

# **THE PRACTITIONERS' GUIDE TO HEA**

## **Chapter 7: Emerging Links, Issues and Approaches**



## 7

**EMERGING LINKS, ISSUES AND APPROACHES**

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The subject of food security and livelihoods is broad and widely related to a number of issues and approaches. HEA is a particular approach for exploring the relationship between households and how they obtain the things they need to survive. It is not the only approach that aims to achieve this goal. Nor does it fully address the many sector-specific issues and concerns that have particular importance in southern Africa, such as HIV/AIDS. This chapter helps the practitioner explore the links between HEA and other current approaches for looking at livelihoods and vulnerability issues. It also provides guidance on how HEA baseline assessments and outcome analysis can add value to specific sectors or areas of investigation, like nutrition, political economy, and HIV/AIDS, and how, by using some of the thinking and tools from these areas of work, value can be added to HEA. As examples of these sorts of links being made and combinations of tools being used in practice are still rare in a number of the areas discussed, this chapter should be seen as suggesting ideas and possible ways forward, rather than drawing lessons solely from experience.

*This chapter was written by Michael O'Donnell, with Laura Hammond (HEA and Power, Conflict & Political Economy) and Arabella Duffield (HEA and Nutrition).*

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**RELATED CD FILES**

The CD that accompanies the **Practitioners' Guide** contains the following files relevant to **Chapter 7**, found in the **Chapter 7** directory:

**Annex A: Other VAA Methods**

- Guidance Notes for Determining Data Quality in Vulnerability Assessments
- Tanzania HBS Question Form 1
- Tanzania HBS Question Form 2
- Tanzania HBS Question Form 3
- Questionnaire Uganda CFSVA Final
- Malawi IHS 2 HH Questionnaire

**Annex B: Checklist of Issues Relating to Power****Annex C: HIV/AIDS**

- A Parrot on Your Shoulder: A Guide for People Starting to Work with Orphans and Vulnerable People
- Children's Interview Form

## HEA AND THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK

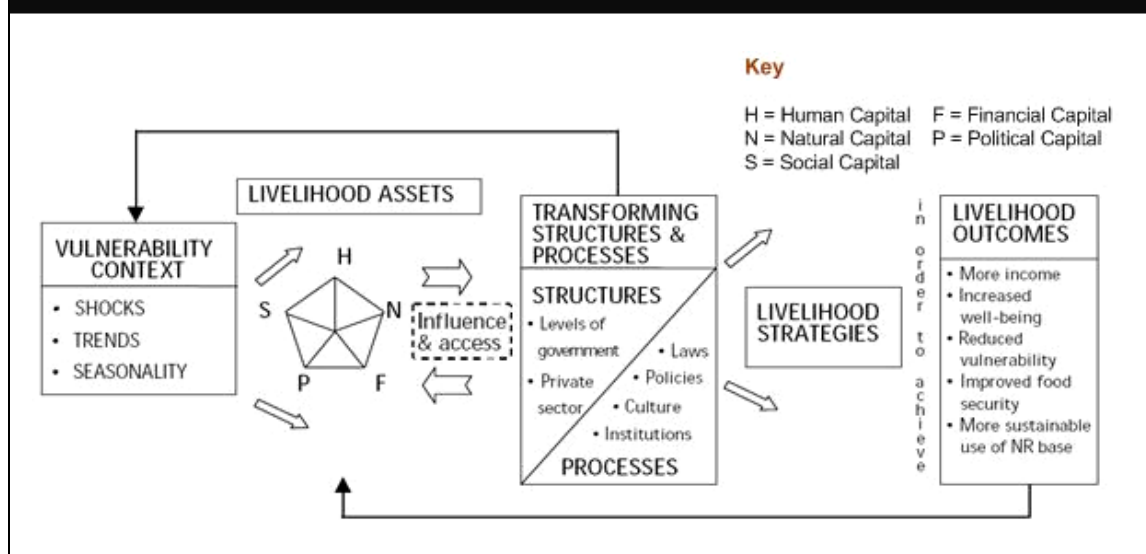
### Background

#### Overview of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is a conceptual framework that helps us to understand how assets, institutions and processes combine to enable households to make a living. The Framework, illustrated in **Figure 1**, has 5 broad components:

- *Assets or Capitals*: different assets provide the bases that people draw on to making a living – human, financial, physical, natural, social and – in some variants of the SLF – political.
- *Policies, Institutions and Processes*: these influence and mediate the ways that households can use the assets that are available to them.
- *The Vulnerability Context*: this describes the external environment in which people exist but which they cannot control, and refers to how long-term trends, seasonality and natural and man-made shocks can affect livelihoods.
- *Livelihood Strategies*: based on the interaction of the above 3 sets of factors, households are able to carry out different livelihood strategies, such as farming, employment or trading.
- *Livelihood Outcomes*: these refer to how successful the livelihood strategies have been in ensuring access to food or income or other measures of welfare.

**Figure 1: The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (source: DFID)**

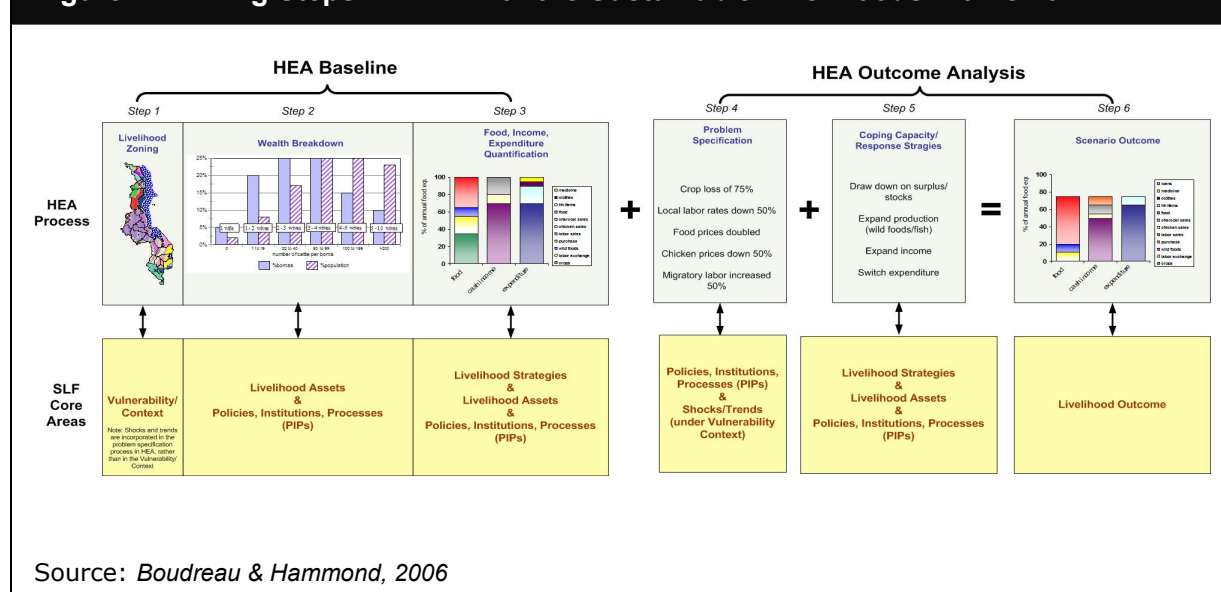


#### How HEA and SLF are linked

While HEA was developed prior to and independently of the SLF, both share many common elements. HEA most explicitly describes *livelihood strategies* and *livelihood outcomes* through the presentation of sources of food and income, and expenditure patterns. The wealth breakdown in HEA incorporates a particular formulation of the assets available to the households, which can be expressed in terms of the 5 types of assets or capitals in the SLF.

Some aspects of social capital and human capital are not comprehensively addressed in most HEA assessments, however.

**Figure 2. Linking Steps in HEA with the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**



The *vulnerability context* is also explicitly covered in HEA, either in terms of a problem specification for a current year, or more implicitly in the criteria for distinguishing between livelihood zones. HEA assessments do not usually have an explicit section looking at *policies, institutions and processes*, and this is an area that could be made more consistent and explicit. Currently, it is common within HEA to describe aspects of key policies, institutions and processes where they help explain the wealth breakdown or different aspects of access to food and income or expenditure patterns, or as part of the problem specification if the problem happens to be one of a change in policy or process (e.g. price subsidies, livestock bans market closures, etc).

Given their respective roots, with HEA originally designed as a tool for emergency needs assessment, and the SLF conceived for more development-oriented planning, HEA has focused more on *livelihood strategies and outcomes*, while SLF assessments tend to focus more on understanding the factors underlying those strategies and outcomes.

## How to Best Exploit the Linkages Between HEA and the SLF

As discussed elsewhere in the guide, it is critical to cater your research approach to a clear set of research questions. In many cases, the set of key questions that leads to an HEA assessment does not require an exhaustive inventory or mapping of the macro-political or economic environment. In cases where this analysis is required, however, there is no methodological reason why greater emphasis could not be placed on understanding all types of capitals and policies, institutions and processes in HEA assessments. Although to date we are not aware of examples of this having been done, it is believed that additional specialised tools could be combined with HEA to

*A different focus*  
HEA focuses on understanding people's *livelihood strategies and outcomes*, while SLF assessments aim to understand the causal factors underlying those strategies and outcomes

**Figure 3. Example of a Agricultural Zone Wealth Breakdown Using HEA and SLF Terminology****HEA Terminology**

	<b>Very Poor</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Better Off</b>
<b>% of Total Popn.<sup>2</sup></b>	10-15%	20-30%	30-45%	20-30%
<b>Main Caste</b>	SC & ST	SC & BC	BC	OC
<b>Household Size</b>	4-6 (mostly 5)	4-6 (mostly 5)	4-6 (mostly 5)	4-6 (mostly 5)
<b>Number Working</b>	2-3	2-3	Mostly 2	1-2
<b>Land Owned</b>	0 (landless)	<1 acre	1-3 acres	3+ acres
<b>Main Crops Grown</b>	None	Rice	Rice	Rice Groundnuts Sugar cane (few)
<b>Other Assets</b>	Labour only	Labour only	Own Draught Power/ Hire Tractor	Own Draught Power/ Hire Tractor Few have irrigation
<b>Livestock:</b>				
<b>Buffaloes</b>	0	0-1	1-3	1-3
<b>Cattle</b>	0	0	0-2	0-2
<b>Goats</b>	0	0	0-5	0
<b>Poultry</b>	Few	Few	Few	Few
<b>Main Income Sources</b>	1. Migratory Labour 2. Agric. Labour 3. Weaving	1. Migratory Labour 2. Agric. Labour 3. Crop Sales	1. Crop Sales 2. Agric. Labour 3. Migratory Labour	1. Crop Sales 2. Agric. Labour 3. Livestock Product Sales
<b>HH Income Range (Rs/ Year)</b>	Rs12,000 – 20,000	Rs15,000 – 20,000	Rs20,000 – 30,000	Rs45,000 – 110,000

**SLF Terminology**

	<b>Very Poor</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Better Off</b>
<b>Natural Capital</b>	No land for cultivation or grazing; little access to land for firewood collection. A small number lease land from others	Small amount of land for cultivation (<1 acre), and often poorer quality (upland, little water)	1-3 acres of land for cultivation	>3 acres of land for cultivation
<b>Physical Capital</b>	No boats/ nets	No boats/ nets	Nets and mostly non-motorised boats	Some have boreholes to irrigate land.
<b>Human Capital</b>	2-3 income earners; limited formal education; labouring skills		2 income earners; more educated	1-2 income earners; more education
<b>Financial Capital</b>	Low income; small debts (no collateral to borrow against)	Low income; some debts (limited collateral)	Middle income; little debt (usually borrow for inputs and repay); better access to credit	Higher income; high borrowing related to agric. inputs, but most repaid; access to formal credit
<b>Social Capital (not formally assessed)</b>	From marginalised castes/ tribes	Mix of castes; SC face discrimination	From higher castes; less socially and politically marginalised; receive better facilities	

Source: SC UK India Programme, 2005

ensure adequate coverage of all aspects of livelihoods (e.g. the “social relations framework” for understanding power and social dynamics).

Meanwhile, HEA can add value to SLF assessments by introducing an element of quantification to descriptions of livelihood strategies and outcomes, allowing decision-makers to understand the relative importance of different food and income sources for different groups, and to see absolute levels of food insecurity and poverty. This makes HEA a very useful tool for operationalising the SLF.

### Wealth breakdowns and the SLF “Capitals”

**Figure 3** gives an example from a Household Economy Assessment in an agricultural zone in Andhra Pradesh, India, where the wealth breakdown was expressed using a standard HEA presentation but also using the 5 capitals of the SLF. The example serves to illustrate the overlap between HEA and SLF. Whether practitioners choose to present their wealth breakdowns in one way or the other will be, in part, determined by the needs of the client who is paying for the assessment.

If a decision maker prefers SLF terminology, it is possible, for example, to describe land ownership within the heading of “natural capital”. Similarly, ownership of key tools and productive assets could be indicated under “physical capital”. Draught animals or other animals used for productive purposes can also be listed under “physical capital”, but total livestock holdings are more commonly captured as “financial capital” given their importance to many households as a “bank on four legs”. “Human capital” will refer to labour availability within the household, and – if this information is collected – to the education and skills levels of typical households within each wealth group.

Different relationships between wealth groups can be captured as types of “social capital”, for example credit relationships, sharecropping and livestock sharing arrangements and social support relationships. However, overall, in practice social capital is not usually examined comprehensively in HEA assessments. In particular, HEA rarely considers the implications of membership of networks or groups at sub-wealth group level, for example whether membership of a cooperative makes some in the poor group somewhat better off than others. For those wishing to look at social capital in more depth, a useful simple resource is the DFID “key sheet” on the issue, referenced in the “further reading” section.

### HEA & policies, institutions and processes

As has been indicated, HEA assessments typically do not have an explicit section referring to *Policies, Institutions and Processes (PIPs)*, which is often a shortcoming in HEA practice. Many of the key PIPs that influence the household economy are considered implicitly in HEA, however. Policies determine agricultural practices, the cost of inputs and farm gate prices, market conditions, and labour practices, among other things. They are part and parcel of the factors included in the expression of distinctions between livelihood zones, and the livelihood strategies that people pursue. How PIPs are mediated through community filters is what ends up being represented in HEA *sources of food, sources of income, and expenditure patterns*. When there are changes in policies or relevant institutions and processes which have discernable economic effects, these are also implicitly included in the HEA *problem specification*.

**Table 1** provides a checklist of some of the PIPs that may be most relevant in HEA assessments, and issues to consider in relation to them.

Other sections of this Guide are intended to help HEA Practitioners redress the lack of focus on PIPs. Markets are arguably the most important institution to consider, and the market

analysis sections in this guide provide more detail on how they should be assessed. In addition, the “Power, Conflict and Political Economy” section later in this chapter provides a useful checklist of issues to be considered that can help explain PIPs.

