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**Working Paper Series**

**National Risk and  
Vulnerability Assessment  
2003:  
A Stakeholder-Generated  
Methodology**

**Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit**

**By Andrew Pinney**

**March 2004**

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## About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research organisation that conducts and facilitates action-oriented research and learning that informs and influences policy and practice. AREU also actively promotes a culture of research and learning by strengthening analytical capacity in Afghanistan and by creating opportunities for analysis, thought and debate. Fundamental to AREU's vision is that its work should improve Afghan lives. AREU was established by the assistance community working in Afghanistan and has a board of directors with representation from donors, UN and multilateral organisations agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

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## **I. Introduction**

Since 2000, the World Food Programme's Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit (VAM) has been conducting a national-level annual assessment to explore Afghanistan's likely food needs in order to assist in planning for the following year. This assessment has been the most comprehensive rural livelihoods survey undertaken each year, and as a result has often provided the main source of information for organisations (government, UN, donors and non-governmental organisations [NGOs]) seeking current national-level statistics.

As a result, the information generated by the country-wide assessment has often been used for purposes that the survey and analysis were never designed to meet, despite the VAM Unit's attempts to outline the limits of the scope of the assessment. This has sometimes generated concern over the decisions taken as a result of this information.

Whilst the World Food Programme (WFP) has refined the methodology each year in an attempt to meet emerging needs, the scale of political changes that occurred after September 11, 2001, created an unprecedented demand for national-level information on which to base policy and programming decisions. It was this demand that led Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the ministry with which WFP is partnered, to request a joint stakeholder review of the country-wide assessment methodology, in order to build on the experience over the past five years.

### **A. Objectives of the Joint Stakeholder Review**

The overall objective of the joint stakeholder review, therefore, was to revise the methodology of the country-wide assessment – in light of learning from the 2002 assessment – in order to:

1. Increase the accuracy and validity of the methodology to be used in the 2003 assessment of vulnerability and food insecurity;
2. Ensure that indicators were included that would provide a basis for programme decisions beyond food aid;
3. Increase the analysis and use of data collected by government ministries, while maintaining the integrity of the assessment for WFP's planning needs; and
4. Identify how other assessment initiatives designed to monitor changes (frequently at a household level) could better complement the country-wide assessment in order to better inform humanitarian responses, aid programming and policy development.

### **B. The Review Process**

This joint stakeholder review, coordinated by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), aimed to include those government and non-government departments and organisations that are involved in the implementation of key national programmes, namely MRRD, the Ministries of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry (MAAH) and Health (MoH), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the (UN) Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the WFP and partner NGOs. These were therefore

identified as the stakeholders; WFP had consulted many of these stakeholders before, during previous methodological revisions.

This review built on the participatory nature of previous WFP reviews, with VAM staff closely involved throughout the process. The review involved meeting with stakeholders to discuss what they saw as their information needs, discussing different methodological forms (such as the Household Economy Approach and the World Bank Living Standard Measurement Survey – see Appendix 2) with experts, re-visiting the 2002 methodology to explore its strengths and weaknesses, piloting a draft questionnaire in the field with staff from a number of different stakeholder organisations, presenting suggested changes to stakeholders at a workshop and further refining the questionnaire in light of comments and further discussions, particularly with WFP, MRRD, FAO, Save the Children-US and the World Bank.

The country-wide annual assessment has often been referred to as “the VAM”. The VAM unit has always tried to draw a distinction between the unit and the various forms of assessment that it conducts. Moreover, it has been keen to promote joint ownership of the 2003 assessment. These factors led to the creation of a new name for this country-wide assessment during the review process: the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA). This name reflects both its multi-stakeholder nature and the breadth of its indicators, as it aims to quantify and understand poverty and vulnerability and to correlate household welfare to past exposure to shocks.

## **II. Background on the Country-wide Annual Assessment**

### **A. WFP’s Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Unit: Purpose and Approaches**

The global VAM unit was established in Rome in 1994 and there are now VAM units in more than 50 countries. The purpose of these units is to assist WFP in measuring, understanding and monitoring vulnerability to food insecurity, and thus help in planning WFP responses, through:

- **Geographic targeting:** assessing the degree of food (in)security of specified geographic areas so that WFP can determine where to prioritise further assessment and response.
- **Problem assessment:** understanding the probable causes of vulnerability to food insecurity, which can exist at any given time in a particular geographic region or population group.
- **Beneficiary assessment:** determining the characteristics of populations vulnerable to food insecurity, and whether food assistance can improve their conditions.
- **The role of food aid:** identifying whether the use of food aid represents a comparative advantage in addressing the basic causes of food insecurity and vulnerability within a targeted population.



- **Advocacy for the hungry poor:** assisting the hungry poor by accurately representing their conditions to others who may be able to provide assistance.<sup>1</sup>

Each VAM unit decides on its own approach to accomplish the above, but guided by a common conceptual framework and set of “best practices” called the Standard Analytical Framework (SAF), developed as a result of a VAM headquarters study in 2000. The SAF is not meant to provide a uniform method of assessment that serves all decision-making needs, but a set of guidelines that 1) emphasises the use of both primary data (data collected) and secondary information (data obtained from existing literature); and 2) encourages the development of a participatory primary data collection and analysis process to complement and challenge secondary data (see Appendix 1 for full details of the SAF).

VAM units therefore may undertake vulnerability monitoring on a monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis, depending on local conditions and decision-making requirements. They will also form different types of partnerships, according to the local situation, but most commonly VAM units work in collaboration with FAO's Global Information Early Warning System and Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems; the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Famine Early Warning System and various NGOs. Their information sources may also vary, but often include:

- Satellite images showing agro-climatic conditions;
- Secondary data on education, health and nutrition status;
- Market prices;
- Face-to-face discussions with members of food insecure communities; and
- Household coping behaviour studies.

In Afghanistan, the VAM unit has employed the following assessments and surveillance instruments:

1. Annual country-wide assessments;
2. Rapid needs assessments;
3. Market price surveillance; and
4. FAO/WFP planting and crop surveys.

## **B. The Evolution of the Afghanistan Country-wide Annual Assessment**

Until 1999, the crises about which the VAM unit in Afghanistan had to provide information tended to be specific and localised: e.g., earthquake in Wardak and Logar Provinces; a blockade in Hazarajat; the arrival of internally displaced persons in Panjshir, etc. The approach used by the VAM unit to explore vulnerability to food insecurity in these situations was to conduct Emergency Food Need Assessments (EFNA) and baseline surveys that were based on the Household Food Economy approach. The EFNA gave a precise quantification of the food needs for a specific community. Baseline surveys were also initiated in the major cities because in 1999, the urban bakeries represented 50 percent of the total WFP Afghanistan Programme.

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<sup>1</sup> World Food Programme - Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit. “Understanding When Food Aid Can Make a Difference.” [http://www.wfp.org/operations/vam/about\\_vam/why\\_use\\_vam.html](http://www.wfp.org/operations/vam/about_vam/why_use_vam.html). 2004. Accessed 28 Feb 2004.

In 2000, an extremely severe drought spread throughout the country. Neither the EFNA nor the baseline surveys were designed to be able to provide information for planning a response to such a widespread crisis. The VAM unit rapidly developed a means that would assist WFP to target food aid to areas which were facing particular problems: the country-wide assessment.

