



GLOBAL IMPACT AND VULNERABILITY ALERT SYSTEM

BACKGROUND NOTE

6 July 2009

MOTIVATION

The economic and food crises have revealed the need for cross-sectoral, real time data that can provide a clear picture of the impact of global shocks on the most vulnerable. Over the past decade, the international community has put in place a number of useful sector-specific global early warning mechanisms, ranging from systems tracking disease outbreaks and natural disasters to mechanisms that capture signs of droughts, famines and climate change to those that signal emerging complex emergencies. However, it has become clear that there are few mechanisms that are able to report across sectors on the immediate impacts that global shocks have on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable populations. As a result, decision makers find themselves having to make difficult decisions based on projections and anecdotal accounts as opposed to collected data that can immediately signal changes in welfare of the most vulnerable populations.

OBJECTIVE

The Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS) will fill the information gap that currently exists between the point when a global crisis impacts vulnerable populations and when solid quantitative information and analysis reaches decision makers. The added-value of the System will be the compilation of real time data and analysis from a variety of reliable sources covering multiple dimensions of vulnerability that will help the international community respond in a more effective and timely fashion.

AUDIENCE AND PARTNERS

The GIVAS will provide periodic situation reports (or alerts) to world leaders. Its partners will include national governments, UN agencies, academic institutions and civil society organizations in developing and developed countries.

SPECIFIC GOALS

The GIVAS will:

- Provide the international community with early, real-time evidence of how a global crisis is impacting the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable populations;
- Raise "red flags" on newly emerging and dramatically worsening vulnerabilities of global concern;
- Provide decision makers with real time information and analysis to ensure that crisis-related decisions take appropriate account of the needs of the most vulnerable countries and populations;
- Bring the voices of the most vulnerable into high-level decision making forums.

VULNERABILITIES

The Alert System will track *vulnerabilities across multiple dimensions of possible distress*. It will focus on tracking *vulnerabilities that are caused or exacerbated by external shocks*.

OPERATIONAL SET-UP

The operational set-up of the GIVAS will be a network with a light structure that builds on and connects existing global alert and early warning mechanisms as well as innovative and rapid data collection initiatives.

HOW IT WILL WORK

Data Collection

The Alert System will rely on a simple indicator framework that will include two types of indicators, namely a larger set of lower frequency “contextual” indicators – drawn from existing data bases – and a smaller set of higher frequency “pulse” indicators. The pulse indicators will be both qualitative and quantitative and will provide real-time evidence of the effects of external shocks on the most vulnerable populations.

Tools

Data collection tools will include traditional data collection methodologies as well as rapid data collection methods, such as mobile communication tools, quick impact assessment surveys and stakeholder interviews.

Data Analysis

A small team or network of analysts will be responsible for analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data collected to identify significant global and regional trends, such as dramatic changes in vulnerabilities and newly emerging factors of distress. The Alert System will be supported by an advisory panel composed of well respected experts in the fields of data collection and vulnerability analysis to lend its findings additional quality assurance and credibility.

Communication and Deliverables

The GIVAS should be seen as a neutral fact-finding and sorting tool. New data presentation formats (i.e. interactive graphics, infographics and mappings) and new technologies will be used. The Alert System’s communication package could include different types of deliverables such as quarterly “situation reports”, “alerts”, “eye-witness reports”, and a “Vulnerability Information Hub” website that could serve as a one-stop-shop to allow GIVAS partners and its wider constituency to access a cross-sectoral array of information on vulnerability.

For more information, please contact the coordinating office for the Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System at givas@un.org.