**Table 1: Examples of Policies, Institutions and Processes, and Their Relevance in HEA**

Policies, Institutions and Processes	Examples of Issues to Consider	Relevance in HEA
Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are markets functioning effectively?</li> <li>• Can people trade goods freely within the country?</li> <li>• How are markets regulated (e.g. price controls, existence of parallel/ black markets)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (As described in Markets sections elsewhere)</li> <li>• How vulnerable are different groups to changes in the market?</li> <li>• How will markets constrain or facilitate responses to shocks?</li> </ul>
Macro-Economic Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the foreign exchange rate stable?</li> <li>• Is the inflation rate low?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are macro-economic shocks a problem affecting the household economy?</li> <li>• How do these affect wages, incomes and prices, and thus different wealth groups?</li> </ul>
Social Protection Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What social protection policies and safety nets are in place?</li> <li>• What sorts of transfers are provided (cash, food, agricultural inputs)?</li> <li>• Who is eligible?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What contribution do these measures make to baseline food and income in different wealth groups?</li> <li>• Is social protection “expandable” if there is a shock? Will a government response be automatic?</li> </ul>
Land Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who owns the land? Who has rights to own or occupy land? How are those rights conferred? By whom?</li> <li>• How is inheritance of land organised (legally and culturally, if different)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do land rights affect the ownership of land and thus the wealth breakdown?</li> <li>• What implications would inheritance issues have if the shock is a loss of a family member, e.g. due to AIDS? Can the household continue the same activities?</li> </ul>
Natural Resource Management Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there restrictions on access to or use of forest products (e.g. cutting trees for charcoal or crafts)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can these activities be expanded if there is a shock or not?</li> </ul>
Ethnicity, Religion, Political Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any form of formal or informal discrimination between different social, cultural or political groups? How does this manifest itself?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do these factors cause different groups to be in specific wealth groups?</li> <li>• Do they constrain opportunities to respond to shocks?</li> </ul>

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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***Q: Doesn't HEA only look at livelihoods from an economic perspective, rather than considering social or political issues, and therefore isn't it less comprehensive than the SLF?***

A: HEA is focused primarily on the effect of economic shocks on people's livelihoods which is one of the primary reasons for disaggregating the population by livelihood zone and wealth group. But economic shocks and non-economic factors, such as social and political issues, are highly inter-related. A politically-motivated decision to change a grain subsidy, for instance, will ultimately have economic effects at the household level. Social status within a community provides or restricts access to certain advantageous economic opportunities. HEA focuses its enquiry on the economic side, but fully recognizes the need to understand the political and social context in order to interpret the economic outcome. Having said that, the depth of the investigation into related sectors actually carried out within a HEA assessment depends on the purpose of the assessment, e.g. it might central to long-term development planning, but less crucial for understanding immediate needs in an emergency.

***Q: Is the SLF a methodology, or an approach or a checklist...?***

A: The SLF is a conceptual framework for understanding how different elements interact to determine livelihoods outcomes. There is no single analytical method for assessments based on the SLF, and a range of tools can be used to collect the information required to do an analysis based on the SLF. In practice, it is also useful as a checklist of issues to consider when assessing livelihoods.

## HEA & OTHER VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS TOOLS

### Background

#### Why use HEA alongside other vulnerability analysis tools?

Vulnerability assessment tools are constantly evolving. Rather than seeing them as competing, it is useful to think in terms of how different frameworks and methods can either be used together in a complementary way or be used to achieve different research objectives. HEA's evolution since the 1990s has reflected different users' demands, and learning from other frameworks and methods. Within southern Africa, there are a wide variety of surveys and studies available. This section summarises different research methods, and describes how they may be used in combination with HEA.

Throughout this guide, we have attempted to distinguish the HEA framework from the methods used to collect information related to the framework. However, HEA in practice predominantly uses qualitative, rapid appraisal methods. (See [Chapter 1, pg 3](#), in the [Practitioners' Guide](#); and [Session 1 \(Introduction to the Field Process\)](#) in the Training Guide for more on the reasons behind this. Similarly, for the other vulnerability assessment tools described here, we will try to distinguish the analytical framework from the research methods, while acknowledging that in most cases, one method is commonly associated with each framework.

### How to do It

#### Understanding different VAA tools

This section looks at three broad categories of vulnerability assessment tools, which we here call:

- (a) "Snapshot" Assessments
- (b) "Annual Accounting" Assessments
- (c) Qualitative Livelihoods Assessments

#### *"Snapshots" of food security and vulnerability*

Depending on the type of information collected, analysis of vulnerability is typically based either on indicators of the situation at a particular point in time (a "snapshot"), such as the last 7 days, or else information on some combination of food consumption, income and spending is collected for a longer recall period – usually a full year – as is done in HEA. Occasionally, the survey instrument used allows both to be done at once. Examples of snapshot indicators are dietary diversity (food groups consumed in the last 24 hours or 7 days), holdings of food stocks in the household and the coping strategies index (variety and intensity of coping strategies used in the last 30 days).

Snapshots potentially provide more accurate information for the period under consideration because people are more likely to recall the recent past. They also provide powerful evidence for decision-makers of severity of the current situation. But they are limited in that they often do not take account of seasonal factors and inter-annual differences, and lack predictive power. For most households, the indicators will vary according to, for example, whether the survey was done immediately after the harvest or at the height of the "hungry season", and whether the year in question was a bumper one, or whether it was the third

bad year in a row. On their own, therefore, this makes such indicators less useful for early warning and making predictions of how things will change. Even if they are collected regularly, they will display trends, but they will not necessarily be a good indicator of how things will change in the future. Given the often long lead times between assessments and response (up to six months for internationally imported food aid, for example), the ability to look into the future is vital in an assessment.

The analytical frameworks behind snapshot assessments are not always clear. At their simplest, they actually try to measure current food insecurity using various proxy indicators which (preferably) have a proven association with levels of food security. For example dietary diversity indices are widely agreed to bear a strong relationship to current food security. At times however, the associations are assumed, and sometimes incorrectly so. For example “duration of household food stocks” is still commonly used. While this may be an appropriate indicator of food security if the household relies **only** on own crop production, many household economies rely on additional cash income and regular purchases of food and food stocks, in this case, are not a valid indicator.

More complex tools use a variety of indicators to complement and cross-check one another. In such cases, however, we must be clear about what the indicators actually indicate, e.g. current consumption (dietary diversity), predicted shortfalls in food production (rainfall or other climatic indicators), levels of existing stress to livelihoods (coping strategies), the outcome of problems in some combination of food insecurity, poor health and a poor caring environment (infant malnutrition).

Proxy indicators have a practical disadvantage in that they only provide a relative measure of food insecurity (i.e. “Household A is less food insecure than Household B”), whereas direct measures of consumption enable absolute statements to be made (i.e. “Household A is accessing 90% of its needs; Household B is accessing 75% of its needs). It may be possible to accurately calibrate proxy indicators against absolute measures, i.e. to be able to say what different dietary diversity scores are equivalent to in terms of total energy consumed. But doing so is complex and requires a lot of data and effort and hence in practice it is rarely done.<sup>1</sup>

Examples of surveys that are more “snapshot” in their nature include WFP “Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Assessments<sup>2</sup>” (CFSVAs) and many national Household Budget Surveys/ Income & Expenditure Surveys (e.g. Tanzania 2000/01 Household Budget Survey).

### *Annual accounting of food security & vulnerability*

Annual accounting refers to those assessments that look not at food security at a single point in time, but try to account for all the food and income that a household accessed in a year and – sometimes – how income was spent. HEA assessments, therefore, use an annual accounting approach. As the HEA framework is well described elsewhere in this guide, for this section we will focus on assessments that use household questionnaires for data collection and quantitative/ statistical methods for analysis, as opposed to the rural appraisal methods more commonly used in HEA.

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<sup>1</sup> Diego Rose/ MSU has done this for dietary diversity in Mozambique

<sup>2</sup> However, CFSVAs (also referred to as Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessments (CVAs) vary from assessment to assessment, and with some incorporating elements of “annual accounting” and – at the time of writing - WFP is investigating ways of incorporating qualitative research and elements of the livelihoods framework.

Obtaining information to meet the requirements of annual accounting of food, income and expenditure through a questionnaire is more demanding than getting snapshot information. It can be difficult to recall accurately things that happened many months previously. However, a well designed tool would facilitate recall by including opportunities for cross-checking information, and by asking questions in ways that are easier for respondents to answer. For example, rather than asking “how much did your household earn last year from casual labour”, it is preferable to break this down by asking for each household member, which months they worked, how many days per week they worked, what the wage rate was at different times of the year and then calculating the total income from these answers.

Some VAC assessments have used this approach (e.g. Zimbabwe 2003-04), while others use a combination of “snapshot” indicators and more or less comprehensive accounting of the household economy within a single survey (e.g. Mozambique VAC, 2005-06). The Malawi Integrated Household Survey, 2004, is another example of a mixed approach.

### *Qualitative livelihoods research*

Qualitative livelihoods research in this section refers to assessment methods that are based on the SLF described previously in this chapter, but which rely on purely qualitative research methods, without quantification. These include the sorts of livelihoods assessments often carried out by NGOs such as Oxfam<sup>3</sup> and CARE<sup>4</sup>, and also Participatory Poverty Appraisals (PPAs) carried out by the World Bank. These types of assessments cover a broad variety of issues relating to livelihoods and vulnerability. The information collected in these studies can be very rich and useful in understanding livelihoods patterns and the root causes of poverty. Because results are not quantified, however, the results can be limited in terms of judging the relative importance of different issues, and the scale of responses required.

Qualitative research is also not meant for applied purposes in an early warning system, which requires a quantified baseline of some sort in order to practically link monitoring data and make quantified predictions.

### **How to choose research methods**

Given the range of tools and methods available, how does one go about choosing which to use? The decision about which research tool or combination of tools to use depends upon (a) the research question you are trying to answer, and (b) practical considerations about time and resources available. It is not the case that one research method is inherently “better” than

#### **Box 1. VAAs in Southern Africa**

##### ***VAC Household Questionnaires***

The content of VAC questionnaires tends to vary from country to country, and even from year to year. However, they usually collect information on household composition, education, health (including chronic illness and HIV/AIDS), and sometimes anthropometry. Most VAC surveys combine the use of “snapshot” indicators with more or less complete “annual accounting” of the household economy (e.g. Mozambique in 2006). Others have focused more heavily on the annual accounting style (e.g. Zimbabwe in 2003 and 2004).

##### ***WFP Comprehensive Food Security & Vulnerability Assessments (CFSVAs)***

CFSVAs have been carried out by WFP in increasing numbers since 2005. They are intended to serve as a baseline for understanding vulnerability in particular countries, and for tracking changes with food security monitoring systems. Their methodology is evolving and varies somewhat from country to country, but broadly can be described as a “snapshot” approach, with partial accounting of the household economy, but including coverage of demography, health, education and anthropometry.

<sup>3</sup> Although Oxfam is increasingly using HEA in its work.

<sup>4</sup> It should also be noted that CARE often also uses quantitative surveys.

another, but rather that different methods are more or less suited to different needs.

### *What is your research question?*

The research question will determine the type and scope of data that you need to collect, and different research methods are more or less suited to answering different research questions.

- **Snapshot surveys:** these are more suited to answering questions about current levels of food insecurity for different population groups; they are also good for describing (but not necessarily explaining) associations/correlations between levels of food security and other variables such as household demographics, health, education and anthropometry.
- **“Annual accounting” surveys:** these tend to be more suited to national-level surveys looking at levels of food security and associations/ correlations with other variables; they are less suited to detailed causal analysis of food insecurity or poverty.
- **Qualitative livelihoods analysis:** These are very strong at explaining causes of food insecurity, vulnerability or poverty, and explaining links between household, community and macro issues; they are not well suited for estimating or predicting levels of food security.
- **HEA:** This is something of a hybrid, in that it quantifies current levels of food and income security, but also goes some way to understanding the immediate causes of poverty and livelihood security and can be used in conjunction with monitoring data to make predictive analyses of food and income security.

### *What resources are available?*

Practical considerations are also at least as important as technical considerations in the choice of assessment tools. These primarily relate to the time, geographical coverage, money and staff available to carry out the assessment. For staffing, HEA is generally considered to require higher-calibre staff with good analytical skills for the fieldwork compared to household surveys. However, significant expert skills are required to design and analyse household surveys as well, and ideally survey administrators should have the capacity to cross-check and probe questionable responses if data quality is to be assured. HEA is often considered an expensive method compared to surveys, but the cost of either approach is heavily dependent on the amount of external technical expertise that needs to be brought in, and the scope of the exercise. The initial HEA baseline and training exercise may be costly, but the investment in the baseline pays off over time since it can be used year after year for projection work, and a repeat updating or monitoring exercise using trained national staff will be relatively cheap. A snapshot survey, on the other hand, has to be repeated in full each time a new analysis is required.

### **Mixing Methods: What HEA adds to other surveys and what they add to HEA**

Increasingly, there is recognition that it is much more fruitful to look at how different methods can complement one another, rather than arguing about which single method is most useful. Mixing of methods can be done either through simultaneous use of different tools (with each adding different pieces of the puzzle, or serving as a cross-check), or sequentially. For vulnerability analysis, a useful sequence might be:

- (a) A qualitative survey or HEA provides an overview that helps in the design of a quantitative survey

- (b) The quantitative survey gets more precise descriptive data on levels of vulnerability and associations between vulnerability and different aspects of the livelihoods, health, education, etc.
- (c) Further qualitative research explores unexpected or anomalous findings, or just tries to provide further causal analysis of the findings of the quantitative survey

**Table 2** suggests how the information from HEA and other tools can complement one another when used simultaneously:

<b>Table 2. How different approaches can complement one another</b>		
<i>HEA and...</i>	<i>What HEA adds</i>	<i>What is added to HEA</i>
<b>“Snapshot” Surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonal and inter-annual context</li> <li>• Usually better at capturing income sources, especially informal sources</li> <li>• Often more comprehensive description of the household economy</li> <li>• Inter-wealth group relationships</li> <li>• Stronger narrative descriptions</li> <li>• Greater ability to link with monitoring data to predict future outcomes</li> <li>• General cross-checking of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More precise info on food security status at a point in time, especially dietary quality</li> <li>• Easier to link food security info with health, education, demographics, anthropometry</li> <li>• Often stronger intra-household information</li> <li>• General cross-checking of findings</li> </ul>
<b>“Annual Accounting” Surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually better at capturing income sources, especially informal sources</li> <li>• Inter-wealth group relationships</li> <li>• Stronger narrative descriptions</li> <li>• General cross-checking of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier to link food security info with health, education, demographics, anthropometry</li> <li>• Often stronger intra-household information</li> <li>• General cross-checking of findings</li> </ul>
<b>Qualitative Livelihoods Assessments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some quantification of livelihood outcomes and contributions of different livelihood strategies strengthens findings and makes them more useful for decision-making particularly in emergencies</li> <li>• Gives a more complete picture of how different parts of the household economy fit together</li> <li>• Greater ability to link with monitoring data to predict future outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually stronger on explaining root causes of livelihood insecurity, especially non-economic factors</li> <li>• Often better explanation of the interaction between the household and wider policies, institutions</li> <li>• Linked to the above, they can be more suited to developing long-term development programmes</li> </ul>

*The following two types of surveys are commonly used at a national level in Southern Africa and are therefore shown here for ease of reference. They are predominantly snapshot in nature, but*

<i>sometimes incorporate elements of annual accounting:</i>		
<b>HH Budget Surveys/ Income &amp; Expenditure Surveys</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonal and inter-annual context</li> <li>• Usually better at capturing informal income sources (less standardised, so more flexible)</li> <li>• Inter-wealth group relationships</li> <li>• Stronger narrative descriptions</li> <li>• General cross-checking of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More precise info on food security status at a point in time, especially dietary quality (shorter recall period)</li> <li>• Often stronger intra-household information</li> <li>• General cross-checking of findings</li> </ul>
<b>Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonal and inter-annual context</li> <li>• Usually better at capturing income sources, especially informal sources</li> <li>• Inter-wealth group relationships</li> <li>• Stronger narrative descriptions</li> <li>• General cross-checking of findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier to link food security info with health, education, demographics, anthropometry</li> <li>• Often stronger intra-household information</li> <li>• General cross-checking of findings</li> </ul>

Some of the other strengths and weaknesses of different approaches are more subjective and/ or more about the way the method can be applied in practice than about things inherent in the method itself.

