

DETERMINANTS OF HOUSEHOLD VULNERABILITY AMONG RURAL COMMUNITIES
IN MAPHUTSENG AREA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME OF LESOTHO

By

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to find out the principal determinants of vulnerability among households in the Maphutseng community of Lesotho. This was done in order to provide alternative effective household targeting methods for social protection and development programmes implemented by governments and non-governmental organizations, respectively. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used. A census survey of 2 566 households in three Community Councils was carried out. Sixteen focus group discussions were conducted in three centres of Setanteng, Mpharane and Ha Sekoati. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0. The Household Vulnerability Index (HVI) model that is anchored on the application of the five capitals (namely natural, social, human, financial and physical) as propounded by the Department for International Development (DFID) was used to compute the indices of vulnerability and descriptive statistics. A Community Council was adopted as the unit of analysis.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Kruskal Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were used to determine if statistical differences existed between and among groups. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to identify the major determinants of household vulnerability. Eleven principal determinants of household vulnerability were distilled from the 25 candidate dimensions. These could be explained using six extracted principal components, viz.: land ownership, land utilization for food production; number of children and adult meals; age, sex and type of employment of head of household; main source of income; household with debt and availability of second income source; and household receiving remittances.

The most important determinants were observed to be ownership and utilization of land for production, both of which could be classified as natural capitals. These results highlighted the importance of natural capital in Maphutseng households in determining their level of vulnerability. However, through focus group discussions financial capital was found to be an important factor that determined household vulnerability. At least three dimensions that cut across other assets might explain the determinants of household vulnerability when the financial capital category was considered.

The mean household vulnerability indices for male and female headed households were 63.4 and 65.4, respectively. These were significantly different ($t = -6.851$, $P < 0.05$). Understanding the spectrum of principal determinants of vulnerability improves the chances of designing appropriate and effective interventions for development relief. Moreover, it

provides an opportunity for targeting the most deserving households, particularly in light of the current reduction in flow of aid from developed countries. The HVI helped to objectively rank and categorize households into less vulnerable, moderately vulnerable and highly vulnerable classes.

About 6.8 % of the households were highly vulnerable; 89.5 % moderately vulnerable whilst 3.7 % were less vulnerable. The degree of household vulnerability varied significantly across the Khoelenya, Motlejoeng and Teke Community Councils ($F = 10.603$; $P < 0.05$). The mean HVI for Motlejoeng Community Council was 62.6 compared to 61.30 for Khoelenya and 61.29 for Teke. The differences in HVI, though small, emanated from various factors, including ownership and utilization of land for production.

The results of this study highlighted the need for reviewing the land policy in Mohale's Hoek District Council and relevant authorities in order to facilitate equitable distribution. Also crucial was the need for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to develop appropriate strategies for promoting the utilization of land so as to address the vulnerability status in Maphutseng.

Key words: capitals, determinants, HVI, livelihoods, targeting, vulnerability