The primary objective of this country-wide assessment in Afghanistan was to provide an analysis of food needs that communities expect to meet through their own production and coping strategies in the 12-month period between the primary crop harvests. The methodology consisted of an evolution of a “cereal equivalent model,” which asks questions of communities about the assets (e.g., crops, livestock, labour remittances and other non-farm income-generating activities) that they predict they will have over the next year, and converts the value of these into wheat to allow comparison. This is done by taking the average local price of wheat from the past three months, and calculating how much the predicted income from these different assets would buy at this price. Wheat and dairy products that are due to be consumed, rather than sold, are accounted for through calories rather than monetary values. This community income/calorie aggregate is then divided by the estimated population of the community to derive an estimated number of kilocalories that would be available for each individual in that community over the next 12 months.

It is usually assumed, using international standards, that each person needs to consume enough food to generate 2100 kilocalories per day. However, because of a concern that communities would tend to under-report both production and income, WFP decided that they would only provide food aid to an area where the country-wide assessment indicated that reported income/production was likely to only provide below 80 percent of individual calorific need, i.e., less than 1680 kilocalories per person per day. This method was used in all three of the assessments from 2000.<sup>2</sup>

The country-wide assessment was intended to complement the UN FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission and other household assessments that are conducted by agencies and NGOs in Afghanistan. Rapid need assessments conducted by the VAM unit six months after the country-wide assessment were designed to test and modify food security estimates in areas where it seemed that vulnerability had been underestimated.

By 2003, there had been three country-wide assessments conducted. However, it was only during the 2002 assessment that enumerators managed to go to every district in the country. The previous two had been plagued by poor security, resulting in 80 percent district coverage. The 2002 assessment was only conducted in settled populations outside urban areas.

Therefore, the urban population, nomadic Kuchis and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps were not included, though the VAM unit did hire a consultant in 2002 to make recommendations on how to include nomadic Kuchis. However, this proved challenging because of the little information available on the location of the nomadic Kuchis, and their migratory routes.

The stratification of the sample in 2002 was by province, district or field working unit (a field working unit is a new district that has not officially been recognised by the

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<sup>2</sup>World Food Programme - Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit - Afghanistan. *Food security assessment, July-August 2001*. October 2001.

Government of Afghanistan), agro-ecological zone and sampled community. The agro-ecological zones were created using information from the 1999 FAO Land Cover Atlas, which is based on 1993 satellite images that were validated by ground true-thing.

The communities in the 2002 survey were selected by random sample, as long as they were within community size guidelines, and that communities chosen were representative of the range of agro-ecological zones within the district. Villages or mosques within villages were only considered a community if they had a population of between 80 and 150 households. Villages were re-sampled if district authorities felt they were particularly atypical of the agro-ecological zone.

In terms of the survey questionnaire used and the following analysis, the following changes were made by the VAM unit to the methodology for the 2002 assessment to address weaknesses identified in the 2000 and 2001 exercises:

1. Only the value of livestock that was due to be sold, rather than all livestock owned in a community, was attributed to income. It was felt that valuing the whole herd of each community as a potential income source was jeopardising future livestock production.
2. A standardised method of quantifying dairy production for cows, sheep and goats was developed based on the number of adult female livestock. This circumvented the need to ask for details about individual dairy production, but allowed for the accounting of dairy production as potential income where communities owned dairy livestock. This income source had not been factored in before.
3. The assumption in the 2000 and 2001 assessments that all income is spent on food was dropped; instead, communities were asked, "Out of the total average cash income of the household, what percentage is spent on food?"

## C. Assessment of the Methodology Used in 2002

As part of the review process, an assessment was made of the methodology used in the 2002 exercise in order to identify strengths on which to build and weaknesses to overcome. This section explores some of the assumptions, implicit and explicit, underlying the methodology used in 2002, and the possible problems associated with them.

### 1. Estimating Income and Production

The methodology used in 2002 assumed that participants in village *shuras* (community councils) are willing and able to provide accurate estimates of income from crop and livestock production, labour and remittances and other non-farm activities for the entire community for the next 12 months.

Experience with household-level surveys shows that collecting reliable data on income already earned is difficult; income is regularly underreported in comparison to other measures of welfare.<sup>3</sup> Add to this the difficulty of predicting income for the next 12 months and the fact that many *shura* members tend to be males from

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<sup>3</sup> Grosh, M. and Glewwe, P., eds. *Designing a Household Survey Questionnaire for Developing Countries: Lessons from 15 Years of the Living Standards Measurement Survey*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. 2000.

wealthier groups, and this suggests that confidence in such estimates can only be tentative.

As discussed above, the methodology does take account of the likely underreporting of income. However, the method chosen was “scale-positive” for wealthier communities: when the food insecurity line in the cereal equivalent model was reduced, the 420 kilocalories difference between the standard 2100 kilocalories needed to sustain a person each day and the 1680 chosen by WFP in order to instigate a programming response represents a much higher proportion of income/production for poorer communities than it does for richer.

A “scale-neutral” way of accounting for an assumed country-wide underreporting of income/production by 20 percent would have been to add 20 percent to the reported income/production for each community, while maintaining the 2100 kilocalories per capita poverty line.

## **2. Estimating Populations**

There are other key pieces of data within the model used in 2002 that have a very high level of influence on the kilocalorie estimate, for instance, community populations. These were estimated by multiplying the number of households by average household size. This population estimate was used to create a per person kilocalorie availability for each community and therefore any significant error in this estimate will have a significant effect on the estimates of vulnerability and food security.

## **3. Estimating Food Security and Issues Relating to Targeting Aid**

Estimating food security at the community level alone – as was done in 2000, 2001 and 2002 – means it is only possible to assess whether or not a community is food insecure, and to what level, not intra-community differences in food security. If there is little difference in wealth between the richest and the poorest households, then overall community estimates of food security provide a reasonable approximation to the actual situation. In this situation the geographical targeting of response has some validity.

However, if, as often is the case, there is a large wealth disparity between households within a village, then community-based estimates of food security will overestimate the food security status of the poorer households within that community. The greater the disparity, the more biased the average community food security estimate is and the less reliable per person food security estimates become.

There was no information collected in these assessments on the social and economic characteristics of households. Therefore, in communities that were deemed to fall below the food security line, implementing partners who are providing food aid to those areas then have to develop their own beneficiary selection criteria that match the level of food insecurity estimated by the community cereal equivalent model. This has often proven challenging.

## **4. Incorporating Coping Strategies**

One of the assumptions in the methodology was that, where estimates suggested there would be a significant deficit in food security in the coming year, communities would only be able to overcome this shortfall through relying solely on food aid. In

the survey, there was no opportunity for communities to suggest how they might fill the gap between estimated income and the resources needed to meet basic food security. Therefore, it was difficult to understand what other coping strategies they might adopt.

However, evidence suggests that when Afghan communities cannot feed themselves, they do have other coping strategies at their disposal. For instance, many individuals and communities in Afghanistan have long used mobility as a coping mechanism, and this has been particularly striking during the last two decades, as Afghanistan has experienced both conflict and drought.

Questions on remittances were included, but as with the problems with income, the information seemed likely to be inaccurate and underreported.