For example, some people find the use of livelihood zones and wealth groups in HEA to be very useful in giving a clear explanation of differences in livelihood patterns across geographical areas. Others however feel that administrative areas are more practical units of analysis for various reasons, or that livelihoods zones are not helpful for the sort of analysis they are interested in. Household surveys have the potential to be more flexible in terms of disaggregating data in a variety of different ways (whereas in HEA information can only be disaggregated according to the groups interviewed and the livelihood zones covered). The caveat here, though, is that the sampling framework for a household survey may mean that disaggregating by some unforeseen variables may result in too few records being used for the results to be valid.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Q: Which are better, qualitative or quantitative research methods?***

One method is not better than another in general. Whether a method is “good” or not is context specific, and depends on (a) whether it is an appropriate tool for getting at the information needed to answer a specific research question, and (b) whether the research is carried out in accordance with good practice. Annex A provides guidance on how to determine the quality of the data in a vulnerability assessment.

### ***Q: If quantitative survey results are statistically valid, doesn't that mean they are more robust?***

Not necessarily. Data quality is not so much related to the method itself, but how the method is implemented in practice. There is good and bad practice in every research method. Statistical validity is an appealing concept, and when the data itself is of good quality then tests of statistical validity are important for demonstrating that the results are reliable.

However, it is possible for bad data to be statistically valid, for example if the question was poorly phrased, or if the answers given were subject to some bias. Similarly, good practice in qualitative research can lead to robust data, while poor practice will lead to unreliable information.

### **Field Materials**

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The accompanying CD includes examples of survey instruments from different quantitative surveys in Annex A. For detailed guides and reviews of different methodologies, see “Further Reading” at the end of this chapter.

#### Survey Instruments:

- VAC HH and Community Survey form, Zimbabwe 2004
- WFP CFSVA HH and Community survey instrument, Uganda 2005
- Malawi Integrated Household Survey-2 HH survey instrument, 2004
- Tanzania Household Budget Survey HH survey instrument, 2000/01

## HEA & POWER, CONFLICT & POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS

### Background

#### What is conflict and political economy analysis?

A political economy approach in livelihoods assessments involves understanding the political and economic interests of different actors, and how those might, for example, influence them to make use of conflict or positions of power for their own ends. It involves looking not only at the actors themselves, but also the structures within which they operate and which may either facilitate or hinder actors' interests.

The HEA framework and the qualitative research methods typically used in HEA fieldwork lend themselves well to incorporating political economy and conflict analysis. Political economy analysis requires delving further into the livelihood strategies that wealth groups pursue and their assets by asking more about why some groups have control over assets, and how and why the opportunities and relative wealth of different groups have changed over time. It involves considering the possibility, for example, that the reason the "poor" have less land than the "middle", or that people in one livelihood zone have more infrastructure and trading opportunities than in another, is not the result of random external processes, but rather of intentional policies or the pursuit of the interests of one particular group. And it involves considering vulnerability not only in economic terms, but also in social and political terms.

There are a number of examples of HEA assessments that have incorporated elements of conflict and political economy analysis, and many HEA practitioners will recognise the issues here as ones they already consider to some extent without expressly calling it power, conflict or political economy analysis. But there have also been calls to make this more systematic and structured in HEA (e.g. Collinson et al., 2002; Jaspars & Shoham, 2002). This section aims to introduce HEA practitioners to key elements of power, conflict and political economy analysis that can be addressed within HEA assessments, and to the ways that more detailed tools for conflict analysis that are available elsewhere can complement HEA analysis.

#### Why consider power, conflict and political economy

Understanding power, conflict and political economy can be important for three main reasons:

- *To provide a deeper understanding of the causes of poverty and food insecurity:* It is widely acknowledged that the root causes of poverty and food insecurity are related to deeply embedded social, cultural, economic and political factors. The immediate causes of who is more or less food secure relates to differences in the amount and quality of food or cash that households can access. Underlying causes relate to the different assets households have and the livelihood strategies that they are able to pursue. But root causes explain why some people or communities have more assets than others or why they are better able to make use of those assets than others. Very often, power and political economy considerations will help explain the root causes - especially in situations of conflict - and guide us towards the most appropriate set of measures to help address those causes.
- *To help predict problems that may arise:* Food security analysis and early warning systems are most often focused on predicting the occurrence and effects of natural

shocks. What is the likelihood of the rains failing next season? Which people in which areas would be worst affected by that? Political economy and conflict analysis enables us also to consider the risks of conflict or tension arising in different areas or between different groups, and not only as a result of the hazard but also because of the nature of the response, e.g. one group being favoured for support over another marginalized group. Combined with HEA, this gives us a more sophisticated understanding of which groups may be affected, in what ways and why. For example, the urban HEA carried out in Harare, Zimbabwe in 2002, was explicitly intended to examine how macro-economic and political changes would affect the economic status of different population groups, and how that might in turn affect the potential for civil unrest.

- *To ensure sensitivity to power relationships and conflict in programming interventions:* HEA enables us to understand which groups are (or are likely to be) food insecure and helps suggest interventions to alleviate that. However, interventions that fail to take account of power relationships and conflict risk exacerbating marginalisation and tensions. For example, could support for a livelihood strategy that is associated with one particular ethnic or religious group cause resentment in another group? Or could a particular type of agricultural support programme inadvertently increase tensions over land rights?

To a greater or lesser extent according to the context, some degree of power, conflict and political economy analysis is a matter of good practice in all assessments.

## How to do It

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It is beyond the scope of this guide to provide detailed guidance on tools for conflict and political economy analysis. Many such tools already exist, and the “further reading” section points interested readers towards those. The purpose of this section is to highlight key aspects of those tools that can usefully be linked to a HEA assessment. [Annex B](#) provides a brief checklist of issues relating to power and political economy analysis which can be used in the field to give an overview of key issues on this subject.

### How power and conflict fit within the HEA framework and methods

The incorporation of power and conflict analysis is compatible with the HEA framework, but it does require a somewhat different analytical “lens” through which information is interpreted to ensure that an accurate and relevant understanding is acquired.

The same basic set of information is collected for the baseline – assets, sources of food and income, expenditure patterns and coping capacity of different wealth groups. This should then be supplemented by information covered in the checklist in Annex B to provide a deeper understanding of the reasons for differences between and possibly within wealth groups. The inclusion of power and conflict analysis may lead to a decision to sub-divide wealth groups or may influence the delineation of livelihood zones (this is covered in the section below). However in most cases, it is likely to simply provide a deeper layer of understanding of the reasons for poverty and food insecurity and the opportunities open to different people to improve their situation. As such, it may point to opportunities for developing programming or advocacy responses that are aimed at the political, macro-economic, or policy level to influence change.

Applying a power, conflict and political economy lens to the analysis of food security and poverty in HEA requires a subtle contextual interpretation of exposure to shocks and capacity to cope. This applies in five main regards:

- (a) To what extent are conflicts predictable? Understanding the dynamics of tensions, and the triggers that are likely to result in their escalation, can help to inform predictions about when a crisis may develop, and thus improve early warning.
- (b) Whose interest is served by the conflict or continued tension? Look for individuals and groups who are likely to benefit from instability and unequal power relations as these actors are likely to work to preserve the status quo. (See **Box 2** for an example of this from Sudan.)
- (c) Does exposure to conflict-related shocks differ within wealth groups? For example, different social groups may pursue the same livelihood strategies in the baseline period and have the same level of wealth, and thus get classified as a single wealth group. But if a particular conflict or source of tension subsequently affects one social group within the wealth group more than another (e.g. ethnic tension arising in a previously integrated community), then a separate analysis will need to be carried out for each group.
- (d) Does the ownership of assets make any group a target in a conflict situation? Typically, more asset ownership would be equated with increased capacity to cope with a shock, and thus wealthier groups would be assumed to be less at risk of food insecurity. But in some situations, those assets may become liabilities by leading such households to be targeted for attack. An understanding of patterns of conflict is thus necessary to determine real vulnerability to different shocks.
- (e) Given the political economy context, could the coping capacity of different groups be constrained by non-economic barriers or by the nature of a political context? For instance, are some groups marginalized on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, or gender? And hence does that affect their vulnerability?

### Box 2. The Benefits of Famine in Sudan

In a landmark book in 1994, David Keen used a political economy perspective to examine the causes and the process of a famine that developed among the Dinka of Sudan in 1985-89. Over 500,000 people were estimated to have died.

By looking at the famine as an extended economic and political process, rather than as an event characterised by destitution and death, Keen illustrated how a variety of benefits accrued to select groups in the midst of the famine. These included cattle raiding and asset stripping by the Baggara, an ethnic group who were armed and encouraged by the central government to quell the demands of the Dinka for political autonomy; and to provide access to oil and other resources in Dinka areas.

For the Baggara, raiding provided economic resources (mainly cattle) and access to increased farming and grazing land, mitigating their existing economic and political discontent. Powerful traders and business interests also benefited by shaping markets and benefiting from price changes that occurred, i.e. low cattle prices, low wage rates for migrant labour, high grain prices and high transport prices. Finally some groups also benefited from the diversion of relief supplies from those in need.

The methods most widely recommended for collecting the information needed for this type of analysis are secondary literature reviews, and qualitative/ semi-structured interviews with key informants. Depending on the nature of the power and conflict issues to be considered, key informants in this case may include staff from research institutes and universities, human rights organisations and media, but at the community level the key informants are likely to be the same as for standard HEA information. Including this sort of analysis therefore fits well with the methods most commonly used to collect HEA information. What is required is additional time for interviews and secondary data review, plus some additional capacity to analyse the information. For in-depth analysis, it is recommended that additional

input is sought from staff or consultants who may be more experienced in this sort of work. Ideally this should be done concurrently with the HEA baseline or monitoring assessment so that a common analysis is developed, with each part of the research building upon and informing the other. In many cases, the issues covered by power and conflict analysis can be sensitive; thus staff need to be aware of any risks to themselves or their organisation of discussing and publicly reporting on such issues, and means of mitigating those risks should be outlined in a research protocol.

### Adapting livelihood zones and wealth groups to account for conflict

In some cases a review of power, conflict and political economy considerations can point to significant differences either between geographical areas or between population groups that may not be captured if an apolitical approach is taken to zoning and wealth breakdowns. This is expected to be relatively rare, as economic differences between zones can often be the outcome of political processes, and thus those political effects are implicitly captured. However there can be exceptions. For example, a geographical area that has the same agro-ecological conditions, market access, infrastructure availability, livelihood patterns, etc. and which normally would be classified as a single livelihood zone, may have to be considered as more than one analytical unit under certain conditions of conflict. There are two possible approaches to handling this.

#### Box 3. Splitting an Urban Livelihood Zone Because of Conflict

SC UK carried out a HEA assessment in Bunia town in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2003. Bunia had been the scene of violent conflict between the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups. SC UK distinguished two different livelihood zones in the town in the north and south, mainly on the basis of socio-political differences, which in turn resulted in differences in economic opportunities. The differences related to such factors as ethnic composition, levels of physical destruction from the conflict and concentrations of host/ settled, displaced and returned families.

- (a) If a conflict is a hazard that is temporarily affecting different parts of a livelihood zone in different ways, construct different problem specifications for different parts of the same zone. For example, the conflict may cut off a key market for only one part of the zone, or may prevent access to natural resources in a localised area. In this case, there will be differences in the vulnerability of populations within different parts of the zone. Dividing the area into separate livelihood zones is not appropriate as the underlying livelihood opportunities and patterns should remain the same.
- (b) If, on the other hand, conflict or a prolonged power imbalance is a chronic situation, and has become “normalised” in a way that has led to significant differences in livelihood patterns in an area that was previously relatively homogenous, then re-define the area as separate livelihood zones. For example, trade patterns may have changed, and production activities may have adapted to account for changes in access to land. In this case, splitting an area into two or more zones will be appropriate.

Within the same geographical area, it is possible to find groups whose livelihood patterns vary for social or political reasons, but who may end up with similar levels of wealth. In these instances, typically the livelihood strategies used by different groups will vary, and thus they can be considered as separate wealth groups, as wealth groups are differentiated not solely on the basis of the outcome (amount of food and cash income earned or assets owned), but also very much on the basis of how they get their wealth. Those differences in livelihood strategies are the key to determining the types of hazards that households are vulnerable to, and at least as - if not more – important that overall wealth in that respect.

#### Box 4. Wealth groups in resettled farms in Zimbabwe

In a HEA assessment in A1 Resettled Farms in Zimbabwe in 2004, it was found that there were two distinct population groups in the same areas: those settlers who had been allocated land, and those who had previously been workers on the former commercial farms and who were now landless but remained on the property. Because the livelihoods of the two groups were closely inter-related, it was not considered appropriate to treat them as two different livelihood zones. And while some of those landless actually had similar levels of food and income access to the poor settlers, they clearly constituted different wealth groups because of their access to land, legal status and differences in political recognition and acceptance, in addition to differences in the types of livelihood strategies that they could pursue. Thus in spite of the name “wealth groups”, politically-determined access to resources was a key dimension along which the breakdown between groups was made.

#### Political economy considerations when making recommendations

It is possible for livelihoods interventions to have negative impacts on power and conflict dynamics if the issues are not thought through properly. Examples include<sup>5</sup>:

- Creating opportunities for greed and fuelling grievances among certain groups
- Reinforcing differences between groups (privileging some over others; widening economic differences) by the choice of intervention or the targeting method
- Fungibility of aid (aid resources being taxed or otherwise feeding a war economy)
- Late disbursement of aid leading to missed opportunities and/ or resentment

HEA practitioners should be sensitive to possible negative impacts of recommended interventions in terms of, for example, increasing the risk of conflict, exacerbating tensions or disparities between different groups. However, unless specialised work has been done on political economy analysis, practitioners should be careful in making recommendations on interventions that try to mitigate the risk of conflict or reduce vulnerability to it. They should highlight broad potential areas for intervention at the same time as flagging possible concerns from a political economy perspective that merit further detailed investigation before an intervention takes place.

