



VOICE, INCLUSION & COHESION IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES

Consideration of Voice, Inclusion, and Cohesion (VIC) in programming in the humanitarian-development nexus can strengthen HELVETAS' humanitarian response efforts. This is a summary of a longer resource guide that offers key insights, tools, and methods to help ensure VIC is integrated throughout the humanitarian response cycle, from initial assessment to program design, implementation, and evaluation.

VIC IN THE HUMANITARIAN

DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

VOICE & INCLUSION

HELVETAS aligns its work on **voice and inclusion** with the United Nations Protection Cluster, Protection Principles, and all [human-rights-related international mechanisms](#). In doing so, HELVETAS emphasizes its work on:

- **Protection**, to prevent our programs from doing harm or reinforcing the vulnerability of affected communities.
- **Social protection**, to facilitate economic and social resilience's building through existing endogenous dynamics.
- **Human rights based and people-centered programming**, to foster safe and inclusive participation processes of affected communities in development and humanitarian program cycle.
- **Accountability to Affected Populations**, to ensure that our response resonates with the needs, perceptions, and local realities of affected communities and to promote genuine participation for constant program adjustment.

COHESION

HELVETAS aims to address cohesion through various approaches. For HELVETAS, social cohesion is fundamental when working on **migration and forced displacement** as it contributes to ensuring equal access to basic goods, services, and rights and, therefore, encouraging forcibly displaced migrants' and Internally Displaced People's (IDP) social contribution to society at large.

Through social cohesion, HELVETAS aspires to:

- foster the creation of **social bonds, trust, mutual respect and understanding** in humanitarian contexts where tensions between host communities and IDPs/refugees are likely to create intense social disruption.
- facilitate safe and inclusive spaces to mainstream horizontal dialogue **through arts, cultural activities, and social initiatives** where refugees, IDPs, authorities and host communities can develop joint and lasting actions.
- collaborate with **independent media** to debunk infodemics negatively portraying IDPs and refugees based on gender, cultural, and social backgrounds.