## 5. Estimating Expenditure on Food

An underlying assumption of the methodology used in 2002 was that communities could estimate the proportion of their income that they spend on food. For example, Question 67 in the 2002 questionnaire asked communities to define how much they spent on food by asking:

*“67. Out of the total average cash income of the household, what percentage is spent on food? \_\_\_%.”<sup>4</sup>*

Though this refers to a household, enumerators asked the question to the village *shura*, and then recorded a mean figure for all households. The mean value calculated for all 1873 communities was 85 percent, with 50 percent of communities reporting a value between 80 to 90 percent (see Figure 1).

This reported level of expenditure on food would appear to be an overestimate compared to actual measurements based on income and expenditure surveys. Work by the World Bank<sup>5</sup> in other countries suggests that even for households only just above the food security line (i.e., where they consume enough to meet a per capita requirement of 2100 kilocalories per day) food expenditures are regularly reported as consisting of only about 40 to 60 percent of overall expenditures in these households. Even for food insecure households, there will be essential non-food expenditures that they make. Experience indicates that the poorer the household is, the greater the proportion of income spent on food items.

It is likely that communities over-reported the percentage of income spent on food, assuming this would result in greater assistance. Unfortunately, the way that the cereal equivalent model is applied, the greater amounts of income that a community

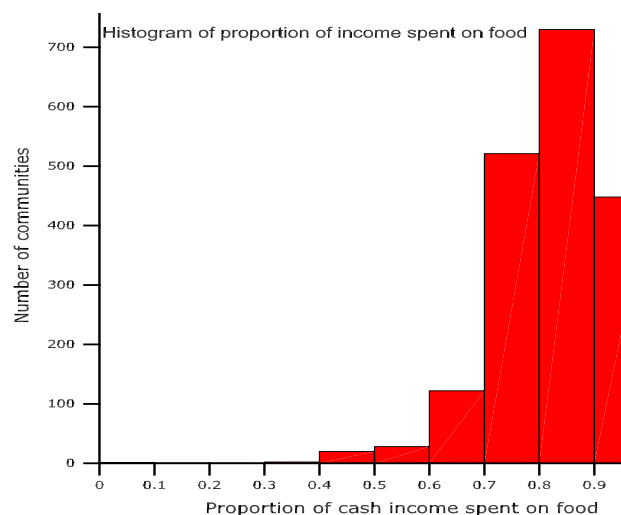


Figure 1. Histogram of proportion of income that communities indicated was spent on food in the 2002 survey.

<sup>4</sup> WFP - VAM, *Food Security Assessment*, op cit.

<sup>5</sup> Grosh and Glewwe, op cit.

declares is spent on food, the more likely that a community does not qualify for assistance.

## 6. The “Monetising” of Consumed Agricultural Produce

All agricultural products estimated by the *shura* to be consumed within the community, other than wheat and dairy products, were monetised (i.e., measured in terms of their cash equivalent) and added to the community income aggregate. However, wheat cash values are an inaccurate way of estimating consumption levels since the price of wheat is variable and this may cause distortions in evaluating food security. It is much easier to calculate the calorific value of food produced and consumed rather than converting it into its cash value and adding it to income to spend on wheat.

## D. How the 2002 Country-wide Assessment Was Used

The results and data sets from the 2002 country-wide assessment informed international and national responses for prioritising relative needs across the country in the following ways:

- The VAM unit analysis, which largely took the form of maps of Afghanistan illustrating the levels of different indicators in different areas, was used by NGOs to validate the data from their own surveillance activities. The population estimates published in the VAM report were also used regularly by the NGOs for advocating for funds, reporting to donors and to corroborate the NGOs’ own estimations of vulnerability.
- The UN’s Afghanistan Information Management Service also used the 2002 country-wide assessment data to produce new indicators and maps that address stakeholder needs.
- MRRD used VAM 2002 in the draft strategy for the National Emergency Employment Programme (NEEP).
- MoH and UNICEF used the goitre<sup>6</sup> indicators and related maps for advocacy, particularly for an iodised salt programme. However, the data related to the scurvy question suffered from high levels of variation and were therefore not regarded with a great level of confidence.
- MoH used the calorie self-sufficiency map of Afghanistan to assist in targeting nutritional surveys. For instance, based on the country-wide assessment data, MoH went to the south of Afghanistan, conducted nutritional surveys and found that 11 percent of the population suffered from acute malnutrition. This is slightly higher than the normal range expected. MoH also used the assessment data to implement blanket supplementary feeding in those areas that were predicted to be the most highly insecure.
- The 2002 data were used extensively for the planning of the geographic prioritisation of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), because the assessment provided what was seen as the only impartial nation-wide data on vulnerability.

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<sup>6</sup> Goitre is a non-cancerous enlargement of the thyroid gland, typically caused by iodine deficiency.

### **III. Stakeholder Needs for the 2003 Country-wide Assessment: the NRVA**

Apart from learning from the 2002 country-wide assessment, the joint stakeholder review was also designed to explore new and emerging data needs of the identified stakeholders, particularly in relation to government priorities and programmes under the National Development Budget. A number of overarching requirements became apparent in the review process. These were:

- The collection of a broader range of indicators and the dissemination of a wider range of output products driven by the priorities of national programmes and primary stakeholders;
- Improved female participation and indicators related to women's participation in the household economy and their risk and vulnerability;
- The inclusion of urban, nomadic, and IDP camp populations;
- The geo-referencing of all communities visited to avoid confusion over different names and spellings for villages and districts;
- Increased participation of government ministry staff in the design, testing, implementation and analysis of data emerging from the NRVA, both at provincial and central government levels; and
- A follow-up programme to support effective analysis, presentation and use of results in programme and policy planning for government stakeholders.

The following section outlines the specific NRVA objectives, data needs and potential areas of collaboration expressed by each primary stakeholder institution, in light of their own data collection activities. Not all stakeholders had a clear idea of what they might want out of the NRVA, however, and therefore there are gaps below.

#### **A. Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Health (MAAH)/FAO**

Compared with many other ministries, MAAH conducts a number of assessment, census and surveillance activities, mostly in collaboration with FAO. MAAH and FAO are currently developing a Food and Agriculture Information Policy Unit to build analytic capacity within the ministry. Currently MAAH, in partnership with FAO, has undertaken or will soon undertake the following data collection activities:

- Regular crop surveys;
- Agricultural market price surveys;
- Agro-meteorological network;
- Horticultural survey;
- Livestock census;
- Veterinary and seeds projects; and
- Food security and vulnerability predictions.

MAAH identified market price analysis as an important component of the country-wide assessment that needed strengthening, and offered to collaborate on this. It was also decided to incorporate the second FAO crop and livestock survey into the household component of the NRVA, since its collection of post-harvest data on actual production and yield can be used to cross-check crop output projections. MAAH also stressed the importance of improving the accuracy of population estimates to increase confidence in the results.

MAAH/FAO intends to use the NRVA data as the basis for developing a livelihoods understanding of rural households in Afghanistan.

