Working Paper 190

The Use of Participatory Methods for Livelihood Assessment in Situations of Political Instability: A Case Study from Kosovo

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Acronyms

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CBO	Community-based organisation
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FSU	Food Security Unit (FAO/WFP)
GDP	Gross domestic product
HLS	Household livelihood security
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development (UK)
KFOR	Kosovo Force
LSMS	Living standards measurement survey (World Bank)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SCCPI	Situations of chronic conflict and political instability
SC–US	Save the Children–United States of America
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
USDS	United States Department of State
WFP	World Food Programme (UN)

Summary

This Working Paper reviews the methodology used for a qualitative poverty assessment of Kosovo carried out in July 2000, then draws lessons learned. The purpose of the assessment is summarised along with a description of the group that commissioned the work. An overview of the process used to develop the methodology includes discussion of the use of the livelihoods framework to assess vulnerability in a situation of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI) in relation to other poverty and humanitarian assistance frameworks. The specific methodology used, including training, implementation and analysis of findings is briefly reviewed. The use of participatory methods in a conflict situation is discussed and alternative methods described. The challenges of linking community findings with macro-economic and political trends are highlighted. The question of whether or not the selected approach was the most appropriate concludes the section on methodology.

A selection of key findings and policy recommendations make up the fourth section of the paper, followed by a fifth section on lessons learned. In a final section, the authors comment upon the extent to which operating agencies in Kosovo built upon the findings in their strategies and practices, and on the impact of the process and training on the Kosovar development practitioners who carried out the field work and contributed to the analysis.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and objectives of the assessment

In July 2000, over one year after the end of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing, international organisations operating in Kosovo were in the process of transferring their assistance from emergency relief to longer-term development. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) released their plan on the Reconstruction of Kosovo 2000 in April (UNMIK, 2000). This plan included both short- and long-term programmes for re-launching the Kosovar economy. Such a transition required deep understanding of the situation of the poor and vulnerable together with policies designed to balance economic growth with poverty reduction (known as a 'pro-poor' approach).

Several humanitarian agencies and the assessment team shared the concern that to apply such a universalistic welfare approach in the immediate post-conflict period would lead to the development of an equally universalistic programme for broad-based economic and social reconstruction and growth. The assessment needed to generate new information about poverty that could sensitise sector, macro-economic, and development policy and programming to address specific poverty reduction needs.

At the time of the assessment, there was no reliable data available on the nature and magnitude of poverty in Kosovo. As the Terms of Reference indicated:

> 'The situation of poverty in Kosovo is unclear. Previous assessments, conducted prior to the conflict, have indicated that between 30% and 50% of the population were living in poverty. It is widely assumed that the impact of the conflict, continuing economic stagnation, and an extremely high rate of unemployment have substantially increased the rate of poverty. However, there is no confirmation of the above poverty estimations from available data or analysis, and data since 1989 is scarce' (Mikhalev et al. 2000).

Over the last two decades Kosovars had experienced a series of stresses and shocks to their livelihoods. The economic structure of Kosovo underwent dramatic changes marked by acute economic and political crisis and decline in the 1990s, followed by massive destruction caused by the recent conflict. Yet by July 2000, many of the Kosovars who had fled Kosovo were settling back into their homes and rebuilding their lives. What were their perceptions and priorities?

The voices of the Kosovar population needed to be heard in the development of a 'poverty profile' for their province. As stated in the Terms of Reference for the study: 'It is vital to the effectiveness of these policies and programmes that they take into consideration the situation of the poor and vulnerable'. Although this may sound self-evident, it is common for humanitarian relief actors not to engage local populations in any analysis of their needs and priorities, nor to solicit their views on the work of international agencies. A meta-review of evaluations from Kosovo highlights this particular problem as follows: 'their [evaluators'] management-solutions approach exhibits stakeholder bias that excludes beneficiary perceptions' (ALNAP, 2001).

Therefore the goal of the assessment was 'to contribute to the formulation of a development vision in Kosovo which incorporates the principles of human development, and which is based on an approach of encouraging and enhancing local people's initiative and ability to set their own targets and agenda for sustainable development' (UNDG, 1999). Furthermore, the lead agency for the assessment, CARE International UK, put considerable effort into negotiating with the Inter-Agency Sub-Group to ensure the assessment centred on participatory methods.