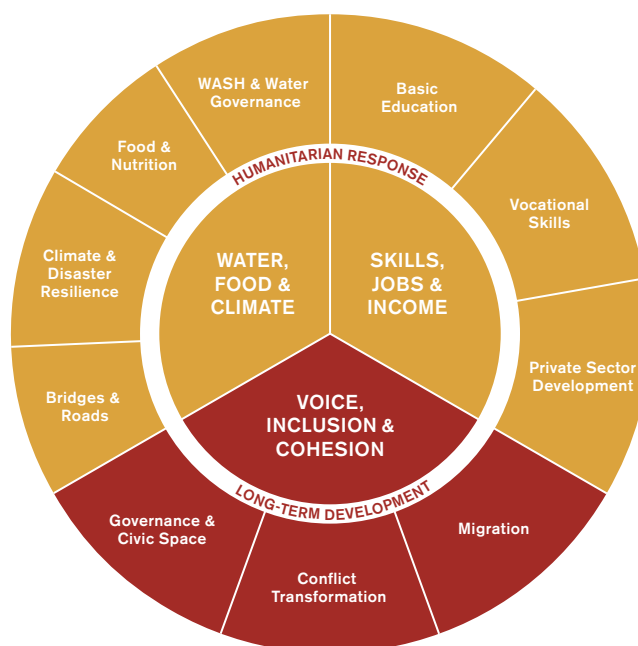


Figure 1 – VIC working area

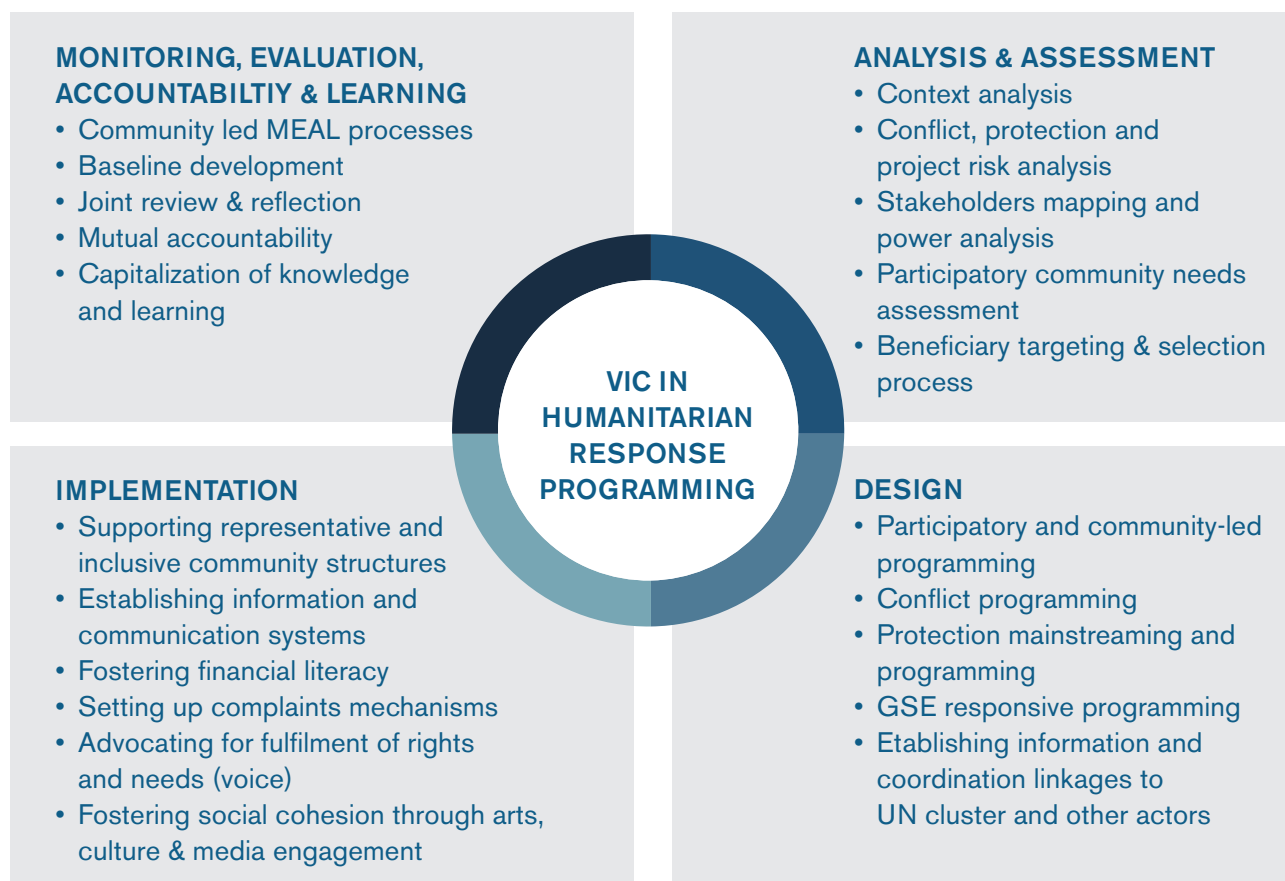


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APPROACHES AND TOOLS IN THE

HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING CYCLE

Along the humanitarian program cycle, a broad selection of complementary and VIC related tools and approaches can be applied, depending on the given context:



ANALYSIS, ASSESSMENT & DESIGN

Conflict sensitivity and risk analysis

Apply the three steps approach to conflict-sensitive programming: a) understand the context; b) understand how the intervention interacts with the context; c) make strategic decisions for program and project management based on the context and the nature of the interaction. The [3-Steps guide for Conflict Sensitive Program Management](#) provides in-depth methods and tools.

Conduct a [protection risk analysis](#) to assess threats, vulnerabilities, and identify coping mechanisms.

Assess [programmatic risks](#) by evaluating the extent to which program objectives, approaches and means will achieve comprehensive program expectations;

Humanitarian responses are prone to institutional risks that can be multidimensional. Therefore, risk assessment may consider analyzing; a) humanitarian aid capture to advance political agenda; b) humanitarian aid as an accessory for systemic corruption; c) humanitarian aid as an international strategy to influence national policy in favor of donor interests.

Stakeholder mapping and power analysis

Conduct a participatory process with affected populations to analyze their situation and how they are experiencing the shifting of power dynamics induced by the evolving context. Refer to the [HELVETAS PEPA manual](#) to deepen your understanding of the approach and to familiarize yourself with the range of tools.

Participatory needs assessment, community-led programming, and selection process

Carry out [participatory needs assessment](#) at an early stage to ensure communities' partnership, ownership, and leadership over the resources and the overall program cycle. Although the contextual, financial, and operational consequences of humanitarian emergencies and protracted crisis may impede application of participatory and community-led programming, use of relevant tools can help to enhance participation in humanitarian response. For example, [Participatory Rural Appraisal](#) and [Participatory Action-Research](#)

A [gender analysis](#) should be mainstreamed throughout the whole process so that the needs identified can resonate with all sociodemographic categories.