## **B. Ministry of Health (MoH)/UNICEF/WHO**

Planned surveillance activities in the MoH include:

- 1. Baseline country-wide micronutrient disease survey - Spring 04.** Urine and blood samples will be gathered across the country, as well as qualitative data. This will form a baseline against which a follow-up survey in three to five years can be measured.
- 2. Multi-indicator cluster survey.** Anthropometric measurements (measurements of proportions of the human body used to indicate nutritional status) will be gathered primarily to explore the degree of stunting (limiting of body growth) in Afghanistan – a multi-indicator health outcome.
- 3. National Surveillance System.** This system will provide anthropological measurement surveillance with nutritional, morbidity and mortality indicators. Pilot methodology is being developed, with assessments to be made at least twice a year.
- 4. District baseline survey.** The survey will monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of the basic service delivery package.
- 5. Clinic-based surveillance data.** Though planned, clinic-based surveillance data is only a useful indicator of the health status of a population where the catchment area for the clinic includes more than 80 percent of the population. Therefore, it is much less valuable in rural areas.
- 6. Clinic-based data for 58 diseases.**

Not all of these surveillance activities were operational at the time of the review and a number were due not to start for many months. Moreover the Public Nutrition Unit within MoH was keen to move beyond monitoring the incidence of malnutrition to begin exploring the causes. Therefore, the perceived value of the NRVA 2003 for MoH was to fill this gap by including indicators related to diet quality and diversity, and to link these to estimates of poverty and vulnerability in order to provide a deeper understanding of rural livelihoods.

## **C. Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH)/Habitat**

During the Taliban era, Habitat formed relationships directly with communities in order to be able to practically engage them. This was done through community forums. These community forums mapped vulnerability down to a household level and provided indicators of vulnerability. The only problem with these indicators was that whilst they were good for identifying vulnerable populations, they were poor at differentiating within these populations. Since Habitat's resources were limited, this meant it was unable to meet the needs of all those identified as being part of a vulnerable group. This then caused friction, because there was no consensus on a rational way of targeting within these vulnerable communities, since they all appeared equal based on the vulnerability indicators identified by the communities



themselves. There is therefore a need for providing information that allows the identification of different levels of vulnerability to different factors in order to assist with programme targeting.

#### D. Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)/WFP

MRRD has no surveillance activities of note. However, the ministry has a huge need for information about poverty, vulnerability, market access and the state of rural infrastructure in order to effectively implement and target a wide range of reconstruction and social protection programmes, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. Reconstruction and Social Protection Programmes			
	Program Objective	Planning frequency/ Plan timing	Indicators needed for planning
<b>National Solidarity Program (NSP)</b>	To establish sustainable and viable local self-governing institutions that plan, finance and manage development and co-ordinate their Block Grant with agencies and government programmes.	3/year	Drought stricken areas Large # returnees War-affected areas Poverty
<b>National Emergency Employment Program (NEEP)</b>	To provide a safety net for the most vulnerable by (i) creating productive short-term employment opportunities; and (ii) establishing effective mechanisms for developing public and productive infrastructure assets.	1/year Sep-Dec	Rural access Poverty rates
<b>National Area Based Development Program (NABDP)</b>	To formulate and implement (i) immediate support for urgent recovery projects; (ii) capacity development for national, provincial, and local authorities to enable them to plan, finance, and manage development interventions in participatory, transparent, and manner; and (iii) medium- and long-term development projects at the "macro" level to stimulate local economies and generate sustainable employment.	1/year Sep-Dec	Poverty rates Specific needs defined
<b>Rural Water &amp; Sanitation Program (RuWatSan)</b>	To provide all Afghans in rural areas with access to safe drinking water close to their house, educate rural people in hygiene practices and support the construction of household latrines.	1/year Sep-Dec	Access to water Sanitation facilities
<b>Micro-Finance Support Facility of Afghanistan (MISFA)</b>	To promote, co-ordinate and stimulate the development of an independent Micro-Finance Support Facility of Afghanistan (MISFA) providing training, equipment and micro-finance capital for the poor.	1/year Sep-Dec	Poverty rates Lack of rural credit
<b>Food Aid</b>	Coordination of social protection responses in rural areas through emergency food aid. Policy and guideline preparation. Liaison and coordination of food aid deliveries. Assessment and monitoring.	1/year Sep-Dec	Food insecurity Extreme poverty estimates

MRRD decisions on whether to allocate cash or food to areas that the country-wide assessment of 2002 identified as food insecure were based purely on the predicted level of food insecurity. Areas with high levels of food insecurity were allocated food assistance, whereas areas with lower levels of food insecurity were targeted with

cash-based programme responses. Such an allocation process does not take into consideration critical market access indicators, which are important for making such evidence-based policy decisions. Such indicators are therefore needed.

There was also considerable interest within MRRD in developing understanding of the impact that returnees are having on their communities and what return has meant in terms of the returnees' welfare. Current information on the well-being of returnees is sparse and unreliable.

UNHCR produced a series of district profiles in those areas of high refugee return. With the existing information, VAM, district profiles and returnee numbers, MRRD would like to produce a simple provincial-level reintegration profile. The objective of the profile is to help with the mainstreaming of reintegration across all national programmes.

MRRD would like to be able to rank districts in relation to reintegration, key sectors such as health and education, food security, income generation and water resources in order to be able to prioritise districts within a province for different types of assistance. They hoped that information from the NRVA would be able to assist in this.

## **E. Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)/UNIFEM/UNDP**

MoWA is keen to develop a database on women, but is unclear what such a database would include and how it would be used. In 2003, WFP was in the process of drafting a terms of reference to bring in a consultant to work with MoWA in using the NRVA data to do gender analyses as well as to conduct capacity-building within MoWA.

## **F. Central Statistics Office (CSO)**

CSO is not currently a significant stakeholder of the NRVA, but ideally will become so in the future. CSO, with support of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), is currently carrying out the pre-census survey. There are four components to this exercise.

- 1. Household listing exercise.** Every house in the country is listed, including the total number of people in the household, broken down by men and women and age (above and below 18). This will estimate the total adult population and the population under 18.
- 2. Village facility survey.** The village facility survey quantifies access to markets, services and other indicators.
- 3. 1/200 household survey.** This will produce a complete picture of the household structure in terms of members, age and relations between the members. The household is defined as those who cook and share meals together.
- 4. Village mapping exercise.** Every village will be mapped and the houses coded in relation to the household listing survey.

These will be the first "official" population estimates since the 1979 census, and will provide a very useful benchmark against which current estimates can be judged.

Data from the pre-census survey will be available on a rolling basis as the data are collected and processed. It is estimated that by October 2003 between 11-17 of the 32 districts will have been completed. Data collection is projected to be finished by mid-2004. Good population data will therefore be available for estimating poverty and vulnerability by the time analysis begins on the NRVA.

## IV. The 2003 NRVA Methodology

The overall objective that now underlies the 2003 country-wide assessment (the NRVA), as drawn from discussions with the above stakeholders, is to deepen the collective understanding of poverty and vulnerability through the indicators collected, in order to enhance the impact of policies and programmes seeking to reduce vulnerability and support social risk management.

Moreover, the nutritional information indicators included in the NRVA are designed to help the MoH in nutrition programming, and the sections on agriculture are meant to provide MAAH with information that will assist in the development of agricultural policy.

The final analysis/report is planned to be released as a database accompanied by a small report, allowing for updating. It is hoped the various ministries/UN agencies will wish to take the analysis of the NRVA data further to specifically address their policy and programme needs. The improved set of indicators in this year's NRVA will also be incorporated into the methodology for the Livelihoods Based Food Security and Nutrition Sentinel Site Surveillance System, an assessment tool that will measure critical deteriorations in food security and malnutrition.

