

CONSULTANT: Monitoring Household Coping Strategies during Complex Crises and Recoveries

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| Location : | Home Based |
| Vacancy Type : | External Vacancy |
| Application Deadline : | |
| Type of Contract : | SSA |
| Post Level : | SSA |
| Languages Required : | English |
| Starting Date : (date when the selected candidate is expected to start) | |
| Expected Duration of Assignment : | To be completed by |

Background

The recent global economic slowdown has exposed vulnerable populations to income and price shocks, raising risks in terms of human development, poverty reduction, equity and achievement of the MDGs. Based on events to date as well as evidence from past crises and other aggregate shocks, it is clear that poor households in developing countries—notably children and women in these households—face substantial risks and that immediate support is necessary. Such risks become all the more imminent in the context of the soaring food prices of the last few years that already caused significant losses along these dimensions.

However, while many macroeconomic indicators such as GDP growth, trade statistics and public revenues have served to mark the evolving gravity of the situation at the aggregate level, it has been more challenging to answer questions related to the impact of the crisis at the level of households and individuals. Such impact is multi-dimensional and could, in principle, be determined through a host of indicators. However, policymakers often strain to find those that are most appropriate in terms of coverage, availability and responsiveness to changing conditions. This situation is one reason for the launch of the UN Secretary General's Global Pulse Initiative, which is expected to systematically build upon existing endeavours to create a more effective monitoring system, both for now and the future.

One characteristic of human behaviour in such situations is adaptation, through recourse to various coping strategies at individual and, sometimes, community levels. Such strategies may be especially apparent in the case of poor households and in some cases, short term coping behaviour may be the precursor of long term harmful consequences for human development that may only become obvious later (Dercon, 2002; Skoufias, 2000).

The ability to cope may itself vary depending on the duration of the crisis as well as the period *between* crises. Important issues of crisis recovery come into play when increasing crisis frequency prevents households from recovering adequately from prior shocks, thus weakening their resilience over time.¹ The direct observation of indicators related to coping strategies, as well as a contextual analysis of these indicators, might be able to provide useful information for policymakers about the size of household impacts as well as how policies could best support and protect children, women and poor families during crisis and recovery periods.

For the purpose of a thorough analysis of these and related issues, UNDP (in partnership with UNICEF) is currently hiring an international consultant under the UNDP-UNICEF joint policy research project Monitoring Household Coping Strategies during Complex Crises and Recoveries.

For additional information or questions, contact Ms. Shivani Nayyar: shivani.nayyar@undp.org

Duties and Responsibilities

1. Objective

The main objective of this project is to help fill a critical information gap at the micro- household level, focusing on data collection as well as analyses of new and existing data on the coping behaviour of households. Two main outputs are envisioned. The first is a **policy research study on the evolution of coping behaviour** during crises and recovery periods, in order to inform monitoring efforts by the UN as well as policymakers' responses to crises. The second main output is the development of a **community level crisis and recovery monitoring module** which will serve as a tool for both UNDP and UNICEF country offices and their partners in the cost-effective gathering of information on human development and the related household coping behaviours during crises and other situations. A third objective is developing stronger partnerships with Southern researchers and civil society groups in the use of community level monitoring and sentinel sites, in anticipation of future possible aggregate shocks that raise risks for human development.

(1) Policy Research Study on Coping Behaviour

The analytical component of the project will synthesize the information available on household level coping strategies as well as identify and validate related observable indicators on human development. Some of the main questions motivating this proposal include the following:

- Which coping strategies do households use to deal with different risks and shocks? The objective here is to build on the present practice of monitoring coping behaviour (e.g. community level monitoring systems, WFP's coping strategies index, etc.) and identify a key set of indicators (plus possible context-specific ancillary indicators).
- How are different coping behaviours linked to human development outcomes and the MDGs? The study will provide a conceptual and empirical analysis of the links across coping behaviours and key human development indicators, building on the existing policy and academic literature, as well as from the ground where available.
- Is there a hierarchy or ranking of these coping behaviours that links them systematically to the severity (or some other observable characteristic) of the crisis? Policymakers could use this information so as to monitor coping behaviour over time in order to gain insights on the evolving severity of household impact.
- Could data on coping strategies add value to the broader monitoring effort on human vulnerability to different risks and shocks? How could this better inform decision makers in terms of ensuring adequate and timely actions, notably in the area of social protection?

One broader objective is to build on the use of coping behaviour as part of ex ante early warning indicators (such as WFP's application) by also integrating the monitoring of recovery. For example, time lags between the onset of macroeconomic recovery and changes in household level coping behavior,;

the speed with which households desist from using particular coping strategies and the role of social protection policy in forestalling adverse human development impacts would all be illuminated by this aspect of the work. In addition, this would also inform policymakers on the completeness of recovery at the household level.