#### Frequently Asked Questions

##### ***Q: Can someone who is not an expert do political economy analysis?***

It should be within the capacity of all HEA practitioners to carry out a basic amount of political economy analysis. The sections above should indicate that at the heart of this type of analysis is simply an openness to and an awareness of how political and economic interests can interact to affect livelihoods. By reading some of the articles in the “Further Reading” section below, most people should be able to do a basic level of analysis. For very detailed analysis - for example if your research is primarily about the interaction of power and conflict with livelihoods and what might be done to address those issues in order to reduce poverty and food insecurity - it is recommended that someone with greater expertise is used to lead that analysis.

<sup>5</sup> DFID, 2002: p23

***Q: How can I analyse and report on political economy and conflict issues and still adhere to the humanitarian principle of neutrality?***

Neutrality as a humanitarian principle refers to not taking sides in a conflict, or not being aligned with any particular group or party on political issues. In practice, being seen to be neutral while still understanding and reporting on the impacts of conflict and political issues is like walking a tightrope. The key is to focus in reports on humanitarian outcomes, and show that your primary concern is for those who are unable to meet their essential needs. In accountable societies, constructive suggestions on improving their situation should be welcomed, and those whose responsibility it is to ensure their welfare should be requested to fulfil those responsibilities. The balance is around doing so without being seen to favour one group over another.

***Q: Power and political economy issues can be very sensitive. Isn't there a risk that my organisation will get in trouble for reporting on such sensitive issues?***

This is similar to the question above. Where the issues are so sensitive that reporting on them puts the communities you seek to serve – or your ability to serve them - at risk, then public reports may not be in the best interests of those communities or of the organisation making the report, and at worst can be dangerous. More private approaches to dealing with the issues raised by political economy analysis should be considered, but ultimately the analysis of the problem does still need to be done.

***Q. What if there is not adequate time or access to do both HEA and political economy analysis? What should I do first? How should I prioritize my activities?***

Both activities are inter-related, and there is no simple logical sequence to them. A basic amount of political economy analysis should be integrated within all HEA assessments. Most obviously, this should be done as part of the secondary data review prior to fieldwork. For more detailed field-based research in situations where resources are constrained, prioritization should be based on research objectives. If the objective is to estimate immediate food security needs, then the HEA takes priority. However, ignoring political economy in that situation may lead to recommendations for interventions (either in terms of approaches or targeting) that could worsen the situation. If the research objective is to understand and respond to root causes of food insecurity, then an iterative sequence may be most appropriate, i.e. do some political economy analysis to contextualise subsequent HEA analysis, with further political economy analysis used to investigate issues that may have been raised by the HEA.

## **Field Materials**

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A checklist of issues to consider in power, conflict and political economy analysis is included as [Annex B](#) for use in fieldwork. Useful secondary information sources, which should be consulted to find relevant information for the context being assessed include:

- International Crisis Group: [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org)
- Human Rights Watch: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)
- Amnesty International: [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)
- US State Department Human Rights Situation Reports: [usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human\\_rights.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights.html)
- International Institute of Strategic Studies: [www.iiss.org](http://www.iiss.org)
- Institute for Security Studies (South Africa): [www.iss.co.za](http://www.iss.co.za)
- The Economist: [www.economist.com](http://www.economist.com)
- Local newspapers
- ReliefWeb country pages: [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)
- Academic/ Research Centre reports, e.g. Tufts ([fic.tufts.edu](http://fic.tufts.edu)), IDS ([www.ids.ac.uk](http://www.ids.ac.uk)), ODI Humanitarian Policy Group ([www.odi.org.uk/hpg](http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg))

## HEA AND NUTRITION

### Background

Food security assessments and nutrition assessments are frequently carried out independently of one another, but the information provided by one can be useful to the other. This section looks at the main ways in which HEA assessments can inform understanding of the nutritional situation and nutritional risks of a population and how, as HEA practitioners, we can employ a stronger understanding of nutrition to provide a richer analysis of the information in HEA assessments.

#### What are we trying to understand?

This section provides some general background on nutrition issues and then proceeds to address three questions:

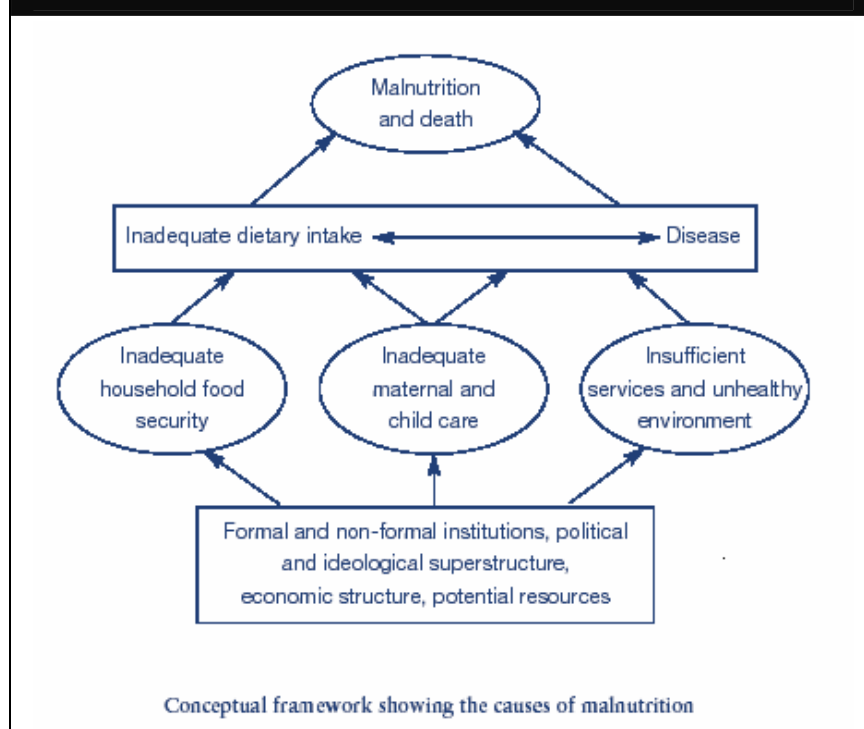
- What can HEA tell us about dietary quality?
- What can HEA tell us about the causes of malnutrition?
- What can HEA tell us about the risk of malnutrition in the future?

#### What is malnutrition and what causes it?

Adequate nutrition is the means by which people thrive, maintain growth, resist and recover from diseases, and perform their daily tasks. When nutrition is inadequate, people become malnourished. Acute malnutrition, or wasting, reflects recent weight loss. Chronic malnutrition, or stunting, is measured as a height deficit and develops over the longer term.

Food insecurity is one of three possible underlying causes of malnutrition, the others being poor childcare practices and poor public health environment and access to healthcare.

**Figure 4: Conceptual Framework Showing the Causes of Malnutrition (source: Sphere Project, 2004)**



**Figure 4** shows UNICEF's widely recognised conceptual framework which highlights the causes of malnutrition. It demonstrates how food insecurity, itself the result of various

structural and institutional factors, can lead to inadequate dietary intake and ultimately malnutrition and death. Inadequate dietary intake refers both to the quantity of food consumed (are people getting enough?), and the quality and diversity of the diet (is it enough of the right types of different foods?).

It is important for HEA practitioners to be aware, therefore, that while being able to access 2,100 kilocalories per day is necessary for ensuring good nutritional status, it is not in itself sufficient. Malnutrition could still arise if the diet did not contain the right balance of foods with adequate micronutrients, or if healthcare or access to clean water was limited.

### **A note on nutrition assessments**

There are two main types of nutrition assessments: rapid emergency nutrition assessments, and a more thorough analysis of the causes of chronic malnutrition. Rapid emergency nutrition assessments typically collect anthropometric data on children under 5 years of age, such as weight, height or mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) and oedema. These are then used to create indicators of nutritional status:

- Weight-for-height: A measure of wasting/ acute malnutrition
- Height-for-age: A measure of stunting/ chronic malnutrition
- Weight-for-age: “underweight” – a common composite measure, which can be hard to interpret as it does not indicate whether the problem is chronic or acute
- MUAC: A measure of wasting/ acute malnutrition, often used to screen for targeted feeding programmes
- Oedema: An indicator of severe acute malnutrition

The nutritional status of under-5s is important in and of itself, because their risk of mortality and morbidity tends to be higher than the rest of the population and they are often the first group within a population to display signs of malnutrition. Thus their status is seen as a leading or advance indicator of population-wide problems. A limited amount of additional data on causal factors (e.g. recent illnesses) is often collected within an emergency nutrition assessment to try to link observed malnutrition to potential explanations.

If a rapid nutrition assessment is conducted using a random sample of an entire population, this provides a statement on the prevalence of malnutrition in the population. It is important not to confuse prevalence data for the population with information on levels of malnutrition within specific populations, e.g. at sentinel sites or from clinic data, which are used for surveillance. The latter can be biased as children who are ill will be over-represented, and illness itself is a major cause of malnutrition. Both these types of data can be very useful for understanding trends in malnutrition, however. Surveillance data should be examined for trends, while population-wide surveys can be used to report prevalence and – if repeated over time – also for trends.

The more thorough analysis of causes of malnutrition usually focuses on chronic malnutrition in children under 3 years of age. It is important to assess this particular group because (i) stunting is irreversible after this age and (ii) children under 3 have different feeding requirements from the rest of the population. These assessments are generally much more detailed than emergency assessments with a more complete accounting of causal factors.

## How to best link HEA and nutritional assessments

### What can HEA tell us about dietary quality?

HEA assessments are most frequently used to tell us about whether households are able to access enough of their total food energy requirements, i.e. the minimum number of calories needed to survive. However, there may be cases where we want to go into further depth on the nutritional implications of the state of the household economy. In these instances we can use HEA information to provide details on additional macro-nutrients, but HEA's ability to look at dietary diversity and micro-nutrients is more limited.

**Access to macro-nutrients:** Macro-nutrients are carbohydrates, fat and protein. These nutrients form the bulk of the diet and supply all the energy (calories) needed. Energy is needed for essential body functions such as breathing, growth and physical activity. Wasting is usually associated with low intakes of energy. Fats and protein provide calories and they also have other important roles. Shortfalls in fat are of particular concern for young children because with their small stomachs they need energy-dense foods such as fats to enable them to get enough calories; other foods may simply be too bulky for them to eat enough of. Fat and protein are also important for the absorption of certain micro-nutrients, and shortfalls in these can lead to micro-nutrient deficiencies. Just as there are reference standards for minimum access to calories (e.g. 2,100 kcal per person per day), there are also standards for minimum fat and protein content of a diet. Reference data on the amount of calories from fat and protein content of foods are also available<sup>6</sup>. Thus it is a relatively simple matter to estimate the adequacy of a diet in terms of fat and protein using HEA information. **Box 5** provides the minimum requirements for macro-nutrients, and how to estimate the contribution of different food sources to those minimum requirements.

<b>Box 5. Sphere minimum standards &amp; calculation for macro-nutrients</b>		
<i>Mean Population Requirements (per person per day):</i>		
<b>Energy:</b> 2,100 kcal	<b>Protein:</b> 10-12% of total energy (52-63g), but <15%	<b>Fat:</b> 17% of total energy (40g)
<b>Example:</b>		
Calculate the contribution to monthly food intake of 100 kg of maize grain for a family of 8 people.		
<b>Step 1: Calculate monthly household requirements:</b>		
8 people x 30 days x (2,100 kcals, 52g protein, 40g fat) =		
Energy: 504,000 kcal		
Protein: 12,480g		
Fat: 9,600g		
<b>Step 2: Find the reference values for maize grain: 100g of maize grain provides...</b>		
Energy: 363 kcal		
Protein: 10g		
Fat: 4.5g		
<b>Step 3: Calculate total energy, fat and protein in 100kg of Maize Grain</b> (where 100g = 0.1kg):		
Energy = 100kg/0.1kg [number of 100g units in 100kg] x 363 kcal [energy per unit] = 363,000		

<sup>6</sup> These are available in the "Platt Tables" in the accompanying CD and in the Livelihoods Field Handbook.

**Box 5. Sphere minimum standards & calculation for macro-nutrients**

kcal

Protein = 100kg/ 0.1kg x 10g = 10,000g

Fat = 100kg/ 0.1kg x 4.5g = 4,500g

**Step 4: Calculate macro-nutrients from maize grain as % of minimum monthly household requirements:**

Energy: 363,000 kcal / 504,000kcal x 100 = 72%

Protein: 10,000g / 12,480g x 100 = 80%

Fat: 4,500g / 9,600g = 47%

Carrying out this additional analysis can highlight cases where households are obtaining 2,100 kcals, but are falling short of the recommended fat content of the diet. Although previous HEA datasets have not been comprehensively analysed in this way, it is possible to say, on the basis of what evidence exists, that shortfalls in fat are likely to be very common among poor households. It is anticipated that detailed analysis of protein levels may have less added value, as protein and calorie content of diets tend to be more closely correlated.

*Access to micro-nutrients:* Vitamins and minerals are found in a wide variety of foods, but are particularly common in fruits, vegetables and animal products – including wild foods. Stunting is usually associated with low intakes of micro-nutrients. Inadequate access to specific micro-nutrients can also cause diseases such as anaemia (iron), scurvy (vitamin C) and pellagra (niacin). The problems of micro-nutrient deficiencies are often underemphasised and have been referred to as “hidden hunger”. It is much more difficult to estimate whether a household has access to sufficient micro-nutrients using HEA, however, as the quantities required are relatively small and would require a level of detailed recall of food consumption that is not realistic for the typical reference periods used in HEA. In addition, the micro-nutrient content of different foods varies according to preparation and storage methods (e.g. milling leads to the loss of B-vitamins in grains; boiling leafy green vegetables leads to the loss of water-soluble vitamins B and C). Formal analysis of micro-nutrient deficiencies requires examination of clinical symptoms or blood samples.

Although we cannot make statements about the percentage of minimum micro-nutrients requirements a household has access to using HEA, we should be able to make tentative statements about the risk of micro-nutrient deficiencies by considering the presence or absence of certain key foods in the diet. **Table 3** serves as a reference for this purpose by outlining some of the common micro-nutrient deficiencies and the types of food in which these micro-nutrients can be found.