The data collection levels in the 2003 NRVA are:

1. At the district level, a district vulnerability profile collected from district key informants;
2. At the village level, a male and a female *shura* group survey;
3. At the wealth group level, male and female assessment for very poor, poor, and medium families; and
4. At the household level, six to eight households per community will be assessed, three by men and four to six by women.

The data collection strategies at each of these levels are described in detail below.

**District level:** An overview of the district will be collected from key informants such as district authorities, Kuchi leaders and veterinary field units. The aim is to determine the different agro-ecological zones within a district, and compare and rank these from the most to the least vulnerable/food insecure areas. Criteria for the ranking of these areas will be based on access to markets, health facilities, water, education, physical environment, security and land mines.

An estimation of the population living in each area will also be collected, to provide a more refined estimate of populations-in-need for planning and targeting. These estimates will be updated after the pre-census survey currently being undertaken by the CSO.

**Community shuras (councils):** The next level of inquiry will be a focus group discussion with community leaders – both men and women – during which enumerators will gain an overview of market and health facility access (including

costs of accessing them), education and literacy rates, shocks and priorities for the village.

The *shura* will also be asked to rank families in the community in terms of four wealth groups: “very poor,” “poor,” “medium,” and “better off.” The number of families falling into each wealth group will be collected to provide an estimation of the population numbers that are likely to fall into each category. These discussions will also determine basic agricultural land and livestock ownership, and the total primary cereal production within each of the different wealth groups. Last year, the same tool was used but production was distributed equally across the community.

Women’s questions will focus more on women’s roles in the community and households, education, constraints to livelihoods, female-headed households and women’s decision-making roles.

**Wealth groups:** A similar yet more detailed cereal equivalent tool than the one used in 2003 will be used at the wealth group rather than at the *shura* level.

Of the four wealth groups identified, only three are of primary concern to the NRVA – the “very poor,” “poor,” and “medium” households. Therefore, data collection and analysis will focus on these groups. The decision not to interview “better off” wealth groups was a compromise reached to allow for more time to conduct household interviews. Since this group is typically made up of the few families in the village that are large landowners or power holders, and who are therefore not likely to face food insecurity, it was felt this compromise was justified.

Like the 2002 methodology, the 2003 survey will collect information on fruit, cash crop and livestock production and sales. Production and income generated through these activities will be converted into a cereal equivalent and then subsequently into kilocalories.

Data collection on labour will focus on agricultural and non-farm labour in the village and work opportunities outside of the village for men, women and children under 14 years. This data will be collected by season. Remittances, as well as non-food essential expenditures and debts, will also be explored in greater depth than in past years, though this area remains the weakest part of the tool. Data will be collected on frequency and means to access markets, health facilities, and shocks, coping strategies and priorities for these groups. The survey will also ask respondents about seasonal intervention preferences – food, cash, combinations or other.

**Households:** The household module developed for the NRVA 2003 methodology includes sections on:

- Household composition;
- Migration;
- Education;
- Health;
- Employment (type but not income);
- Household assets;
- Household amenities;
- Covariate shocks/risks (shocks that affect many households in a region or area);
- Idiosyncratic shocks/risks (shocks that are specific to a very small area or household);

- Programme participation; and
- Dietary diversity/seven-day recall of food consumption.

Information on nutrition will be based on an evaluation of dietary diversity asked to members of the households who know most about food preparation, likely to be women. Respondents will be asked to recall the type and quantity of food intake over a period of the last seven days to form a very crude food consumption aggregate. There will not be enough contact time per household to consider aggregating consumption by production, purchases and gifts, which is normal practice in creating a consumption aggregate. The brief time spent in each community will also not permit non-food consumption data to be collected.

The household questionnaires have been standardised to complement the wealth group questionnaires; findings derived from the wealth groups can therefore be cross-checked and verified by the household data during the final analysis.

## **A. Summary of Methodological Changes in the 2003 NRVA**

To address the weaknesses of earlier country-wide assessments as outlined earlier, the following major changes have been made to the 2003 NRVA methodology:

- 1. Calculations will be made at a wealth group level instead of at a community level.** While critics would be right to say that the same biases will still apply, making three observations per community rather than just one will reduce the degree of bias. Respondents will be asked to typify households similar to their own rather than rely upon a male *shura* trying to predict total aggregate production and income. Using wealth groups will also facilitate social, economic and geographic targeting.
- 2. Much greater detail will be collected on labour, which was felt to be significantly underreported in 2002.** Instead of just asking for a prediction of future income, respondents will be asked to typify income earned from the last year, project income for the future and cite the reasons for the change, if any, in labour income. This will also be disaggregated by male, female and child labour.
- 3. Data on market access will be collected from various wealth groups and will form the empirical basis for a discussion on policy recommendations for appropriate assistance activities for food insecure areas.** The distance, cost and frequency of transport to the market will be obtained at the community level to determine the differences in market access between households within the different wealth groups.
- 4. Survey instruments will be designed for both male and female respondents.** Income data will be asked of females wherever possible. This will be added to the male income data collected from the male wealth groups. While most of the male indicators will be included in the female interviews, there will also be a set of questions specifically designed for women, developed by female monitors who participated in the 2002 country-wide assessment, to determine women's decision-making roles within the household and the community.
- 5. There will be no assumption made for underreporting of income.** After much debate among stakeholders, it is felt that a more complete income

aggregate can be constructed than has been possible before using enhanced data on labour, remittances and non-farm activities and by increasing the diversity of respondents and therefore an artificially set percentage to account for underreporting is not needed. However, while it is likely the survey will be able to collect a more complete set of information on income from both male and female members of the household, this will not totally solve the problem of underreporting of income. This is of particular worry this year, as there has been a significant increase in the planting of opium, and it is unlikely that income from this value crop will be unreliably disclosed. This supports the argument for using a rigorous consumption aggregate rather than an income aggregate as a proxy for welfare, but this was not felt feasible in 2003, because of the lateness of this suggestion and the difficulty of coming up with a viable alternative in the time then left.

6. **The assessment will aim to cover all rural populations, including short- and long-range migratory Kuchis.** The only population groups that will be excluded from the assessment will be residents of urban areas and of IDP camps.

## **B. Indicators: Changes and Additions**

As mentioned above, the assessment also expanded its indicators, incorporating the FAO food security and agricultural survey, a questionnaire devised by Tufts University and the USAID, an MoH/UNICEF survey that discusses dietary diversity as an indication of nutritional status and a light household questionnaire developed in conjunction with the World Bank.

### **1. Nutritional Indicators**

The unit of observation of the 2002 country-wide assessment was the village council, and was not conducive to reporting of dietary diversity. When the nutritional data from this assessment was analysed, it was found that there was no relationship between increasing diet diversity and caloric self-sufficiency, despite this being repeatedly reported in other countries. The most appropriate unit of observation for dietary indicators is the household, preferably the person who knows most about food preparation. An improved dietary diversity tool has therefore been incorporated into the NRVA methodology and asked at household level to the person knowing most about the preparation.

