4.4 COMMUNITY FACTORS ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

Introduction

The community and structural context provides the context within which to understand and interpret the individual and household/family factors. Community factors refer to the immediate physical and social surroundings of individuals and households/families that either increase or decrease an individual's likelihood of experiencing violence, exploitation or abuse before, during or after migrating. This toolkit provides guidance on how to assess the ways in which community-level factors influence an individual's vulnerability by using the assessment tool provided.

Use of the community factors assessment tools will only provide part of the contextual information necessary to interpret the individual and household/family factors – the structural factors are also an important element of this contextual analysis. Refer to Parts 2, 3 and 5 for information on conducting assessments of the individual, household/family, and structural factors.

This toolkit contains: (a) a discussion of different community-level factors and how they influence vulnerability; (b) an assessment tool to be used to gather, structure and present the information needed to assess the impact of community-level factors on migrant vulnerability; and (c) guidance on how to apply and adapt the assessment tool.

Community factors

The list of factors described in this section are based on existing literature on vulnerability to violence, exploitation and abuse, as well as research conducted using the IOM determinants of migrant vulnerability framework. The community factors discussed in this section can be assessed through use of the assessment tool provided in this toolkit.

Individual status, identities, beliefs and orientations

There are a number of identities, statuses, beliefs and orientations that either increase or decrease vulnerability to violence, exploitation or abuse before, during or after migrating. These include: racial identities, ethnic identities, religious identities, linguistic identities, sex (male, female or intersex), gender and gender identities, sexual orientations, social class, socioeconomic status, jobs, marital status, education, familial or kinship linkages, being older/elderly, and being younger (a child or an adolescent).

Analysis of this factor requires: (a) understanding the impact of these characteristics on an individual's status within the community; (b) understanding how people are treated based on this status; and c) how this status and treatment impacts their vulnerability to violence, exploitation and abuse. For example, in some communities, individuals' whose sexual orientation is anything other than heterosexual (or is perceived to be anything other than heterosexual) are marginalized – through denial of access to shelter, services and employment – and this treatment may incentivize them to engage in risky behaviours or migration practices that expose them to risk. They may also be specifically targeted for violence, exploitation and abuse.

Community beliefs, practices and expectations in relation to particular groups

There are multiple community beliefs, practices and expectations about particular groups of people that increase vulnerability for individuals who are part of those groups. These include beliefs, practices and expectations towards people based on their age, for example a belief that the eldest child is responsible for earning money to contribute to the upbringing of their younger siblings, even if this entails risky migration. It also includes beliefs, practices and expectations based on sex, for example a belief that a daughter should marry young so as to reduce the financial burden on her family. Other examples include beliefs, practices and expectations based on health, such as the practice in some communities of hiding a person with a disability or forcing them to undertake unwaged domestic labour; and those based on race or caste, such as the belief in some communities that certain types of jobs should only be performed by members of certain castes.

Analysis of this factor requires: (a) elaborating what beliefs, practices and expectations in a particular community lead to greater vulnerability; (b) analysing their prevalence; and c) understanding how they impact an individual's vulnerability to violence, exploitation and abuse.

Livelihoods and employment opportunities

Adequate financial resources – and therefore access to livelihoods and employment opportunities – is a key protection factor as it allows individuals to meet their needs and responsibilities. Conversely, poor or no access to such opportunities makes it difficult for individuals to meet their needs and responsibilities, exposing them to various forms of insecurity and increasing their likelihood of engaging in risky behaviour to earn income.

Analysis of this factor requires: (a) an understanding of the availability of decent work in the community, in both the formal and informal sectors; and (b) an understanding of which groups within the community, if any, are excluded from access to decent work, and the extent of that exclusion. This analysis therefore captures potential generalized vulnerability arising from an overall lack of decent work in the community, as well as the vulnerability of particular groups whose situations might be worse than the overall one.

Environmental and climate factors

The natural environmental and climate of a community can shape access to food, shelter, and livelihoods and employment opportunities. Environmental degradation, climate change and natural disasters can increase the vulnerability of community members when they disrupt normal social interactions, destroy crops and livelihoods, and cause injury and illness. Natural disasters are also associated with displacement.

Analysis of this factor focuses on the extent to which the natural environment and climate introduces risk for communities, including the risk of displacement.

Existence and accessibility of services (education, health care, financial services, decent housing and other social services)

Access to education, health care, decent housing, as well as financial services (such as money transfer services and savings opportunities) and social services (such as police and fire services and job training) is in general associated with decreased vulnerability. This is because all of these services are linked to more positive living circumstances, including being better-informed and more empowered, as well as having better employment prospects, health and living conditions, and services that tend to be associated with a higher standard of living.

Analysis of this factor then focuses upon: (a) understanding if these important services are sufficiently and equally available to the various segments of the community; and (b) whether and to what extent the level of access impacts vulnerability.

Social networks and civic engagement opportunities

This factor focuses upon opportunities for social engagement, meaning opportunities for social interactions such as those in community centres, cafes or public spaces, and for civil engagement, meaning opportunities for organizing and coming together for political and non-political purposes to address community concerns and issues. A lack of such opportunities tends to be associated with greater vulnerability due to social isolation or an inability to engage collectively on civic issues.

Analysis of this factor seeks to ascertain: (a) whether there are numerous, diverse and equitable opportunities for social and civic engagement overall in the community; and (b) if and to what extent any particular groups are excluded from such opportunities and thereby rendered more isolated and vulnerable.

Prevalence of violence, including from criminality, organized crime and political conflict

Violence is associated with greater generalized vulnerability for the members of the community in which it occurs. It is also associated with particular vulnerability for individuals who are targeted, as well as for their household/family members by virtue of their being potentially exposed to violence as well as called upon to offer support and protection.

Analysis of this factor involves exploring: (a) what, if any, types of violence are present in the community; (b) the prevalence of violence; and (c) if and to what extent violence contributes to displacement or migration.