It was planned that a quantitative World Bank living standards management survey (LSMS) would follow the participatory assessment to form a province-wide inter-agency poverty profile that would provide the basis for a review of UNMIK policies and programmes, and the development of a Poverty Alleviation Strategy and Action Programme.

Finally, specific objectives of the assessment were to:

- Design, implement, and analyse the results of a qualitative poverty assessment;
- Inform a review of UNMIK, UN agencies and other organisations' policies, projects, and programmes so that they can better address and target issues of poverty, vulnerability, and social needs;
- Discuss with the World Bank to clarify activities leading up to the quantitative poverty survey to ensure that the combination of information can be used to generate a full 'poverty profile' within the definitions and objectives stated for the overall project.

1.2 Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty

The Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty in Kosovo consisted of UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing support to Kosovo's relief and reconstruction efforts.

Box 1 Members of the Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty

United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF)
Save the Children–USA (SC–USA)
CARE International UK
Mercy Corps International
World Vision
Action Against Hunger (UK)
Catholic Relief Services

The Sub-Group was formed as one of many efforts to coordinate the efforts of the diverse actors in humanitarian assistance in Kosovo. A first step in taking coherent action to progress the humanitarian response from a direct assistance mode to a longer- term rehabilitation effort was the development of a joint understanding of poverty in Kosovo. Paradoxically, the Sub-Group remained dominated by external international actors with no representation from local organisations. Yet, to be fair, individuals and their organisations recognised that a key step in making the transition from short-term to longer-term programming required the transfer of responsibility and control to local actors.

2 Application of the Livelihoods Framework in Kosovo

2.1 Justification

For over 10 years CARE International UK and other agencies have used the livelihoods framework to develop programme strategies along the relief to development continuum. Referred to by CARE as household livelihood security (HLS), the framework places the poor at the centre of analysis. Within a specific context, poor households have access to assets that can be analysed at individual, household or community levels. Poor and vulnerable households use and combine these assets to develop livelihood strategies. The prevailing social, institutional, economic, political and environmental context shapes their access to assets and livelihood strategies. It is the combination of livelihood strategies used by households to meet their needs that leads to livelihood outcomes, security or well-being.

CARE's work with the livelihoods framework has centred around three analytical principals:

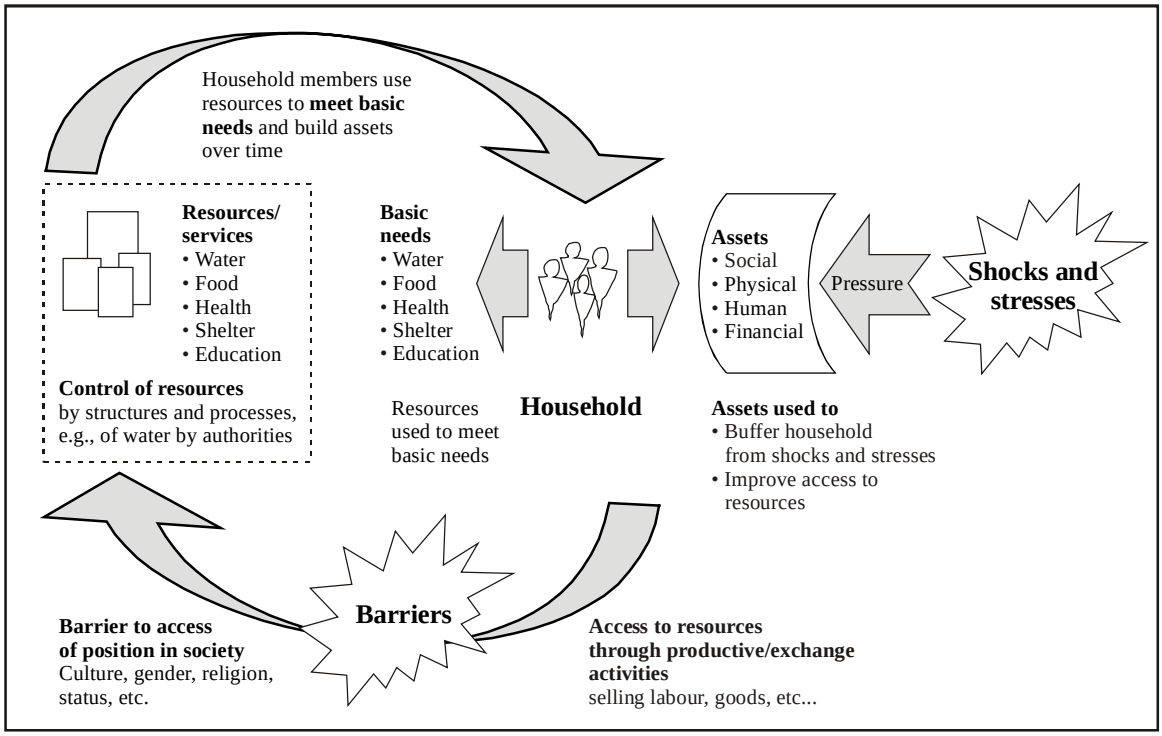
1. The analysis is 'holistic', involving three levels of analysis:
   - Contextual: the analysis explores the major economic, political, social, resource-based and cultural trends and issues facing households in a particular context;
   - Differentiated: the analysis highlights social and economic differentiation between households;
   - Disaggregated: the analysis draws out the different experiences of diverse individuals with regard to gender, and generational differences within households;
2. Livelihoods analysis delineates the 'vulnerability context.' Identifying the wider shocks and stresses that influence livelihoods and present challenges to the maintenance of household assets, or to their accumulation and depletion, then by understanding how and why households are responding to such trends, it gives key insight into livelihood strategies;
3. Finally, CARE's application of the livelihoods framework distinguishes between the vulnerability context, the livelihood strategies of households, and livelihood outcomes. Livelihood outcomes are the results of household livelihood strategies within a particular context. In that context, factors such as markets, governance, policies, and civil society are analysed, showing both the major trends and the prevailing shocks and stresses. At the level of livelihood strategies, the analysis captures the levels of human, social, economic and natural capital of different households, and the nature of the household production, income and exchange activities based on these assets. Consumption activities of household members relate to livelihood outcomes for households with different levels of livelihood security.[1]