Anthropometric measurements have not been included in any of the country-wide assessments, and have not been included in the NRVA either, because of two concerns: first, the difficulty of training a large number of inexperienced enumerators to accurately collect anthropometric data and second, the sampling used for the country-wide assessment is not sufficiently rigorous to make prevalence statements with statistical confidence. Therefore, anthropometric measurements were excluded from the NRVA 2003.

### **2. Market Access Indicators**

Below is a list of indicators that were developed in discussions with MRRD relating to market access; these were felt to be important for those planning NEEP and to support MRRD in making decisions about the relevance of food versus cash as a response.

- Where bartering is a significant form of exchange in the community;
- Location, time and cost for accessing nearest market centre, clinic and school;
- Frequency of availability of transport to nearest market centre (number of times/week);
- Number of months during the winter when market access is severely restricted or impossible;
- Whether there is another market centre further away that is an important aspect of trade within the community, and if so, what it is and for what commodities it is used; and
- Community views on food versus cash as a programming response to food insecurity.

### 3. Water and Sanitation Indicators

MRRD recognises that sanitation is a major challenge to improved morbidity rates within rural areas, but realises that the key to motivating communities to improve sanitation facilities is to understand whether that community perceives poor sanitation as a potential cause of high levels of morbidity and mortality. The following indicators have been included in the NRVA to compensate for the lack of information on these areas in the CSO village facility survey, despite only sampling one in 20 villages as opposed to CSO's visit to every village.

- Number of:
  - Households now and households five years ago (before the drought);
  - Wells (sweet, salty and dry);
  - *Kandas* (an underground water storage cave fed by trainees from micro watershed);
  - *Howzs* (a pool, typically in downstream irrigation communities where spasmodic irrigation water needs to be stored for water and other purposes);
  - Hand pumps (working and non-working condition);
  - Springs;
- River access;
- Distance to nearest potable water source, if not in the village;
- Broken water infrastructure - identify; and
- Type of sanitation generally used in the village.

### C. Expected Outputs for WFP

The following data sets will be compiled for WFP for each wealth group in each agro-ecological zone within the district:

- An estimation of projected income from the 2003 harvest to the 2004 harvest by wealth group within each zone in each district;
- An estimation of the number of people living in extreme poverty or whose predicted income is not sufficient to provide basic food needs for the next 12 months;
- A more reliable estimate of population within each agro-ecological zone within districts;
- A social economic/geographical projection of food needs for Afghanistan in the next 12 months;

- A wealth group level preference for food or cash interventions, by season, to allow for better response programming;
- A stated priority of activities and needs to be used for project planning by WFP and other partners;
- Data on access to markets, health and education by wealth group and by gender;
- A deeper understanding of the role of women in rural Afghan livelihoods; and
- A data structure that is compatible with the rapid needs assessment methodology, allowing for seamless updates in food security estimates.

## **D. Expected Outputs for Other Stakeholders**

The following data sets will be available to other stakeholders:

- An estimate of extreme poverty levels in rural Afghanistan;
- The construction of a very basic food consumption aggregate and dietary diversity indicator that will form an alternative measure of estimating welfare and the means to calculate an extreme poverty line. The dietary diversity will also be used by nutritionists to identify those areas that are particularly prone to micronutrient diseases;
- An understanding of changes in access to land, livestock, pastures, water and agricultural production;
- Details on rural household composition and migration;
- Levels of access to water, education, markets and health:
  - Satisfactory “educational access” is defined as children currently in secondary school, who cite no problems.
  - “Health access” is defined as persons living in households with a health facility less than ¼ day away by normally used means.
  - A “health need” is defined as persons who have been sick or injured in the last four-week period preceding the survey.
  - “Health use” is defined as persons who consulted a health practitioner in the four-week period preceding the survey;
- Adult literacy rates;
- Employment/unemployment data for all household members over the age of six;
- Information on household assets and amenities;
- Shocks, both covariate and idiosyncratic, that households have been subjected to and their coping strategies;
- Determination of the significant indicators in accounting for variation in the consumption aggregate at the household level;
- Clear links to the Nutrition Sentinel Site Surveillance System and other assessment/surveillance activities;
- An understanding of poverty levels to guide policy and intervention strategies; and
- Household estimates of crops and livestock production in 2003 as compared to 2002.

## **E. Expected Stakeholder Access and Utilisation**

The NRVA is expected to be used in the following ways:

- WFP will develop and update its core food security model based on data from the wealth groups. It is recommended that the dissemination of the results of



this aspect of the analysis be made through a series of presentations to key ministries, including MRRD, MAAH and MoH. Experience suggests that going to the ministries to make individual presentations significantly increases participation from staff from the individual ministries. It is also a chance for senior ministry staff to be briefed on the data and interpretation of key results for programming purposes.

- The World Bank has released funds to implement a capacity building programme for the analysis of the data from the household questionnaire. This will take place once all the data have been entered and cleaned. MRRD staff will be primary targets for this training on the analysis of the household data.
- MAAH/FAO are currently developing a Food and Agriculture Information Policy Unit (FAIPU) and it is hoped that the advisers in this unit will use the NRVA data relevant to the MAAH as an opportunity to build analytic capacity within the ministry and also explore how the results can be used to influence policy.
- The data will be made available in a much more user-friendly database format than in 2002 and will be available through the NRVA web site at: [www.af/nrva](http://www.af/nrva). It is also anticipated that the WFP analysis report will be distributed with data summaries as well as the raw data. Included will be a guide to how individual agencies can access the data and use it for further analysis. It is hoped that this will encourage NGOs and UN agencies to use the data set for their own needs.

## **F. Implementation of the 2003 NRVA Survey**

In 2002, there were 150 enumerators from NGOs, WFP VAM and private individuals. In 2003, the participation of ministry staff from MAAH, MRRD, MoWA and MoH was given priority by the VAM unit. Personnel from these ministries are also likely to be involved in further activities with the National Surveillance System, so that the country-wide assessment experience can contribute to the capacity building of vulnerability surveillance and analysis within government.

Other changes to the implementation of the 2003 survey include the following.

### **1. NRVA Sample**

In the absence of a completed census, it is not possible to ensure that the sample is statistically representative of the rural population of Afghanistan. Therefore, the communities in the previous year's country-wide assessment will be revisited. This sample will be validated with district governors and key informants to ensure representativeness in terms of number and characteristics within the agro-ecological zones identified. It is intended that every district in the country will be visited, security permitting. Within each district, the agro and ecological zones identified will be sampled (normally 2-4 communities per agro-ecological zone). It is expected that the number of settled communities will be similar to the country-wide assessment 2002, i.e., 1850, but it is anticipated that about another 200 Kuchi communities will be added to this year's assessment, bringing the total to more than 2,000 communities.

## **2. Data Entry and Quality Control**

While Microsoft Excel was used as the data capture and analytical tool for the country-wide assessment in 2002, the NRVA 2003 will use an Access database designed for this purpose. It is estimated that there will be more than 250,000 pages of forms completed during the survey process. To cope with this overwhelming data entry challenge, specialist software (Teleform—[www.Cardiff.com](http://www.Cardiff.com)) and a high speed scanner have been purchased to allow the data sheets to be directly scanned into the database.