**Table 3. Micro-nutrient deficiencies and associated foods**

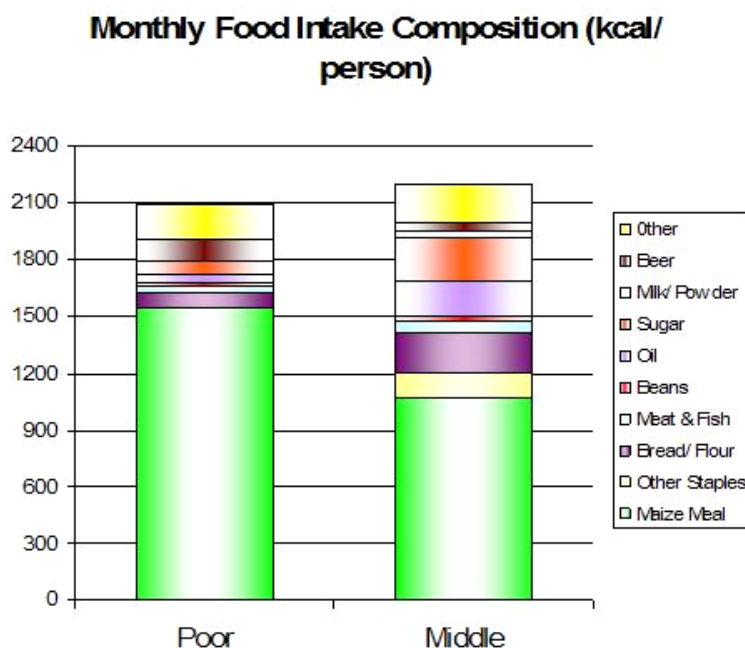
<i>Deficiency</i>	<i>Risk of deficiency if the diet lacks...</i>
Anaemia (Iron)	Red meat; eggs; pulses; beans; raisins; dates; prunes; spinach. Animal sources of iron are easiest to absorb. Eating foods with Vitamin C at the same time also aids absorption of iron.
Goitre (Iodine)	Iodised salt (check when asking about salt purchases if salt is typically iodised or not)
Beri-Beri (Thiamine/ Vitamin B1)	Whole grains; pulses; nuts; eggs; leafy green vegetables; citrus fruits. The absence of those additional foods poses a particular risk where the staple food is milled/ polished rice.
Scurvy	Citrus fruits; mango; papaya; green vegetables; potatoes

Table 3. Micro-nutrient deficiencies and associated foods	
(Vitamin C)	
Pellagra (Niacin/ Vitamin B3)	Whole grains; pulses, nuts, offal. The risk of pellagra is elevated where there is a high reliance on milled maize.
Night-Blindness (Vitamin A)	Liver; milk/ dairy products; eggs; dark yellow and orange vegetables (e.g. pumpkins, sweet potatoes, carrots); papayas, mangoes; dark green leafy vegetables (spinach, broccoli, rape; also wild leaves). Also ask whether vitamin A supplements have been provided within the last year.
Riboflavin Deficiency (Vitamin B2)	Whole grains; pulses; nuts
Note: When considering micro-nutrient availability, check whether fortification of cereals, oils or other foods occurs, and whether supplements (e.g. Vitamin A) have been provided.	

Overall dietary diversity is most accurately measured by 24-hour recall surveys of food consumption at the individual household level. These are increasingly included in questionnaire-based assessments by the VACs and WFP, but they have the limitation of referring only to that 24-hour period. Hence, unless they are repeated over time, they cannot take account of seasonal changes and they can not make predictive statements. HEA cannot provide as much detail on dietary diversity as 24-hour recall surveys, but it is still possible to make some broad comparisons between the diversity of the diets of different wealth groups. **Box 6** illustrates this.

**Box 6 : Dietary Diversity in Mutorashanga Informal Mining Communities, Zimbabwe**

The Mutorashanga Informal Mining Livelihood Zone in northern Zimbabwe is heavily cash-based, and almost all food is purchased (rather than grown). The figure on monthly food intake composition provides an illustration of the kind of differences in dietary diversity between wealth groups that HEA can show. While both the poor and middle groups get the majority of their energy from cereals, the middle group obtains more calories from beans, oil, milk, meat and fish than the poor. This suggests that middle households have a diet that is richer in protein and fat than the poor.



Source: Save the Children UK Zimbabwe Programme, 2001: Mutorashanga Informal Mining Communities HEA

### What can HEA tell us about the causes of malnutrition?

Malnutrition rates are a strong driver of humanitarian action, and are also one of the indicators for the first Millennium Development Goal on reducing hunger. Thus, many actors pay close attention to malnutrition rates. However, because malnutrition has multiple causes as indicated in **Figure 4**, above, understanding the reasons for malnutrition in a particular context are a key part of determining how to reduce malnutrition in both the short and long term.

Ideally, to understand the causes of malnutrition, additional questions on all the possible causes would be added to a nutrition survey questionnaire and could be related to the nutritional status of the children in the household. This would be done using statistical techniques which are beyond the scope of this manual to describe. However, in practice, this is done only in a small percentage of nutrition surveys. Furthermore, as has been indicated elsewhere, using a questionnaire to get solid information on food security is particularly difficult and demanding. More typical is the case of a nutrition survey with anthropometric data, and a variety of other different surveys that are done at slightly different times and places, which are referred to in a less formal attempt to untangle the causes of malnutrition.

Because the HEA framework provides an excellent basis for understanding whether households are obtaining sufficient access to food, HEA assessments can help contribute to a discussion about causes of malnutrition by either factoring out or in this key determinant. Where HEA has found that people are unable to obtain their minimum food requirements, and at the same time malnutrition has been observed in the same area, it will be possible to say that food insecurity is at least one of the active causes of malnutrition. Refining this analysis further depends on how comparable the HEA and nutrition survey data are. For instance:

- (a) Do the assessments refer to the same time period? HEA baselines cover a reference period of one year, and outcome analysis projects food security usually through a six to nine month period in the future. Nutrition surveys would typically be snapshots of a particular point in time. Consider the seasonality of food security and which season the nutrition survey refers to. Was the nutrition survey done at a time when we would expect some or all of the population to be struggling to access enough food? In an agricultural area, if we see high acute malnutrition rates immediately after harvest time, when food is more available and prices are lower, malnutrition is more likely to be related to health or care than food security, whereas in the "hunger season", food security is more likely to be a cause of malnutrition. (However hunger seasons in agricultural areas often coincide with seasonal peaks in health problems, so the latter should not be ruled out.)
- (b) Are the geographical areas consistent? Nutrition surveys typically cover administrative areas (e.g. districts) while HEA assessments typically cover livelihood zones. Take care not to relate the findings of one to the other unless there is very substantial overlap between these two, as otherwise they will refer to different populations. It should be possible to cross reference the locations of the surveys and re-analyse nutrition survey results by livelihood zone, but advice should be sought on a case-by-case basis on whether the sample for the nutrition survey is big enough to do this validly.
- (c) Linking nutrition results to wealth groups. Poverty is a major cause both of food security and malnutrition, so we would generally expect to see higher rates of malnutrition in poorer wealth groups. But malnutrition is not limited to the poor. We can get a better sense of whether food security is a major cause of malnutrition if the nutrition survey incorporates indicators of the wealth group of households

interviewed. Two main ways of determining the wealth group of households in a nutrition survey are (1) to ask questions relating to asset holdings that could be compared to the wealth breakdown in the HEA; and (2) ask a knowledgeable key informant to accompany the nutrition survey team and discreetly inform the team which wealth group each household falls into. SC UK has used the latter approach successfully in Ethiopia to show that malnutrition is more common among poor wealth groups.

In addition to indicating whether food security is likely to be a cause of malnutrition, HEA can also suggest avenues for further investigation related to other aspects of the malnutrition causal framework. **Table 4** provides a list of some of these.

**Table 4. Additional nutrition indicators available from HEA baselines**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Relevance and where collected in HEA</i>
Expenditure on healthcare	The expenditure patterns included in an HEA baseline provide information on how much is being spent on healthcare by households in each wealth group and to what extent different households can afford this cost. This provides part of the explanation for why poor health may be an underlying cause of malnutrition.
Expenditure on water	Where water must be purchased, this cost is included in the expenditure section of the baseline. Again, this information highlights the extent to which different households can afford sufficient water, providing part of the explanation for why poor health or hygiene may be an underlying cause of malnutrition.
Expenditure on soap	Spending on soap is regularly collected as part of the expenditure data. Limited soap usage can lead to poor hygiene and ultimately malnutrition.
Ability to afford a diverse diet	Dietary diversity is important for preventing micro-nutrient deficiencies. It is possible to compile a set of foodstuffs needed to provide a healthy and diverse diet and then calculate the cost of this set using available price data. <sup>7</sup> This cost can then be compared with the income levels of wealth groups to determine its affordability. However it requires information on prices for a wide range of foodstuffs in different seasons of the year, in more detail than a typical baseline provides. It is certainly possible to collect the necessary data during a HEA, however it should be noted that this is very time-consuming.
Workload of mother	A mother's workload can determine her ability to provide proper care for her infants, especially frequent breastfeeding. Discussing labour roles in the households and getting a daily activity calendar (see "Field Materials" for a template) for women in different seasons will help determine whether a mother has time to provide adequate care.

Chronic malnutrition is usually caused by long-term consumption of a poor quality diet (insufficient micro-nutrients) and repeated illness. HEA assessments can, to a certain extent, help us to see whether or not certain sections of the population are likely to have an inadequate diet in terms of quality. Information on cash available for household expenditure can also help us to predict whether or not a household could ever afford a satisfactory diet or access to good quality healthcare services.

<sup>7</sup> SC UK has developed a software package that allows you to do this kind of analysis.

While seasonality is less likely to influence the rates of chronic malnutrition, seasonal calendars can give important clues as to when diets are likely to be short of specific micro-nutrients. For example, information on when different types of fruit and vegetable or milk is most readily available and consumed should be relatively easy to obtain during discussions around a seasonal calendar. This should assist us in thinking about whether or not specific micro-nutrient supplements should be provided at certain times of the year.

### What can HEA tell us about the risk of acute malnutrition?

A key question for decision-makers, especially those interested in early warning, is what impact a shock such as a drought is likely to have on acute malnutrition rates. The risk of malnutrition is not only of interest for its own sake, but also because in practice unfortunately most resources to respond to a predicted crisis are often mobilised only once the malnutrition rate has actually begun to rise, by which time the crisis is already in full swing. With better predictions about likely rises in malnutrition, it is hoped that resources could be mobilised faster.

While HEA has developed tested procedures for predicting food access problems, predicting malnutrition is still an imperfect art. This is because:

- (a) as the causal framework indicates, malnutrition is the outcome of the interaction between a diverse and complex set of factors,
- (b) even within food security alone, it can be difficult to predict people's actual behaviour under stress: will a family actually sell all their cattle before cutting down food? or will they cut down on some food early on so that they can maintain productive assets for the future?
- (c) There may be further shocks or changes that arise that could not have been anticipated at the time the prediction was made.

One of HEA's main strengths is that it is a predictive tool. It does not simply report current food insecurity, but enables us to make predictions about the impacts of shocks and hazards on the food security of different population groups in the future. Where we predict that some population groups will face a food deficit in future, we can usually say with confidence that in the absence of an external intervention, we can expect to see malnutrition increasing. In the future it is expected that work will be done to strengthen the link between food security predictions and malnutrition. Below are some of the areas that will need to be factored into this work.

**Coping strategies:** As explained in [Chapter 4](#), in HEA we do not include in the projected outcome analysis income earned from

harmful coping strategies in our predictions of needs as our objective is to prompt a response before people are forced to resort to those measures. In reality, however, people will often use those strategies if they have to, rather than letting their children become malnourished. If we exclude those strategies and try to predict malnutrition, we may predict more or earlier malnutrition than actually happens, which could give rise to the accusation of "crying wolf". Making a later prediction of malnutrition by including harmful coping strategies

#### Box 7: What does the "2,100 kcal" threshold actually mean?

The reference value of 2,100 kcal per person per day was recommended for use in 2000 by WHO. Prior to that, a stricter threshold of 1,900 kcal was used. It refers to the average energy needs of all people of all ages and both genders, for a population with a specific demographic profile, doing only enough activity to maintain productive life, at average ambient temperature, shelter and clothing, and without health problems such as malnutrition or HIV/AIDS. So in reality the requirements vary somewhat from population to population. Hence 2,100 kcal is a useful guide, but we cannot say that any population failing to get precisely that amount will become malnourished.

is more realistic. But if that is done, then it is essential to emphasise at the same time the damage that would be done by failing to prevent people from using such strategies and responding only when malnutrition begins to rise. In all cases, it is necessary to be explicit about the basis for determining a deficit in HEA.

**Size of the deficit:** It is not possible to make a simple correlation between the percentage of minimum food needs met and the rate of malnutrition. However, it is considered reasonable to expect that anything more than a 10% deficit (i.e. roughly less than 1,900 kcal pppd) is likely to start causing a rise in acute malnutrition. Certainly a deficit in the region of 25% or more is cause for major concern. However, further research is needed on this, and hence those figures should not be taken as formal thresholds.

**Seasonality and timing of deficit:** Precisely what an annual deficit will mean for a household needs to be examined in the context of seasonality, and when that deficit will be felt. A 16% deficit spread over 12 months may not sound so bad, but a 100% deficit for 2 months (which amounts to the same thing over a year) does sound extremely serious. Households do budget their resources to a greater or lesser extent, so we would rarely expect households to simply go from getting enough food to getting no food from one day to the next, but we would certainly expect to see seasonal patterns to any deficits. Thus practitioners should consider how seasonally concentrated any deficit is likely to be, and indicate both the severity and timing of the impact on malnutrition.

In sum, HEA can thus be a useful aid in predicting the risk of acute malnutrition associated with food security. However, because of the multiple causes of malnutrition – a number of which are not covered by HEA assessments – it is recommended that such predictions are made in a collaborative way with other actors who may have information on the other causes of malnutrition. VACs in Southern Africa are a good potential forum for this, while the FSAU in Somalia currently uses this approach within the “Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification” (IPC).

## Frequently asked questions

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***Q: If malnutrition exists, should you always recommend interventions to improve food security?***

A: No. It is possible that malnutrition among a particular group may be not be caused by food insecurity, but by other factors such as disease outbreaks (e.g. measles, diarrhoea or malaria), or by poor caring practices (non-exclusive breastfeeding, early weaning of children). Food security interventions may have no impact on malnutrition in such cases. It is therefore necessary to understand the causes of malnutrition before drawing conclusions about appropriate interventions. Furthermore, we should look beyond the immediate causes and even the underlying causes. For example, in many situations, poor caring practices may not be the result of lack of knowledge of good caring by mothers, but rather be caused by wealth-related factors, such as an inability to afford to diverse diet or a lack of time for breastfeeding because of heavy workloads. Alternatively, in some populations malnutrition among younger children may be due to unequal intra-household distribution of the food.

***Q: Why not just add some questions to the household nutrition survey about food security to make the links?***

A: Such questions, if well chosen, can indeed show statistical relationships between nutritional status of children and household food security. Choosing the right food security indicators, however, can be difficult. Some common indicators are not always used appropriately (e.g. “food stocks in the household” is not an appropriate indicator where the household economy is heavily based on income and food purchases), while others are very difficult to collect accurately in a short questionnaire (e.g. income levels). Questions around

household wealth, probably related to asset holdings, are probably the easiest to include in a nutrition survey. A more qualitative type of HEA would add value by (a) indicating the most relevant questions to include in the survey, and (b) providing more contextual information that would allow statistical relationships between nutrition and food security or wealth to be explained rather than just described.

## DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN CHRONIC AND TRANSITORY FOOD INSECURITY

### Background

The main factor that distinguishes between chronic and transitory food insecurity is the length of time a household is unable to meet its minimum food requirements. “Chronic food insecurity is a long-term or persistent inability to meet minimum food consumption requirements, while transitory food insecurity is a short-term or temporary food deficit. An intermediate category is cyclical food insecurity, such as seasonality.” (Devereux, 2005; p. xi) Given this definition, it is logical to treat chronic food insecurity as a subset of poverty: chronically food insecure households are a category of the poor who regularly do not meet their 2,100 kcal per day requirements.