The following diagram and notes summarise the livelihood framework, highlighting the dynamic and interactive nature of the various components. Figure 1 describes the framework. Other diagrams are used by different agencies. Figure 1 shows the interpretation of the framework as it was applied in Kosovo (Sanderson and Westley, 2000).

The strengths of applying the framework in a situation of political instability and conflict are multiple. The framework allows for a dynamic understanding of poverty in terms of a vulnerability context that introduces shocks and stresses that households 'manage'. Conflict generates particular forms of stress or shock, which vary in intensity and duration depending on multiple factors. The ability of households to cope with these stresses and shocks is also circumscribed by the conflict itself, and the role or experience of a household in and during the conflict. Therefore, the nature of the conflict, its root causes and way it is experienced by diverse households are directly integrated and analysed through the application of the framework.

[1] This section is based on both published and unpublished work by Michael Drinkwater. See Frankenberger et al. (2000).

Figure 1 The Livelihoods Framework



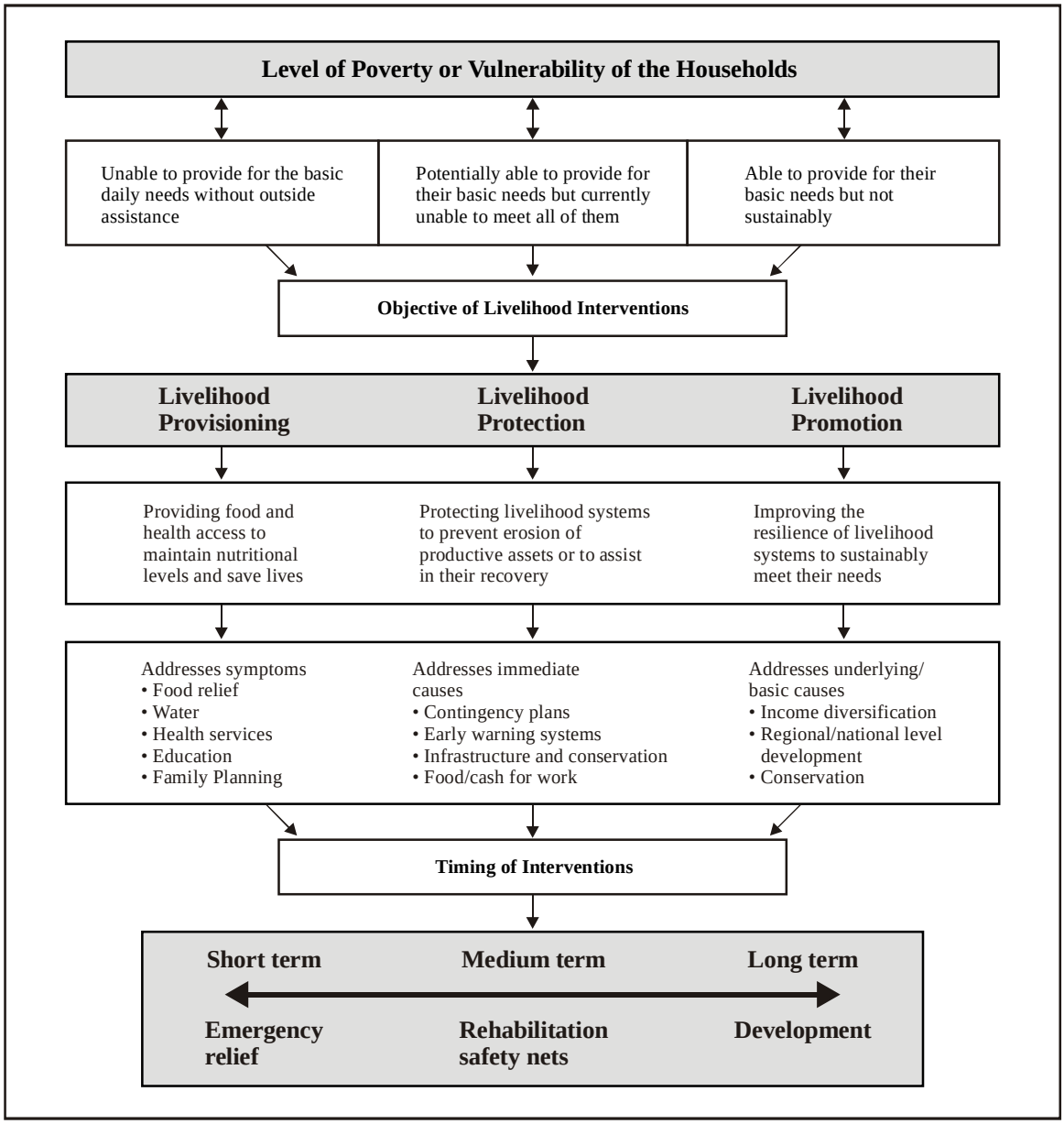
The dynamic nature of the framework allows an understanding of how household livelihoods change over time. Why and how do some households maintain assets and livelihoods during conflicts while others do not? How resilient are households to conflict and what makes them so? While households may appear to have the same levels of assets, one may be significantly less vulnerable than another, i.e. able to maintain assets and livelihood strategies over time. In this sense, the livelihoods framework addresses the central question of 'vulnerability,' which is fundamental to the understanding of how conflict influences poverty.