The policy research component will require several intermediate inputs: a) putting together and analyzing a **panel dataset on household coping behaviour** covering pre-, crisis and recovery periods; and b) **the production and application of a community level crisis and recovery monitoring module**. Both these objectives could be linked, depending on the datasets that are available in the 2-3 countries which will be the main focus of this project. The aim is to build a dataset for a few countries, which could be used to track and analyze the behaviour of households over time

(2) Community Level Crisis and Recovery Monitoring Module

The module will be developed by the consultant in close collaboration with a small group of advisors, including from UNDP, UNICEF and WFP. The goal is to build on the already existing practice of monitoring household coping behaviours,ⁱⁱ with some adaptation to cover not just pre- and crisis periods, but also the recovery period. Key additional aspects such as debt levels and how these change over time will also be considered to provide a fuller sense of the inclusiveness of the ensuing recovery. The important role of access to social protection and other basic services will also be captured in line with this. Drawing on the policy and academic literature, below is a preliminary and non-exhaustive list of indicators of coping behaviour that would be considered:

- Net asset depletion
 - Selling household assets (including non-productive and productive assetsⁱⁱⁱ)
 - Increased time poverty (time is an asset for the poor, especially women)
 - Closing a business
 - Taking on more debt^{iv}
- Diminished human capital investments
 - Nutrition: Eating less food (or eating lower quality food)
 - Education: Pulling children out of school
- Migration
 - Migration to look for work
 - Migration of children/families to join relatives during a shock
- Income augmentation
 - Taking on more jobs (for family members already working)
 - Sending family members into the labor force (including child labor)
 - Starting entrepreneurial initiatives (activities in the informal sector), etc.
 - Begging, etc.
- Other changes in consumption with possibly adverse consequences^v
 - Switching energy sources (e.g. from oil to collecting firewood)
 - Switching water sources (e.g. from safe drinking water to collecting water from open sources)
 - Switching from private to public providers of goods and services (i.e. implying increased stress on social services, social welfare and social protection systems unless adequately boosted)
 - Switching to cheaper (or less nutritious or wild) food sources^{vi}
- Community based coping^{vii}

- Transfers and loans from family and extended network.
- In the case of rotating schemes such as ROSCAS, fall in frequency of meetings.

(3) Application of Community Level Monitoring and Sentinel Sites

Sustained work on community level monitoring and sentinel sites could help provide critical information to central and local governments as well as development partners on the impact of different aggregate shocks, and help facilitate more timely and effective responses. Other applications may also help strengthen participatory decision making and empowerment of citizens, in order to help improve governance at the local government level. Investments in community level monitoring could thus open the possibilities for different applications, as well as strengthen human development monitoring.

2. Main Deliverables

The main deliverables of the project are:

- (1) Creating a community level crisis and recovery monitoring module to be applied in a core group of 2-3 countries. The questionnaires should cover the key issues outlined under 'objectives', as comprehensively as possible. (There is a possibility of future expansion of the scope of this project. However, his TOR is only for an initial proposal of 2-3 countries.
- (2) As part of the policy research study, conduct empirical analysis of data produced through (1), in order to examine the nature of crisis impact and recovery given different contextual factors. Some of the main research questions to frame this study are outlined under 'objectives'. Data analysis will also include cross checking and validation against other available country level data, in consultation with national and local level governments.
- (3) Both (1) and (2) will then be used as inputs in developing a final community level crisis and recovery monitoring module that could be deployed in crisis and emergency situations. The penultimate objective of the project is to arrive at a shared and more standardized monitoring tool that UNICEF, UNDP, as well as other agencies, could use in order to monitor the impact of crises and the ensuing recovery process. This tool seeks to aid in designing policy options that more effectively address the evolving vulnerability of families, women and children during crises and emergencies. It may also be possible to explore the use of this tool for decision making with regard to social protection.

3. Notes on Country Selection

This initiative will involve 2-3 countries, preferably at least one each in Asia and Africa. These could be countries with an existing direct monitoring through a questionnaire linked to the global financial crisis. It could also be a country where the timing of a regular survey was such that the impact of the crisis would be reflected. Availability of pre-crisis baseline data will be an added advantage.

Other factors to consider include expectation of a difficult recovery period for the country, due to macroeconomic context, labor market structure continued vulnerability to food price and financial volatility, government policies etc. As mentioned above, we are interested not only in the depletion of assets during coping but also the eventual recovery and building up of assets. Hence, the study will

prioritize looking into countries where the crisis recovery period involves clear human development risks and merits continued monitoring and policy engagement. Such a context also offers a richer basis for analysis.

The applicant will have to demonstrate sufficiently deep experience in the countries proposed.

