

Informing Contextual Livelihood Programming: Situational Analysis

SUMMARY

- The SA informs a context-specific approach to designing livelihood programs
- The SA consists of two major sections: national- and sub-national/community-level analysis
- The SA process examines five major contextual factors: 1) policy environment, 2) availability of and access to ES/L/FS, 3) community networks and cultural beliefs, 4) market actors and private-sector players, and 5) gender.

INTRODUCTION

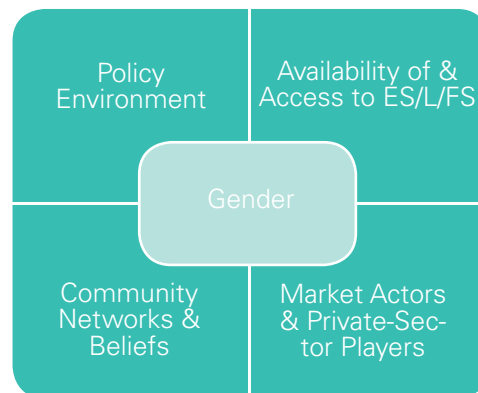
As communities analyze their own strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for change, a situational analysis (SA) can play a transformational role through increasing the awareness of all stakeholders as actors of change. From the national level to the community level, an SA provides a critical understanding of a wide array of interrelated factors—including contextual vulnerabilities, societal gender and cultural norms related to economic strengthening, livelihoods, and food security (ES/L/FS). The analysis of these interrelated factors through an SA helps to inform a more context-specific approach to the design of livelihood programs.

The Livelihoods and Food Security Technical Assistance II (LIFT) project engages an extensive pool of people, public institutions and private organizations as a first step to understanding the availability and accessibility of HIV- and AIDS-related services for affected populations. The SA is the starting point for program design; its results inform decisions on customizing LIFT's approach to specific countries and local communities. Furthermore, the SA also is intended to support the development of national capacity and the policymaking processes.

CONDUCTING A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The SA is divided into two major sections, the national and sub-national/community-level analysis, and it includes five primary components: 1) policy environment, 2) availability of and access to ES/L/FS, 3) community networks and cultural beliefs, 4) market actors and private-sector players, and 5) gender.

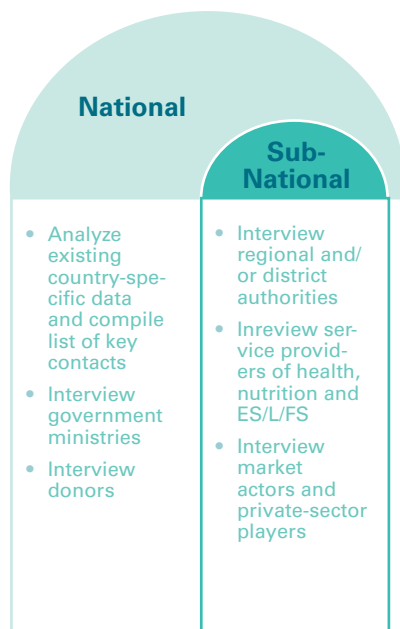
To inform program design, it is important to understand both the key national and sub-national/community actors involved in providing services related to ES/L/FS, HIV and AIDS, health and nutrition, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), and key populations, as well as the relationships among them and initiatives that offer opportunities for synergy with LIFT II. Developing a preliminary list of government, private-sector and civil society actors that provide or are relevant to ES/L/FS services in the catchment area¹ is a critical first step in this process.



The **national-level analysis** entails engaging with government and international development policymakers about HIV and AIDS, ES/L/FS policy, and the institutional environment. Specific objectives of the national-level analysis include:

- Recognizing the administrative divisions within the country.
- Considering policies, priorities, and areas of engagement by international policymakers and donors.
- Examining the drivers of the HIV and AIDS pandemic; challenges to effective intervention, including the role of local attitudes and norms about HIV and AIDS; and opportunities for policy and programming improvements—including the role of markets.
- Developing advocacy objectives for social change, where appropriate.

¹A catchment area, the area and population from which an individual service attracts visitors or customers, helps to define the boundaries of the area to be included in the assessment.



LESSONS LEARNED

Through LIFT's experience carrying out situational analyses in **Malawi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Tanzania and Lesotho**, we have improved our understanding of trends such as the local pattern of the spread of HIV infection, prime pandemic drivers, economic activities and opportunities, service availability, and other resources. We have also expanded our knowledge and awareness of communities, gaining a better understanding of household gender dynamics, social cohesion, and legal and political environments. In all of these countries, the knowledge generated through conducting an SA has provided LIFT with a better understanding of local context vulnerabilities and societal gender and cultural norms to develop and implement ES/L/FS services. LIFT has created an SA guidance document as a practical manual to help develop realistic, effective, efficient and contextual livelihood interventions to best protect and improve the well-being of people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS.

The national-level analysis is complemented by a **sub-national/community-level analysis**, which entails engaging representatives from the district government and service providers. The overall goal of this portion of the SA is to assess the availability and accessibility of ES/L/FS services by people living with HIV (PLHIV), their socio-economic concerns, and their connection to markets in the search for livelihood opportunities. The unit of analysis for the sub-national/community inquiry should be guided by what level the project or program aims to work with. For LIFT, this has meant a focus on the communities that constitute the nutrition assessment, counseling and support (NACS) health facility catchment areas. The specific objectives at the sub-national/community level include:

- Understanding the program's catchment area (and refining this, as needed) as well as the community's attitudes and beliefs.
- Assessing the effectiveness of sub-national coordination and implementation mechanisms for services related to HIV and AIDS, health and nutrition, OVC and ES/L/FS.
- Reviewing and documenting the sub-national government structures operating within the catchment area that may be relevant for linking clinical services with ES/L/FS services.
- Examining the social and economic needs and concerns of PLHIV and HIV-affected households, and the extent to which gender roles are a factor.
- Analyzing households' connections with markets, how those markets function (particularly for access to goods and services), and available income opportunities.
- Analyzing the effectiveness of available ES/L/FS services in addressing identified needs and concerns.
- Identifying priority actions to improve the design and delivery of ES/L/FS services to PLHIV and HIV-affected households.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OUTPUTS

The SA includes both qualitative and quantitative data and strategic priorities for action. The final product includes a formal report that articulates these findings in a concise and easy-to-understand manner. Other potential communication products resulting from the SA include fact sheets, pamphlets and PowerPoint presentations that summarize findings and recommendations. Advocacy and educational campaigns about the major findings and recommendations can also be developed. The information garnered in the SA and available in any of these products is key to not only contextualizing LIFT's model to the country environment, but also to mobilizing stakeholders and the community more broadly.

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For more information on LIFT II, please visit our website: www.theliftproject.org

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