The duration of food insecurity should be considered separately from its severity. It is possible to have a severe but transitory episode of food insecurity, for example if a household highly reliant on farming loses all their crops in a flood, but then recovers within a few seasons of normal activity. A mild drought, however, might result only in a moderate degree of transitory food insecurity. Moderate chronic food insecurity is more common, for example, among elderly-headed households with no other means of support, or other labour- and asset-poor households who always struggle to meet their needs. Severe chronic food insecurity effectively means destitution, with a high risk of malnutrition and morbidity.

In practice, the chronically food insecure can be a very diverse group. Some may have the capacity to become productive if they had the resources, while others are likely to be permanently reliant on outside support. If the objective of your HEA assessment is to make detailed recommendations to deal with chronic food insecurity, you will probably need to do a more poverty-oriented analysis, using HEA to explore the relevant constraints and opportunities at issue with the particular group or groups under consideration.

#### Why do we need to make a distinction?

Distinguishing between chronic and transitory food insecurity is important primarily because it helps in choosing the most appropriate means of addressing the problem. Short-term solutions and emergency responses are unlikely to address the causes of chronic food insecurity, or the underlying causes of acute food insecurity. An episode of acute food insecurity can result in chronic food insecurity for a household that is unable to recover from the effects of the shock, so it is also critical to be able to provide appropriate livelihoods support even during a crisis. Households that sell off, for instance, draught animals and other productive assets in order to meet immediate consumption needs, may be unable to recover even if external conditions improve, because they no longer have the means to sustain their livelihood. This would create an additional emergency case load even in years when things had returned to normal. Therefore, while long-term interventions are planned and implemented, the short-term humanitarian needs of anyone who is food insecure cannot be ignored; the two types of intervention should be seen as complementary.

### How to use HEA to distinguish between chronic and transitory food insecurity

#### Using an “average year” HEA baseline to distinguish between chronic and transitory food insecurity

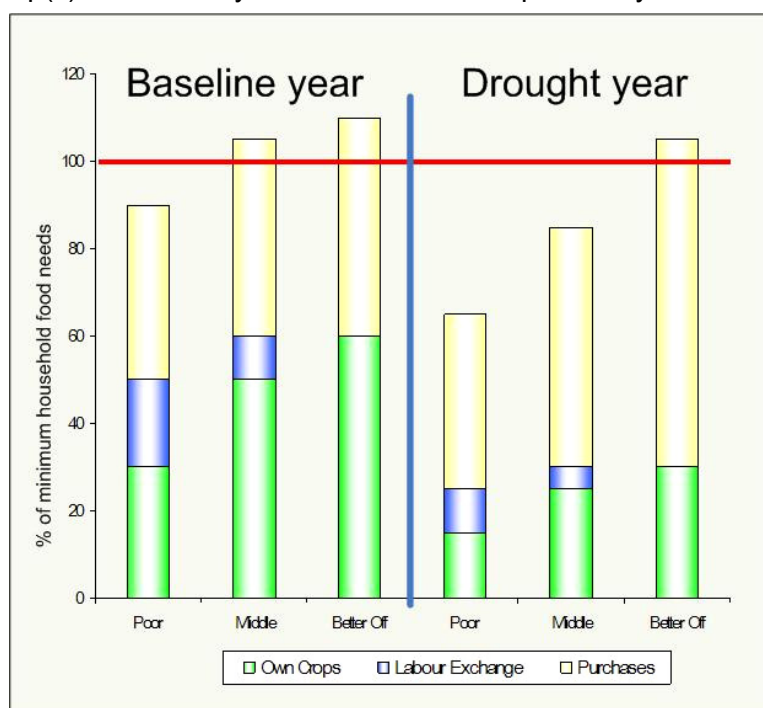
If an HEA baseline has been carried out for a reference year that is considered average, and in which no significant shocks occurred, it is logical to conclude that households unable to meet their minimum food and non-food needs even in the baseline year are chronically food insecure, and no groups are transitorily food insecure.

If your outcome analysis then shows that the assessed hazard will cause households in another wealth group to face a deficit, then the additional households can be considered transitorily food insecure. Meanwhile, the chronically food insecure are likely to be even worse off.

### Box 8. Using average year baselines to distinguish between chronic and transitory food insecurity

The graph below shows how much of their minimum food needs households in the poor, middle and better off wealth groups have access to in the baseline year and in a drought year, which reduces crop production by 50%. For this exercise, the baseline year is an average one in which there were no shocks.

- (a) Which wealth group(s) does the graph suggest is chronically food insecure?  
 (b) Which wealth group(s) is transitorily food insecure in the problem year?



#### Answer:

- (a) The poor group are considered chronically food insecure. Even in the baseline year when there is no shock, they are only able to access about 90% of their food needs. Both the middle and the better off are able to meet their minimum needs in the baseline year.
- (b) In the drought year, the situation of the poor worsens, and the middle households face a food deficit of around 15%. They are now unable to cope without outside support. Because middle households are food insecure only in a year with a shock, they can be considered transitorily food insecure in the problem year. The better off group manage to cope and still have access to enough food.

### When the HEA baseline is not “average”

There will be times when it is not possible or appropriate to use an “average” year for your baseline. This may be, for example,

- Because there has been a structural change in the local economy since the last average year (e.g. a mine closure; land reform), and it is therefore not possible to return to that situation
- Because recall of the last average year is too difficult for those interviewed, for example because the year was too far in the past for people, or because the rapid changes in prices and incomes due to hyperinflation makes accurate recall difficult

In these situations, the most recent year is typically used as the reference year, regardless of the fact that it may have been one in which either positive or negative shocks occurred. Distinguishing between chronic and transitory food insecurity in this case is more complicated, but theoretically it should still be possible. The approach suggested involves modelling what an average year might look like; or in other words, modelling the hazard out of the picture. This is the reverse of what is typically done in HEA:

*Standard approach:* Outcome = Baseline + Hazard + Response

*Modelling out the hazard:* Baseline = Outcome – Hazard - Response

If you model out the shock and find that any wealth group is unable to meet their needs, then such a group could be considered chronically food insecure. If you find that a group was food insecure in your reference year, but when you model out the shock they are then able to meet their minimum needs, then that group could be considered transitorily food insecure.

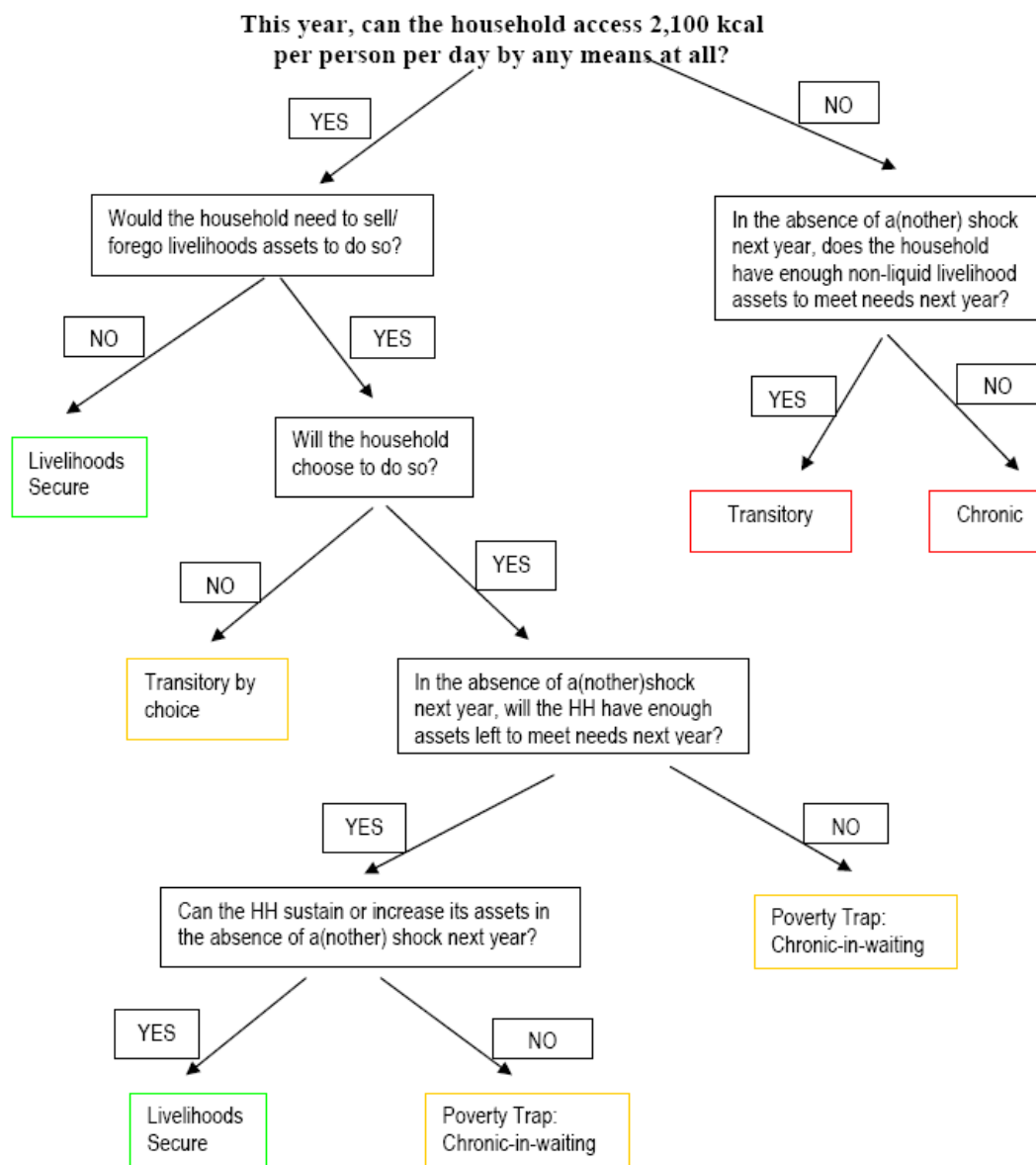
If your HEA survey requires this sort of analysis to be done, then it is necessary to take that into consideration during data collection. Information must be collected that allows you (a) to quantify the effects of the hazard that people are currently dealing with (e.g. “if it wasn’t for the drought, we would have produced twice as much maize”), and (b) to quantify the coping strategies that people are currently using (e.g. “we sold four cows this year, but normally we would only sell two”).

Note that this sort of analysis is very hypothetical and there are currently no “real life” examples of it having been done in HEA. Therefore its validity must be further investigated.

### Projecting a downward spiral into chronic poverty/ chronic food insecurity

**Box 8** showed how the middle group became transitorily food insecure as a result of a drought. But it will also be important to consider whether that group will be able to recover. Will they become food secure again the following year? Or will they get stuck in a downward spiral, for example by having sold off important productive assets to meet immediate needs?

HEA’s modelling capacity can be used to ask this important question of whether a household faced with a hazard can recover, or whether they are likely to get into a “poverty trap” of divesting assets, eventually leading to chronic food insecurity. This requires looking at the current strategies that people are using to access their food and income, and considering whether those strategies are sustainable. The diagram below illustrates the process of analysis:



The process begins by checking whether, hypothetically, a family could meet its minimum food requirements by any means at all in the year of analysis. This means considering even harmful coping strategies. If they can not, then the question for the following year is whether – in the absence of another shock – they would still have the means to access their food needs next year. The means are described as “non-liquid livelihood assets” to distinguish items that could be sold – such as livestock and tools – from those that cannot be sold, e.g. skills and education. For example, a casual labourer may lose income in the current year because a drought means there is no work available, but if there is no drought the following year, they will still have their labour to do casual labour that year, assuming work is available again. In that case the labourer will be transitorily food insecure. However, another family may be reliant on selling cash crops, and to cope with the current year drought they may have to sell off their draught animals and may lose access to credit by not selling enough crops to repay loans for inputs, so the next year they no longer have the capacity to produce cash crops and potentially become chronically food insecure.

Note that it is considered possible to be transitorily food insecure by choice, in the sense that a household could have the potential to get enough food by selling assets, but may choose to retain those assets and forego consumption instead.

If we pursue the other branch of the tree, and look at families who can access their minimum food needs in the current year, we see that they may well be food insecure in future. The tree shows how that family may sell or use up some of their assets: enough to meet current needs, but not so many that they immediately become destitute. But while a certain level of asset sales can be sustainable (e.g. selling an extra 2 cows when you have a herd of 70), a higher level may be unsustainable and place the family into a downward spiral where they keep having to sell more assets each year just to keep their heads above water (e.g. selling 2 cows when you only have 5, and new births cannot replace those sold). Eventually that can result in chronic food insecurity if there are insufficient assets left to sell to cover basic needs.

### **Frequently asked questions**

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***Q: For how long do you have to be food insecure for it to be considered chronic?***

A: There is no commonly-agreed length of time before food insecurity becomes chronic. Conceptually the chronic/ transitory distinction is about time, but for practical uses, whether you are able to get enough in an average year (as described above) is more useful.

***Q: Should you ever recommend food aid or cash as a relief intervention for the chronically food insecure?***

Emergency relief will not address the underlying problem of chronic food insecurity. But short-term food deficits cannot be ignored. If short-term relief is required as a life-saving measure, it must be provided; however it must be accompanied by interventions aimed at addressing long-term problems.

## HEA & GROUPS OF SPECIAL INTEREST: EXAMPLES OF HIV/AIDS-AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS AND CHILDREN

### Background

A “classic” HEA assessment provides information that is disaggregated by wealth group. The logic for this is discussed in [Chapters 1 and 3](#). However, there will be times when users will need information on specific sub-sections of the population other than wealth groups such as particular demographic groups like children, the elderly or women<sup>8</sup>, or other types of social, cultural or economic groups such as those affected by HIV/AIDS, ethnic minorities, or people doing a specific livelihoods activity (e.g. commercial sex workers). When considering such groups, decision-makers are typically interested in:

- What differentiates these individuals or categories from others in terms of their livelihood activities, and their food security or overall wealth?
- What particular needs do they have and/ or what specific interventions would be most suited to their circumstances?

The HEA framework can be used with minor adaptations to field methods to look into these questions. This section illustrates how this can be done using two different groups as examples: (a) the situation of HIV/AIDS-affected households, and (b) the situation of children within families.