4. Costing and Execution Arrangements

- This project will be jointly financed and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF.
- The consultant will work closely with a joint UNDP UNICEF advisory committee.
- Consultations and buy in by government, at local and national levels, will be an important step in the finalization of the study.
- UNDP and UNICEF will together approve the final outputs of the project, on a consensual basis.

5. Application Procedures

Applicants must submit the following documents by the deadline indicated. Curriculum Vitae

(1) A technical outline of the survey methodology (maximum 2 pages), including:

- Proposed selection of countries.
- Past professional experience in proposed countries.
- Past experience with implementation of proposed methodology.

This can be combined with the CV and uploaded or alternately, emailed to shivani.nayyar@undp.org

(2) A budget proposal indicating timeline and cost proposal for each of the following deliverables:

- Production of a draft community level crisis and recovery monitoring questionnaire^{viii}
- Implementation of questionnaire in 2 or 3 countries, first round.
- Preparation and presentation of first report covering:
 - Analyses of results for above countries
 - Empirical analyses of panel data on coping behaviour
 - Draft conceptual framework for understanding and monitoring coping behaviour^{ix}
- Preparation of revised questionnaire.
- Implementation of fine-tuned questionnaire in the same 2-3 countries, second round.
- Preparation and presentation of final report.

This can be combined with the CV and uploaded or alternately, emailed to shivani.nayyar@undp.org

Competencies

- A minimum of 10 years work experience in an international development context.
- Experience with high quality data collection, designing and implementing household surveys.
- Proven record in capacity building, particularly at the community level.
- Demonstrated ability to produce high quality writing in economic and social policy issues.
- Relevant work experience in developing countries, preferably in Africa and/or Asia, will be an asset.

Required Skills and Experience

- Post graduate degree in Economics, Social Sciences, Development Studies or related discipline (PhD desirable).
- Experience in development policy research in human development, poverty, government policy, social protection, community level monitoring.
- Proven publication record, preferably peer reviewed papers and journals.
- Solid knowledge of statistics, econometrics, survey methodologies.
- Proficiency in various MS Office applications (Excel and Word).
- Fluency in English is required.
- Ability to write clearly and concisely.

Endnotes

ⁱ Issues related to macroeconomic recovery are well studied, yet microeconomic or household-level recovery issues are often not well documented. Some analyses exist and focus on income-related measures; see for instance the study of the Mexican crisis by Cunningham and Malone (2000). Further, del Ninno and others (2001;2003) track debt and child nutrition levels during and after the floods in Bangladesh in 1998.

ⁱⁱ The literature in this area is extensive and includes work by the World Food Programme (see Qureshi, 2007; CARE, 2008) and recent work examining the social impact of the global crises of 2008-2009 (see Brinkman and Mahama, 2009; Hossain, 2009; Reyes and others, 2010; TEPAV, UNICEF and World Bank, 2009; and SMERU Research Institute, 2009).

ⁱⁱⁱ In certain countries, productive assets may include livestock, which are often disposed at ill opportune conditions during crises at precisely the time when their values plunge (Verpooten, 2009).

^{iv} In order to better examine the recovery period, it would be critical to track how debt is unwound by the household, and not just whether it increases during a crisis. A study of household debt holding after the 1998 floods in Bangladesh found evidence that more than 60 percent of poor and flood-exposed households borrowed money after the flood. Subsequently, their debt rose by an average of 1.5 months of typical consumption. Furthermore, 15 months after the flood, household debt still averaged 146 percent of one month's average consumption for two-thirds of flood exposed households in the bottom 40 percent of the expenditure distribution (del Ninno and others, 2003:1235).

^v These are critical to monitor particularly as they may signal greater time poverty, notably among women and girls on whom the burden of these strategies typically fall. In many parts of the world, women and young girls also bear the brunt of the "time costs" of poverty. They have less (or not enough) time for rest and leisure, hence higher "time poverty"—and this can only be expected to increase under crisis situations when the household faces even lower income and other types of distress (e.g. possibly lower public services if these are cut as a result of the crisis) (Bardasi and Wodon, 2006; Malmberg Calvo, 1994).

^{vi} It must be noted that some adjustments in this regard need not result in lower levels of nutrition intake. See for instance the analysis by Lokshin and Yemtsov (2010) of dietary adjustments by Russian families during the 1999 debt crisis in that country.

Nevertheless, these authors confirm the general observation that poorer households with less human capital and other assets tend to have more difficulty adjusting.

^{vii} For a discussion of community based coping, see Bhattamishra and Barrett (Forthcoming) and Skoufias (2000).

^{viii} To be produced in consultation with UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP staff involved in this project. During this period, project managers will also finalize the core group of 2-3 countries in which the project will be implemented.

^{ix} This section of the report will be produced in collaboration with UNDP and UNICEF policy staff.