The livelihoods framework can distinguish between those households currently accumulating assets, those maintaining their assets or those depleting their assets, thus providing direction to development planners. CARE uses the term 'provisioning' to refer to interventions that provide basic needs, 'protection' for those that focus on supporting and maintaining household assets and 'promotion' for ones that aim to increase households' assets over time. This concept is summarised by the 'relief to development continuum' (Figure 2). This continuum is not unidirectional in the sense that in situations of chronic conflict and political instability (SCCPI), households may shift in and out of a position of vulnerability and will require different forms of support at different points in time. Likewise, different households in the same area may require more livelihoods provisioning, protection or promotion at the same point in time.

UNMIK's New Social Assistance Scheme also reflected this categorisation into provisioning, protection (for endemically vulnerable) and promotion (for economically vulnerable) programming. This scheme aimed to provide assistance to two groups of the most vulnerable members of the population:

1. Families **without resources** who are incapable of working;
2. Families **without resources** who are capable of working but unable to find work.

Figure 2 The Livelihoods Framework and the Relief to Development Continuum



Source: Drinkwater and Rusinow, 1999 after Frankenburger 1997

Of these two groups, assistance would be given first as a priority to the population in category 1. What these different vocabularies share in common is: recognition that there will be different needs, requiring different instruments; that the balance of needs will change over time; and therefore, that poverty analysis must seek to understand these dynamics.

For these reasons, the assessment team felt the livelihoods approach was useful in understanding the poverty situation in Kosovo: a context that was changing fast, in which there were winners and losers, and no precise sense of whether the conflict was 'over' and if so, for whom. The livelihoods framework provided the flexibility to clarify some of these dynamics.