Ensure affected communities receive appropriate response to their needs. The [joint principles for targeting assistance framework](#), UNHCR and WFP describe some key principles that should be followed.

Protection mainstreaming and programming

[Protection mainstreaming](#) means that protection principles and meaningful access are incorporated in humanitarian response. Protection Principles 1 and 2 from the [2018 Sphere Guidelines](#) provide clear indications for enhancing affected communities' safety, rights, and dignity and on ensuring their access to assistance according to their needs. [According to the Global Protection Cluster](#), mainstreaming protection in humanitarian intervention requires the followings to be considered: a) prioritize safety & dignity and avoid causing harm; b) set up impartial access to assis-

tance and services for affected people; c) establish adapted accountability mechanism; d) promote effective participation, empowerment, and leadership of the affected population.

[Mainstream protection against sexual and gender-based violence](#) As one of the main protection risks worldwide, it should be mainstreamed into all programming.

Gender and Social Equity responsive programming

Promote transformative change and a better quality of humanitarian response by ensuring programming promotes gender equality and social equity. To ensure that humanitarian response is equitable and protects fundamental rights of all persons, it is essential that women, youths, LGBTQIA, differently abled persons are empowered and well placed to bolster change and combat social and gender barriers.

Humanitarian coordination

HELVETAS collaborates, through the UN Cluster approach, with local and national authorities and other humanitarian organizations to broaden the coverage of humanitarian response and mutually shares relevant information through appropriate communication channels.



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IMPLEMENTATION

Representative and inclusive community structures

HELVETAS supports representative and inclusive community structures to foster community ownership and responsibility among affected communities and to promote sustainable interventions shaped by endogenous capacity and expertise.

Community representation as a prerequisite for site management and protection sectors, requires the followings to be considered: a) genuine participation and inclusion of all categories of persons; b) rights awareness; c) mobilization and engagement of affected communities; d) establishment of transparency and accountability mechanisms.

Information and communication systems

Empowerment of affected communities, as well as their ability to advocate for their rights, relies on relevant information and well-functioning channels of communication that include a) providing information on people's rights; b) making information accessible; c) adapting messages to different groups.

Financial literacy and budget analysis

Transparency about budget allocation is the first step to attain community empowerment and genuine participation.

Financial literacy should be integrated into humanitarian response so that affected communities can be informed about the humanitarian budget and its execution.

Complaint mechanisms

Various [complaint mechanisms](#) can be used depending on the context: complaint and suggestion boxes, SMS incident reporting, hotlines, community help desk and community grievance committees.

Advocacy to fulfil rights and needs

At all times and through the whole program cycle, the voice of the affected communities must be heard. To do so, some of the followings can be considered and should be implemented in a conflict sensitive manner: a) public hearing and people assemblies; b) representing people's needs in UN cluster meetings; c) citizens' reports, community-led advocacy, and campaigning; d) and mutual accountability processes.

Social cohesion through arts & culture and independent media engagement

VIC aims at fostering social cohesion in affected communities through promotion of cultural dialogue, independent and objective media reporting, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity.

HELVETAS has tested tools and approaches, such as, open history initiatives, arts & crafts workshop, community dance and theatre and relevant work with independent media and journalists. Some key examples are included in the [pluralism toolbox](#).



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MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & LEARNING (MEAL)

Community-led MEAL processes

Support communities to identify and track results of humanitarian actors, national and local agencies. Because community participation in MEAL is an upstream work, during the program design phase smart integration of participatory approaches in the MEAL framework should be envisaged.

Baseline development

Make use of [participatory baseline development](#) when starting mid-way and without the relevant baseline information. Participants can create a map/calendar/tree to reflect on the situation and how changes and results resonate with their perception.

Joint review and reflection and mutual accountability

Ensure accountability to affected communities through a [Social Audit](#). This is a process whereby power is handed over to communities to review and examine project, use of funds and local authorities and other humanitarian actors' performance.

[Community Score Cards](#) are a similar participatory tool that is useful for evaluation of HELVETAS projects carried out in emergency context. The cards can be applied in a post-disaster context to monitor disaster response, recovery programs and disaster risk reduction policies.

Capitalization of knowledge and learning

Place knowledge, learning and innovation at the center of interventions. In doing so, Helvetas can continue to gather knowledge and lessons learned for our humanitarian responses in order to continuously adapt and innovate.

VIC TEAM PROFILE AND

ADVISORY SERVICE

The [VIC team](#) is available to provide coaching, training, thematic advice, program development and evaluation support on the integration of the above-mentioned topics and approaches into humanitarian responses. Contact us at (VIC@helvetas.org).



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