## **3. Implementation Schedule**

There is a need for more flexibility in timing and scheduling to allow the enumerators to get to the more remote villages. Making assessments on market days was problematic in the 2002 assessment, as most of the heads-of-household were absent during market days. This year, market days will be used to conduct the district-level surveys. Teams will also leave their updated schedules with the district administrative centres to facilitate contact with supervisory teams.

## **4. Urban Component of the NRVA 2003**

It was originally anticipated that the methodology review would facilitate coverage of the urban population. The scale and complexity of developing the instruments for the rural assessment eventually required that development of the urban component be delayed until the rural assessment was well underway.

However, there are some lessons and considerations that can be derived from the development of the rural methodology that may help in developing the urban component:

- Where there is a high degree of heterogeneity of income sources as in urban areas, wealth groups are not a useful unit of analysis; the data collection and analysis have to occur at the household level. Particular attention, therefore, will need to be paid to the sampling of households.
- Welfare is better assessed by evaluating consumption rather than income. This is particularly appropriate in urban environments, where opportunities for cross-checking data are more restricted than in rural settings (e.g., agricultural yields and livestock numbers can assist in triangulation of data in rural areas).
- The same indicators are likely to be equally applicable in an urban setting, and are important for comparisons of vulnerability between urban and rural areas.

## **V. Lessons Learned from the Stakeholder Review**

### **A. The Inability of the Transitional Administration to Articulate Its Assessment Needs**

Apart from ministries with external advisers, it was generally found that ministry staff were not able to clearly articulate assessment needs. MRRD was the most able to articulate needs, but this was largely driven by the minister, who comes with an NGO background and could draw on a large cadre of advisers.

## B. Challenges of Addressing Multi-stakeholder Needs

The multi-stakeholder nature of the potential users of NRVA information, with their diverse data needs, as well as the multi-stakeholder process of the review, required that some compromises were needed in the approach developed, particularly in relation to the following issues:

- Scale of definition;
- Discipline;
- Methodology;
- Perspectives (ex-ante vs. ex-post); and
- Unit of observation and therefore of analysis.

For example, the WFP scale of definition is agro-ecological zone within districts, whereas the World Bank uses household-level instruments to estimate poverty and vulnerability at regional or national scale. Also, WFP uses an ex-ante (predictive) approach, whereas many of the other stakeholders prefer an ex-post (based on what has already happened) approach. WFP's unit of observation is the wealth group, whereas the World Bank, FAO and UNICEF's unit of observation is the household.

The resulting methodology to some extent incorporates elements of many of these different approaches. It is hoped that the data arising out of the 2003 NRVA will provide a means of judging the benefits and limitations of these different approaches in order to make recommendations for a future standardised approach that is best suited to measuring poverty, vulnerability and the impacts of shocks in Afghanistan.

## C. Continuing Weaknesses in the NRVA Methodology

1. A lack of good census data has prevented more statistically rigorous proportional sampling. The last and first census of Afghanistan was in 1979 and was only 70 percent completed because of security limitations. The CSO current population estimates have used a standard annual multiplier of 1.92 percent, which puts the current population of Afghanistan at about 20 million people. However, there are many factors that are likely to challenge the validity of this compound multiplier-based estimate. Migration, both in and out of the country, and from rural to urban areas, has been significant in the last 24 years and exacerbated in areas of high insecurity. In addition, death rates are likely to have increased because of military casualties. The compound multiplier does not take into account any of these likely effects. Therefore, if we assume that there has been significant rural-urban migration, then it is likely that the current CSO population estimates will be overestimating the rural and underestimating the urban population.
2. This challenge is confounded by the regular emergence of new "unofficial" districts. Until recently, the official population estimates were based on the 1982 32 province/329 district dataset. Recently, the Ministry of Interior (the ministry officially responsible for defining political boundaries) increased the number of districts to 371. There are no official boundaries associated with these new district definitions. This makes sampling yet more difficult.
3. In addition, as indicated above, the NRVA is a multi-stakeholder methodology that has drawn on a number of approaches (see Appendix 2). There are apparent weaknesses in this mixed methodology, which compromise some

aspects of certain methodologies that influenced the development of the NRVA 2003.

4. Attempting to incorporate information from both men and women at both wealth group and household levels is challenging in the Afghanistan context due to cultural norms in many areas which make it difficult for female enumerators to travel and therefore makes access to women a particular challenge. However, certain components of the household questionnaire are most appropriately addressed to male household members (e.g., agricultural production details), whereas food consumption data is most likely to be more appropriately addressed to female household members. Accessing both male and female household members requires an interaction with both male and female enumerators in the same household to ensure that a household questionnaire is answered by different members of the same household. This may well be logistically complicated to implement in the field.
5. With more than one community sample per agro-ecological zone, combining results across the sample of communities is challenging. The lack of consistently verifiable indicators to define wealth groups within communities within the same agro-ecological zone make it difficult to summarise data from potentially different definitions of wealth groups in different villages within that zone.
6. The household questionnaire does not have a rigorous food and non-food consumption section. The food consumption data is based on respondents' ability to remember the levels of consumption for the household over the last seven days, and there is likely to be confusion over weights and measures, as none of this will be verified by taking scales to the field. This may be particularly difficult when asking households to estimate in kilogrammes, a unit of weight with which they may not be familiar.

## **VI. Recommendations for Further Methodological Developments**

1. **Develop a rigorous sampling frame based on the pre-census household listing from CSO to ensure statistical representativeness of sample.**

Sampling using statistically rigorous proportional techniques, thereby ensuring that every community has an equal chance of being selected, has not been possible for the NRVA 2003 due to lack of good population data to form a sampling frame. Instead, it was agreed to use the same sample as that of 2002, with the addition of a number of communities, including nomadic Kuchi communities enumerated in their summer locations.

The pre-census survey, currently being completed by the CSO with support from UNFPA, aims to visit every household in Afghanistan, and will produce the most reliable up-to-date estimates of population. The field work is scheduled from March 2003-March 2004. This exercise will be prone to some double counting as it is carried out over a period of one year, and therefore cannot be considered as a true census. However, it will provide the most rigorous and accurate population estimates since 1979.

## **2. Update poverty and vulnerability calculations once pre-census data is available.**

Obtaining reasonable estimates of food security in the sample communities is a significant step towards producing an effective programming and planning tool. Another critical element is having reasonable population estimates for the agro-ecological zones, or at least the district level, the unit of analysis for which WFP produces results. If reliable population figures are unavailable, no matter how good the food security indicators are at village level, multiplying up the results from the sample to represent a number of vulnerable populations per agro-ecological zone, district or province is very likely to produce very inaccurate numbers.

Although the pre-census survey population estimates will not be available for the initial data releases from the NRVA 2003, the calculations of poverty, of vulnerability and numbers falling into these categories should be updated once there are population data releases from CSO. The agro-ecological zones used in the NRVA sampling will not be reflected in the CSO data collection. But as all communities visited will be geo-referenced, population estimates of agro-ecological zones can be calculated once the new geo-referenced community has been plotted and stratified by the agro-ecological zones.

## **3. Consider abandoning wealth groups as a unit of observation and analysis.**

The wealth group is an approximation of the household, and further country-wide assessments may wish to consider using only community and household as units of observation to create a more simplified structure. This would also relieve the enumerators of the difficult task of dividing communities into wealth groups, and trying to typify households within the wealth group. It is much easier to train enumerators to ask specific questions directed at specific household members. Having a representative sampling frame will ensure that appropriate random samples of households within communities will produce sufficient cross-sectional representation.