### How to Do It: HEA & HIV/AIDS-affected households

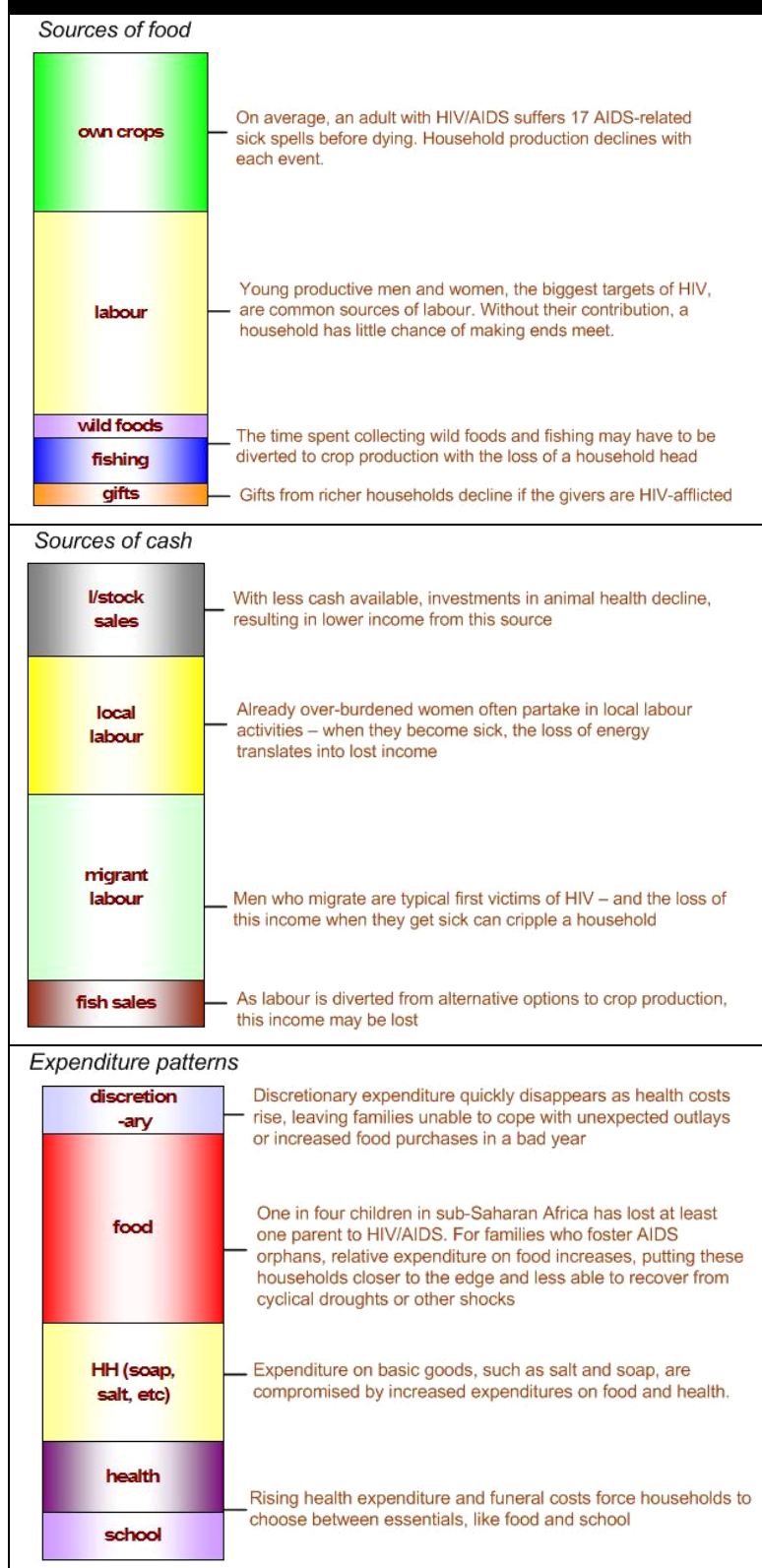
#### What are we trying to understand?

HIV/AIDS is an issue of vital importance in southern Africa in particular. In recent years, the links between HIV/AIDS, food security and livelihoods have been the subject of much research and of many direct interventions. HIV/AIDS is different from other diseases because it is debilitating at first, fatal in the end, and affects adults in the prime of their lives. Its effects are multiple and far-reaching, with knock-on effects at all levels of the micro- and macro-economy. **Figure 5** provides an illustrative example of how all aspects of the household economy are affected by HIV/AIDS. A sick household member means lost labour, production and cash income. Other household members may be required to devote a greater portion of their time to caring for sick relatives. Chronic illness causes healthcare costs to rise. Bereaved women and children can find that they have problems with inheriting land and other assets when the male head of household dies. Families who take in orphaned children must stretch their resources to meet new needs.

When we consider HIV/AIDS and livelihoods, we are usually trying to understand the ways that HIV/AIDS filters through as a series of shocks to households. We are interested in understanding how affected and unaffected families differ, and what the implications are for interventions.

How HEA is used to understand the impacts of HIV/AIDS depends on whether we are (a) trying to understand actual changes over time in the household economy of affected households, or (b) trying to predict how HIV/AIDS might affect households in the future. In

<sup>8</sup> For example, Save the Children and Unicef are particularly concerned about the situation of children, while HelpAge or a government body dealing with Old Age Pensions will want specific information on the elderly.

**Figure 5. HIV/AIDS and the household economy**

the former case, the process is one of comparing two complete baselines for different time periods, while in the latter case, the various economic shocks resulting from HIV/AIDS are modelled against a baseline in the same process as described in Chapter 4, Outcome Analysis.

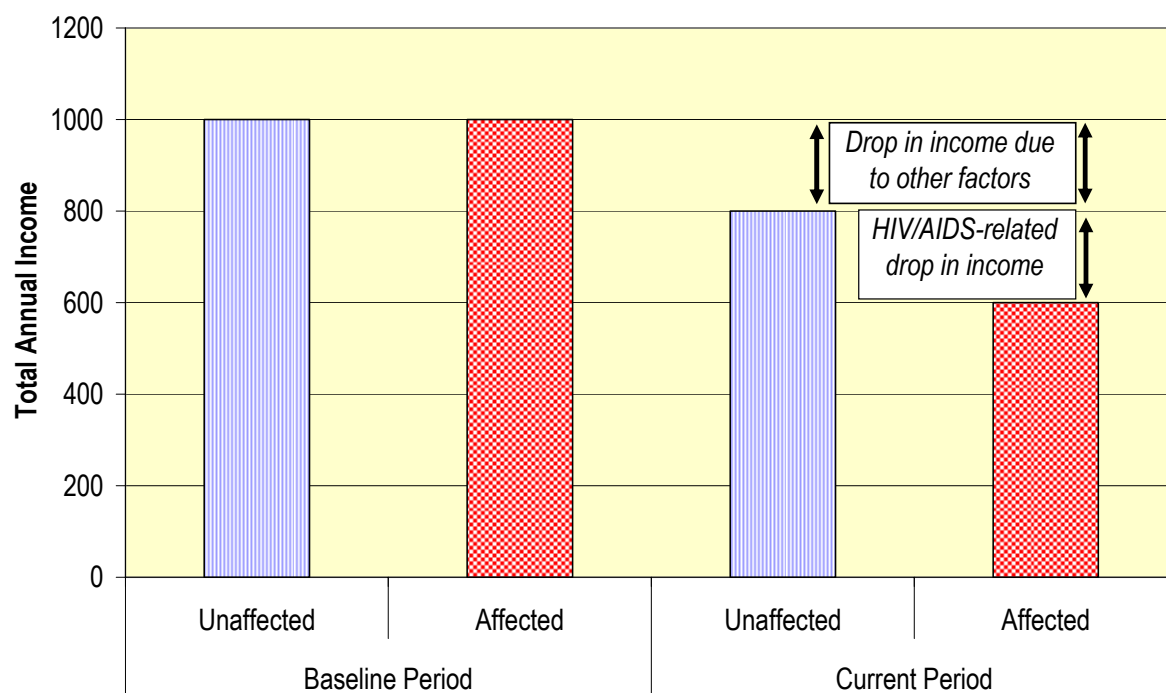
### Using HEA to understand previous impacts of HIV/AIDS

If your research question involves looking at changes that have already occurred to the household economy as a result of HIV/AIDS, then the process involves collecting information on the assets, sources of food and income and expenditure patterns for a baseline year before HIV/AIDS began to affect the livelihoods activities of household members, and comparing that to the same information for the current year. Note that the baseline in this case is not the same as the period before infection, because there can be a substantial lead time between infection and the onset of AIDS affecting the ability of those infected to work.

By comparing the two complete pictures of the household economy before and after the impacts of HIV/AIDS are manifested, we can identify such things as changes in asset holdings, changes in total food access and total income, changes in the types of livelihood activities undertaken, and changes in spending priorities.

The two potential drawbacks of this approach are (1) if the

baseline period when the household was unaffected by AIDS is a long time ago, then accurate recall may be difficult, and (2) if there are differences between the baseline and current year that are unrelated to HIV/AIDS (e.g. there is a drought or some shock in one year that is not present in the other), then a simple comparison over time is unlikely to be able to distinguish the effects of HIV/AIDS from the other shocks.

**Figure 6. HIV/AIDS and changes in the household economy**

In this example, we look at the change in the total income between the baseline and current period for one family that is unaffected by HIV/AIDS and another similar family **from the same wealth group** that is affected. Between the baseline and the current period, there have been two shocks: HIV/AIDS has impacted on the affected family, but not the unaffected family; and another shock (such as drought) has impacted on both families.

If we had only examined the change from the baseline period to the current period of the affected household, we would have risked mistakenly attributing the entire \$400 decline in that family's income to HIV/AIDS, when in fact the drought caused half of the decline.

If we had only compared the affected and unaffected household in the current period without looking at the baseline period, we would have missed the fact that both were also being impacted in the current year by drought.

Thus, a complete understanding of the impacts of HIV/AIDS can only be seen by comparing the change over time between an affected family, and an unaffected family who can act as a form of control group.

Because of these drawbacks, it might be suggested that a simpler method would be to compare the current situation of a HIV/AIDS-affected family with the current situation of an unaffected family that is similar in all other regards, i.e. from the same wealth group in the same livelihood zone, and with a similar demographic composition. While this does solve the problem of recall and does in theory ensure that other shocks do not blur the effects of HIV/AIDS, in practice it can be difficult to accurately pair up households in this way, especially if a large number of households are to be covered.

Ideally, therefore, we should combine these approaches, i.e. look for changes in affected households over time, and also look for differences between those changes and changes in unaffected households. Figure 1 explains this graphically.

Another practical concern is who should be interviewed if we wish to do this sort of research? Should we interview focus groups of HIV/AIDS-affected households, or should we look at individual households?

For this sort of research there is a preference to look at individual households. One reason is because “HIV/AIDS-affected families” are a very diverse group. Three main types of HIV/AIDS-affected families are:

- Those with a member who is currently chronically ill
- Those with a member who has died from HIV/AIDS
- Those who have taken in children orphaned by HIV/AIDS

Even within each of those groups, however, there are differences. In HEA it is assumed we would already disaggregate by wealth, and it is no different for HIV/AIDS as HIV is an illness that is not restricted to any single wealth group. However, even controlling for wealth, there will be differences, for example according to whether the ill person is a male or female adult and thus what their relative contribution to household livelihoods is, or whether the affected household is just recently bereaved or lost an income-earner many years before. It could be difficult – but not impossible - to form sufficiently homogenous focus groups to provide useful information, therefore. If those differences are not recognised and different types of HIV/AIDS-affected households are lumped together in a single focus group, it may prove difficult both to get a “typical” picture for them and more importantly to provide information that decision-makers can usefully translate into interventions.

HEA also helps us to identify households or wealth groups that may be affected indirectly by HIV/AIDS. In Makueni, Kenya, F.E.G. reported on how illness among better off households led to reduced incomes for those households and increased spending on healthcare. The indirect result of this was that their spending on hiring people from the poor wealth group for agricultural labour declined, and because the poor were highly dependent on income from casual labour, they ended up with a significant deficit in their income.

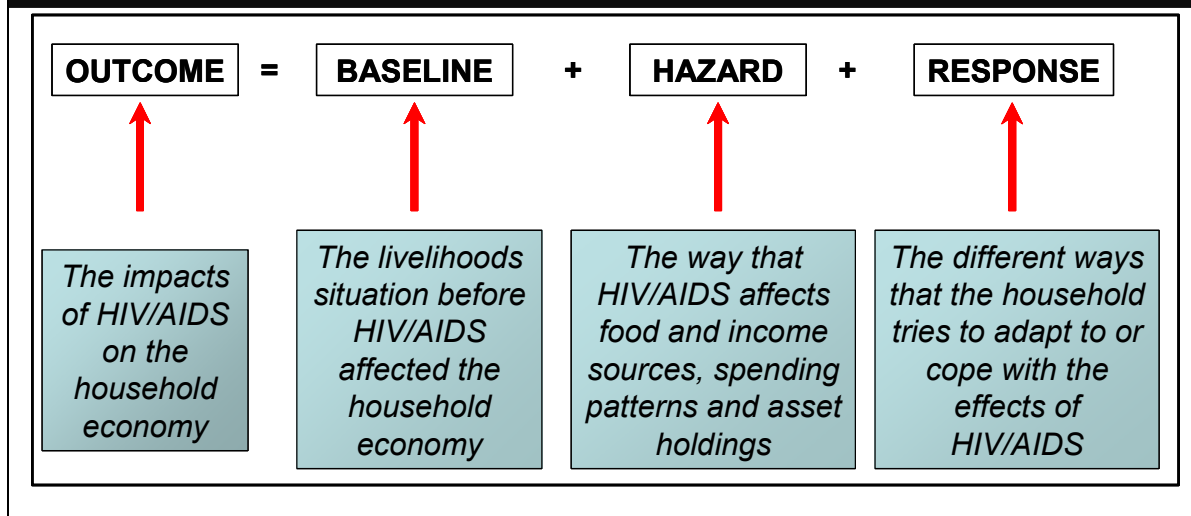
### **Can we use HEA to predict the impact of HIV/AIDS on livelihoods?**

If we wish to use HEA to predict the likely impact of HIV/AIDS on livelihoods, then our question essentially becomes “can we define HIV/AIDS as a hazard and carry out outcome analysis in a similar way to other hazards”? **Figure 7** illustrates how this question would be understood within the HEA framework.

The baseline in this case refers to the situation in a reference year of a household that has not yet been affected by AIDS.

The hazard of HIV/AIDS - like any other hazard in HEA - has to be defined in terms of a quantifiable change in each source of food and income, or the cost of items, or in asset holdings. To begin with, the exact nature of the “shock” of HIV/AIDS has to be specified: are we talking about illness, death, taking in an orphan...? Each one of these is a different shock and would need to be treated as such.

As with any shock, the HEA Practitioner would then need to get a good understanding of the different ways that the specific HIV/AIDS shock might affect livelihoods (most easily through a review of relevant literature, such as Harvey (2003), or O'Donnell (2004)). Next, the scale

**Figure 7. HIV/AIDS in the HEA Framework**

of likely impact needs to be quantified and expressed as a % change in the baseline levels.

This information could be attained through direct discussions with households themselves, key informants such as Home-Based Care volunteers, clinic staff or agricultural extension workers. The aim to express hazard information such as:

- Agricultural production declines by 40% (because of reduced availability of labour), or
- Agricultural production declines by 100% (for example if land is lost to the family upon the death of the male head of household)
- Casual labouring declines by 75% (if the ill person contributed that much of the baseline casual labouring income)
- Spending on healthcare increases by 300% (to treat illnesses or purchase anti-retrovirals)
- Spending on food declines by 20% (for example if one member in a household of 5 dies)

As illustrated by the Makueni example above, it is also important to bear in mind that because of economic linkages between households (e.g. casual labourers working for other households, sharecropping agreements, credit relationships, etc.), there may be indirect economic effects of HIV/AIDS on households that may arise as a result of illness in another household.

The next stage is to provide similar information on the response of the household to this shock, expressed as % changes. It is important to recognise that, as with any shock, people will attempt to cope and adapt (see Box 1 for examples from a study in Mozambique). This is can be the most difficult part of the framework to collect information on. As the case studies in Box 1 illustrate, while some of the responses to HIV/AIDS can be reasonably predictable

### Box 9. Household responses to HIV/AIDS in Mozambique

In case studies of households affected by HIV/AIDS in Mozambique, Petty et al. (2004) found some of the following responses that enabled those households to avoid destitution:

- A widow reduced the amount of land cultivated and lost the salaried income of her husband, but focused her attention on petty trading instead. Her total income was reduced by around 60%
- A young widow lost access to food and income from farming, and tried to compensate by selling more vegetables and increasing petty trade
- An orphaned boy who now lives by himself lost access to farmland, but sustains himself by renting out the main house on his parents compound, and by doing small jobs such as carrying water

(for example intensifying existing activities such as petty trade), other responses can be harder to predict as the options facing any given household will vary significantly according to the types of assets they have, including labour, land and financial assets, and the external environment they face. Experience to date suggests that while HEA can be useful for predicting the immediate impacts of HIV/AIDS, the volume of information required to make an accurate prediction of household responses to those immediate impacts means that only quite localised studies based on individual household interviews are feasible.

Putting the hazard and response together in a similar way to the outcome analysis described in Chapter 4 gives us an overall estimation of the impact on the household economy of different aspects of HIV/AIDS.

## **How to use HEA to understand the situation of children**

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### **What are we trying to understand?**

Children typically make up 50% or more of the total population of the areas that we assess. There is a tendency to simply assume that by discussing the household economy with adults, we will get a picture that is adequate for understanding the situation of children. However just as it has long been recognised that gender analysis will provide a deeper understanding of differences in the status and needs of women and men which may be useful for intervention purposes, a better understanding of the situation of children can enable us to design more appropriate responses in support of children within the household context. Taking a long-term view, ensuring that children are adequately supported in terms of nutritional status, access to education and health, and protection from exploitation and abuse is not only necessary in and of itself, but is central to breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty.

When the situation of children is incorporated within HEA assessments, the objectives are twofold:

- To understand how children contribute to the household economy, and
- To understand and highlight how hazards and shocks may impact on children in a broad range of ways.

### **How to understand children's contribution to the household economy**

Children contribute to the household economy in many ways, both directly and indirectly and through productive and domestic work. From an early age, children can be seen looking after infant siblings, herding animals, carrying out domestic chores and assisting in ways that free up parents to spend more time on productive activities. As children grow up, they often become more engaged in productive activities themselves, assisting with farming, petty trading or casual labouring, for example. While discussing children's roles with parents is useful, the best way of understanding their contribution is to discuss it directly with the children themselves.

Because children's roles differ according to age and gender, it is recommended that discussions are held with different groups organised along age and gender lines. Experience suggests that the most significant differences are between groups of children aged around 6-12 and those aged 13 and above, though these are not strict boundaries. It is recommended that focus group discussions are used with children, as the group environment tends to be more suited to encouraging open conversation with children.

Having a local adult present is important for the sake of transparency, though interviewers should be aware that having the adult present may make children less willing to talk. Where sensitive issues are likely to come up (such as transactional sex or other forms of exploitation or abuse of children), the researchers should make arrangements to refer such issues to appropriate people, such as social workers, who can follow up the issues with the children and their community.

### Box 10. Children's Activities in Binga and Nyaminyami, Zimbabwe

The table below shows the diverse range of children's productive activities in the Zambezi Valley, broken down by age and gender, as reported by them in a 2003 baseline HEA by Save the Children. In addition to these activities, girls were found to be responsible for many domestic chores, such as cooking, cleaning in and around the house, and fetching water and firewood.

Activity	Gender	Age range
Weeding	Both	10 years+
Planting	Both	10 years+
Going to the Grinding mill	Both	8 years+
Collection of wild foods	Both	5 years +
Selling wild fruits	Both	9 years
Herding cattle	Boys	10 – 16 years
Leading oxen during ploughing	Boys	8 years +
Buying maize	Both	10 years+
Work in other people's fields	Both	
Herding cattle for others	Boys	10-16 years
Fishing	Both	9 years+
Hunting	Boys	11 years+
Brick moulding (collect water)	Both	13 years+
River bank gardening	Girls	13 years+
Harvest Fibre from bush	Boys	12 years+
Basket making	Girls	15 years+
Building huts for others	Boys	16 years+
Work as housemaids for teachers	Girls	15 years+

While talking to children does not necessarily require different staff, it does require a different approach and in some cases additional training. Discussions must be relatively short (less than an hour); the topics must be ones which the children know about or have an opinion on (there is little point asking a child how much income his/her parents typically earn, for example); and it is particularly necessary to take time to make the children feel confident enough to speak openly. The style of interviewing will need to be different, with the phrasing and language of questions such that children are able to understand; the interviewer's bearing and tone should make the children feel at ease. Starting the discussions with ice-breakers in the form of songs or games is useful with younger children.<sup>9</sup>

Discussions are best held in the form of a semi-structured interview, with participatory exercises for the children. An example of a semi-structured interview form used in HEAs by

<sup>9</sup> Further details on working with children can be found in "So You Want to Consult With Children?" (SC Alliance, 2003), and practical resources are available in "A Parrot on Your Shoulder" (International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 2004).

Save the Children is found in [Annex C](#) of this chapter. The interview typically focuses on daily activity calendars which are completed by the children, and then discussed to get a full understanding of children's roles and how they change over seasons. **Box 10** provides an example of the activities children reported undertaking in Zimbabwe.

The information on children's roles is important in order to understand issues such as the financial and productive contribution of children to household food and cash income, which types of children attend school and why, and what sort of hazardous or exploitative work children may be undertaking. The application of this information is even more relevant when we look at how shocks and hazards may affect children.

### How to understand the effects of shocks on children

Typically, an HEA outcome analysis will examine the impact of a shock not only on the household's access to food, but also on the ability of the household to afford a basket of essential non-food items which can include services like education. Incorporating a more explicit awareness of children and children's rights simply implies elaborating on the impacts of hazards and of households' coping mechanisms as they relate to children.

The most important element of this is for HEA practitioners to be aware of and sensitive to the different issues for children that can arise as a result of livelihoods problems. To this end, Save the Children UK informally uses an adapted version of the standard definition of food security to concentrate the minds of staff on the links between food security and other children's rights:

- "Food security exists when **all children**, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy and active life **in a manner which protects and does not interfere with the fulfillment of other child rights.**"

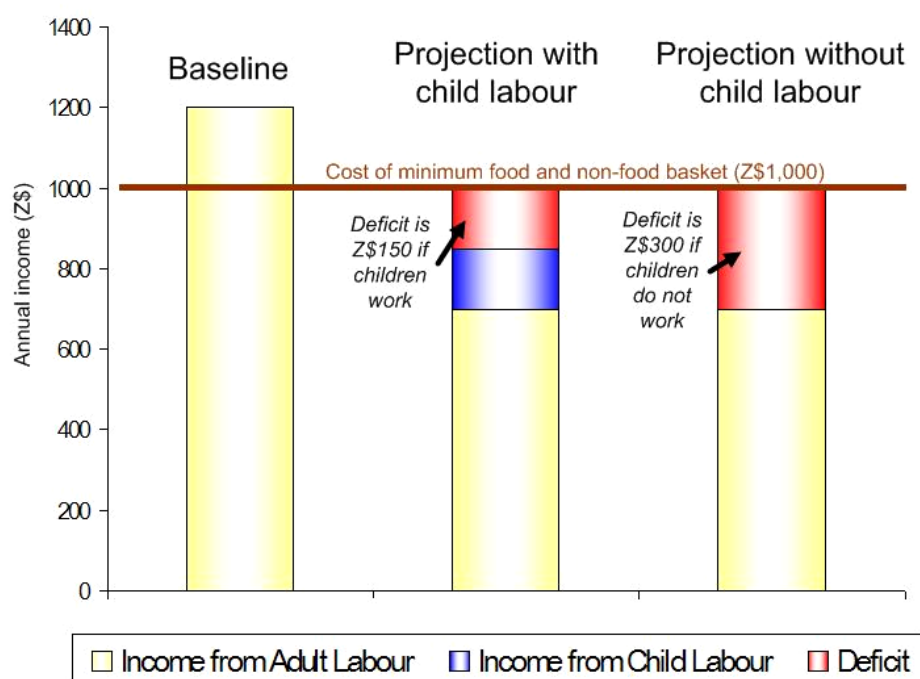
This leads to a stronger focus on three main issues in addition to access to food and non-food items:

- Will households' coping strategies include increasing children's labour? For example, we normally would consider whether increased casual labouring is a coping strategy. But we could ask more about who is likely to do this additional labouring? Will it be older children? Will it indirectly affect children, e.g. if the mother does increased labouring, will girl children have to do more domestic work? The greatest concern is if any additional children's work is harmful for exploitative, or if it is likely to force children to drop out of school.
- Will children's access to education be harmed? Specifically, will the household still be able to afford the direct costs of school (fees, uniforms, books, stationery, etc.), and can they afford the opportunity cost of leaving children in school who could otherwise help access food and cash income?
- Will livelihood stress lead to any child protection concerns? For example, will children be at increased risk of sexual or other exploitation (e.g. girls at secondary school sleeping with older men in exchange for school fees, or – as has been documented in West and Central Africa - children being asked by aid workers for sex in exchange for registration for food or other relief items); might children become separated from their family (e.g. when adults migrate for work, or when children are sent as domestic workers to other households); or might children join armed forces as a way of ensuring access to food and money?

All of these issues can be explored through discussions with children, parents and key informants such as school teachers and social workers. As many of these issues are quite sensitive, it can require a particular effort to uncover them. In Liberia, for example, work on understanding the links between livelihoods and sexual exploitation was carried out as a special study, with a combined team of HEA-trained livelihoods staff and social welfare and protection staff.

Understanding these issues may have implications for HEA outcome analysis and for recommendations. Specifically, we may choose to present a scenario for access to essential food and non-food items that discounts any income earned through harmful child labour or coping strategies that have serious protection risks for children. This would imply making an even stronger case to relevant governments and agencies to intervene early and adequately not only to save lives or even to protect livelihoods, but also to protect other children's rights. **Figure 8** illustrates this point.

**Figure 8. Deficits with and without child labour**



In this hypothetical example, the income of the household is adequate to meet essential food and non-food needs in the baseline period. When a shock leads to a decline in adult income, one coping mechanism is for children to start working. If child labour is included in our projection, the deficit will be \$150. However, if we say that child labour is an unacceptable coping strategy, the deficit is \$300, and an intervention to preclude this activity would have to occur would have to be in line with this gap.

In practice, it is often seen that even recommendations for life-saving interventions are not adequately responded to, and therefore it may be felt that recommending an even greater intervention to prevent other types of harm to children is unrealistic. However, one option is to present alternative interventions scenarios (life saving only; life saving + livelihoods protection; life saving + livelihoods protection + full protection of children), and to indicate explicitly what the cost to livelihoods and children's rights would be of choosing not to intervene at each threshold.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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***Q: How do you ensure that ethical research practices are followed when working with children?***

Some key steps are:

- Sensitise all staff and partners to children's rights and to protection issues and to good practices in working with children
- Inform parents and other adult "gatekeepers" of the purpose of discussions with children
- Explain the purpose of the research to children and get their agreement to participate in the discussion. For younger children, parent's consent may be required.
- Put in place mechanisms for reporting and following up any protection concerns that arise in discussions with children
- Take measures to ensure that in data collection, storage and reporting, children are not placed at risk because of their participation or of what they have said

See "So You Want to Consult With Children" (SC Alliance, 2003) for further guidance on this issue.

***Q: Given the negative impacts of HIV/AIDS on livelihoods, can we assume that all HIV/AIDS-affected families are food insecure and in need of support?***

No, HIV/AIDS affects households across the entire wealth spectrum, and at any given point in time many affected households will be able to meet their basic needs without outside support. However, it is important to recognise that AIDS can set affected households on a downwards spiral towards food insecurity and therefore while AIDS-affected households should not automatically be targeted for emergency support, they may be an appropriate target group for longer-term support to prevent them from becoming chronically poor over time.

***Q: Does a finding that children are vulnerable in wide range of ways to livelihoods shocks imply that we need to target children with livelihoods responses?***

The implication is that the impacts of interventions need to *reach* children, but that does not mean that they need to be directly targeted at children. In most cases the best way of reaching children is through the family. What is important, however, is to consider those children who may not be reached in that way, e.g. child-headed households, or in some cases orphans who are discriminated against within host families. These children may need to be targeted more directly or with additional interventions.

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## Field Materials

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Sample of a "Children's Interview Format" from a HEA assessment in Pakistan

Examples of participatory exercises and practical resources for working with children can be taken from "A Parrot On Your Shoulder".

**FURTHER READING...****...on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and HEA**

DFID: Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets  
[http://www.livelihoods.org/info/info\\_guidancesheets.html](http://www.livelihoods.org/info/info_guidancesheets.html)

DFID: Social Capital Keysheet  
[http://www.keysheets.org/red\\_3\\_social\\_capital.html](http://www.keysheets.org/red_3_social_capital.html)

Hammond, Laura & Tanya Boudreau, 2006: Quantifying Needs and Understanding Processes: Combining the Benefits of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and Household Economy Approach, draft paper for Oxfam GB

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**... on Power, Conflict & Political Economy Analysis**

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Keen, David, 1994: *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983-1989*. Princeton: Princeton University Press  
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**...on Other Vulnerability and Assessment Tools**

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[http://www.sahims.net/doclibrary/Sahims\\_Documents/141105\\_RVAC\\_VAC\\_review.pdf](http://www.sahims.net/doclibrary/Sahims_Documents/141105_RVAC_VAC_review.pdf)

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Scott, Kinnon, 2003: "Generating Relevant Household Level Data: Multi-Topic Household Surveys", in Bourignon, F. & Luiz A. Pereira da Silva [eds], The Impact of Economic Policies on Poverty and Income Distribution: Evaluation Techniques and Tools, Washington DC: The World Bank

[http://povlibrary.worldbank.org/files/12931\\_chapter7.pdf](http://povlibrary.worldbank.org/files/12931_chapter7.pdf)

Tango International Inc. July 2002. *Household Livelihoods Security Assessments- A Toolkit for Practitioners*. Atlanta: CARE USA

[http://www.kcenter.com/phls/HLSA%20Toolkit\\_Final.PDF](http://www.kcenter.com/phls/HLSA%20Toolkit_Final.PDF)

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### **...on Nutrition and HEA**

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Save the Children UK, 2004: Emergency Nutrition Assessment Guidelines for Field Workers

Sphere Project , 2004: Minimum Standards in Food Security, Nutrition and Food Aid, chapter 3 of "Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response" [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.]

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### **...on Special Interest Groups (examples of HIV-affected and children)**

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