## **4. Develop a standardised methodology for assessing poverty, vulnerability and food security.**

The analysis of the NRVA data should provide the basis for developing an empirically based method of arriving at a standardised methodology for assessing poverty, vulnerability and food security in years to come.

## **5. Use other means to collect data on village facilities.**

The village facility survey, which is currently part of the CSO pre-census survey, would be a more appropriate means to gather this type of data than the NRVA, since the intention is to visit all villages within Afghanistan, whereas the NRVA will only gather information from a sample of villages.

Attempts were made to include indicators on market access, water and sanitation within the village facility survey at the design stage, but CSO only agreed to add one indicator on water. This is a major lost opportunity, given the expense of visiting every village in Afghanistan, and the small number of additional questions requested from MRRD to meet this most acute data need.

**6. Collect non-food consumption data as well as food consumption data.**

Traditionally, consumption-based welfare aggregates use both food and non-food consumption information. While the food consumption alone can still provide a useful estimate of a poverty line and profile, there is significant inter-country variation on the proportion of income spent on food and non-food items for those households around the poverty line. Collaborating this ratio for Afghanistan will be important for future poverty analysis.

**7. Improve WFP/VAM Standard Analytical Framework (SAF).**

While VAM's SAF vaguely discusses best practices, there are no specific examples or guidance on the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. The SAF should be able to supply a critical review of the range of existing approaches to assessing food security and construct a more technically detailed and practical analytical framework. It is likely some of the weaknesses in the methodology used to date could have been avoided with the production of a more technically rigorous SAF for WFP's food security assessments.

## Appendix 1: WFP/VAM Standard Analytical Framework (SAF)

The VAM unit is defining a Standard Analytical Framework which sets the following standards:

- SAF analyses should be consistent with a common conceptual framework of food security and vulnerability and use “best practices” in assessment.
- To this end, VAM analyses should reflect a standard and shared conception of food security and vulnerability, and utilise common terminology.
- The SAF should not specify which analytical techniques and methods to use in VAM assessments, but should require the use of “best practices” in the way the analysis is structured, data manipulated and results interpreted.
- SAF analyses should use both primary and secondary information, as appropriate.
- Some information needs – geographic targeting, sectoral problem identification – are well served by analysis of secondary data.
- Others, such as beneficiary targeting and programme design, may be better met using primary data collected directly from the food insecure and vulnerable.
- SAF encourages the development of a participatory, primary data collection and analysis process to complement and challenge secondary data.
- SAF analyses are designed to feed decision-making processes; they should, therefore, be transparent and accessible to those who produce and use this information.
- The ultimate goal of the SAF process is to identify analytic processes, information products and support materials (guidelines, training modules, etc.) that will allow food security and vulnerability assessments to be undertaken and understood by all WFP staff and its partners.
- SAF defines a core group of VAM analyses, which should be undertaken in all WFP country offices.
- These analyses should provide both a country-wide and a community-specific context for the following:
  - Understanding and measuring vulnerability to food insecurity;
  - Monitoring changes in food security;
  - Identifying causes and plausible solutions; and
  - Planning for future food security and vulnerability problems.

## Appendix 2: Existing Methodologies That Influenced NRVA 2003 Development

Methodology	Description	Influence on NRVA
<b>The Household Economy Approach (HEA)<sup>7</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A robust and widely tested methodology for assessing food security.</li> <li>• Advocates the use of wealth groups in rural communities as a cost-effective means of estimating household welfare. This is because it is felt that households within wealth groups in rural communities will be sufficiently homogeneous in the way they derive their livelihoods.</li> <li>• Wealth groups are not used for urban assessments because of the much greater level of livelihood diversity expected within the same wealth group. This would make the typifying of the household livelihood problematic.</li> <li>• The key HEA analytical approach is to collect data on ex-post income but verify it with a validation on subsistence level food consumption. This is done by asking respondents to account for sufficient income or production to account for the energy needed for the household over the past year. This prevents significant underreporting of income/production for households that fall below the extreme poverty line.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wealth group methodology was adopted and incorporated in the 2003 NRVA.</li> <li>• The analytical approach to validating income was considered, but rejected because it was felt to be too challenging to train a large number of enumerators in a very short time to manage the required calculations correctly in the field to effectively use this technique.</li> <li>• While very good at predicting the impact of large covariate shocks on rural populations characterised by typifying of wealth groups, it is not appropriate to monitor poverty and the effects of development policies, programmes and projects on living standards.</li> </ul>
<b>The World Bank Living Standard Measurement Survey (LSMS)<sup>8</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determines living standards by measuring economic inputs and consumption as opposed to income.</li> <li>• Measuring aggregate consumption in households in developing countries can be a more accurate measure of welfare, where the range of goods consumed is low and the diversity of income sources relatively high.</li> <li>• Seasonal patterns in consumption are typically smaller than those in income, because consumption is less tied to seasonal or weather-related patterns in agriculture than income. However, consumption recorded for less than a year is likely to overstate poverty and inequality.</li> <li>• The theoretical advantages of measuring consumption over income decreases as the survey period gets longer: If it is feasible to visit households on many occasions throughout the year, such surveys will clearly capture seasonality in the household income.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A food consumption module was included at household level to overcome issues of underreporting of income generally found in household surveys, but likely to be particularly acute in the rural Afghan economy that is often dominated by the cultivation of opium and marijuana.</li> <li>• Non-food items, normally collected in an LSMS, were not collected in the NRVA because of time/cost limitations for the enumerators to be in each village.</li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Seaman, J., Clarke, P., Boudreau, T., and Holt, J. *Household Economy Approach: A Resource Manual for Practitioners*. London: Save the Children UK. 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Grosh and Glewwe, op cit.



Methodology	Description	Influence on NRVA
<b>The World Bank Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ)<sup>9</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is intended to monitor poverty and the effects of development policies, programmes and projects on living standards without the large survey and expense of a full LSMS.</li> <li>• Employs simple indicators to identify who is, and who is not, benefiting from various actions designed to improve the social and economic status of the poor.</li> <li>• Normally designed to relate to the in-depth consumption and income data of an LSMS through proxy indicators core welfare, i.e. those readily verifiable indicators shown to be determinants of poverty either at a regional or national level in a proceeding LSMS.</li> <li>• Helps provide policy makers with household-level information for policy formulation and evaluation.</li> <li>• Focuses on the collection of information to measure peoples' access, use and satisfaction with key social and economic services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The household questionnaire sections on household demographics, migration, health, education and employment were modelled on formats used in previous CWIQ questionnaires.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup> The World Bank. *C W I Q (Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire) Handbook and CD-Rom. Africa Operational Quality and Knowledge Services*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. December 1999.

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CWIQ	(World Bank) Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire
EFNA	Emergency Food Need Assessments
FAIPU	Food and Agriculture Information Policy Unit
FAO	(United Nations) Food and Agriculture Organisation
HEA	Household Economy Approach
IDP	Internally displaced person
LSMS	(World Bank) Living Standard Measurement Survey
MAAH	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NEEP	National Emergency Employment Programme
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRVA	National risk and vulnerability assessment
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
SAF	Standard Analytical Framework
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission on Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme

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