Finally, although not an inherent property of the livelihoods framework, it does lend itself to more participatory analysis. This is not to say that the livelihoods framework cannot be applied to undertake more extractive, quantitative analysis. However, in the case of Kosovo, due to the nature of previous interventions that tended not to differentiate between different groups and households

(e.g. 'blanket' targeting of food aid), the lack of participation by communities and households in the humanitarian effort, and the encroaching 'dependency' mentality, the team favoured a participatory approach.

2.2 Obstacles encountered in applying the livelihoods framework

The choice of the livelihoods framework as the analytical approach met with several obstacles. Team members from different backgrounds each faced particular learning curves that caused some discomfort and friction. Those most familiar with applying the livelihoods framework had little experience in the Balkans. Those with experience in the Balkans or in transitional states had less practical understanding of the livelihoods framework, and favoured economic and income-based poverty analysis. The tensions in the team created gaps in the analysis, particularly in making the macro- or micro-links. The macro-analysis tended to be economic, rather than political or social. The micro-level analysis provided depth but was difficult to aggregate. Better co-ordination might have resolved some of these issues, but the conceptual differences played a significant role.

The Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty also proved to be divided. Some group members appeared comfortable and confident about the livelihoods framework, where others showed scepticism or simply failed to incorporate the livelihoods vocabulary and concepts in their feedback. In general, NGOs seemed more at ease with the framework and able to see how it could apply to their own strategies and programmes. Other agencies may have preferred a more quantitative approach or better macro-analysis of social factors.

The team of Kosovar facilitators who carried out the field work for the assessment showed less concern about the conceptual framework. In some cases they were less rooted in single-sector perspectives than the agencies for which they worked.

The strength of working through an inter-agency grouping was that it masked some of the individual agencies' particular methodological and programmatic biases. In this sense, the livelihoods framework was able to unite the sectoral priorities of the various members, highlighting complementarities and assimilating different types of information. However, a certain level of competition between methodologies and approaches is common in the humanitarian and development communities, and Kosovo was no exception.

2.3 Food economy, food security, income, poverty and rights-based frameworks

Different agencies in Kosovo were using other frameworks to understand poverty in Kosovo and to develop their strategies. The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had identified six food economy zones in Kosovo; these became their units for planning and strategy. The food economy zones represented distinct conditions of food-related poverty risks (Lawrence, 1999). The WFP was in the process of reducing coverage of food distribution from the entire province to more vulnerable areas based on food economy zones.

Action Against Hunger (UK) also used a food security approach and had just completed an Anthropometric, Nutritional and Infant Feeding and Weaning Survey. Again, this study was assessing the need for continuing food aid. Interestingly, this survey, found that malnutrition in children was less prevalent than obesity in women of reproductive age. It is perhaps facile at this point to conclude that tools used to assess the impact on livelihoods of other types of emergencies with a combination of environmental and political causes, such as famine, are not directly applicable to SCCPI.

The majority of organisations in Kosovo, however, had recognised that food needs were declining, and other priorities increasing in importance. Therefore a broader understanding of poverty was required, which neither a food security framework, nor a food economy zones approach could provide. In addition, basing assistance on 'geography' determined by agro-ecological factors, contrasted with the ethnic- and conflict-based roots of poverty in Kosovo. Unlike food security approaches, the livelihoods framework emphasises the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty.

Most agencies in Kosovo were concerned with improving targeting criteria, not just for food and other types of direct assistance, but for social protection programmes (safety nets). While income is a common criterion for targeting social assistance in some parts of the world, in Kosovo and other transitional economies it is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, introduction of income testing without prior experience and an administrative framework is costly and organisationally difficult. Secondly, it is impossible to monitor households' incomes due to widespread informal activities and forms of support, such as remittances. Thirdly, social security budgets are unable to provide adequate funding to fully fill the poverty gap. Precisely measuring income was beyond the scope of this assessment, given budget and logistical limitations.

In 2000, the World Bank carried out a LSMS, with a sample size of 2800 households in order to quantify the poverty levels of Kosovars (World Bank, 2001).

The rights-based approach could have been very useful in this assessment. Although, this assessment did not explicitly use such an approach, rights issues dominated both implementation and analysis. Given that the historic abrogation of rights of Kosovar Albanians and minority groups is one of the root causes of poverty in Kosovo, it is difficult to assess poverty there without addressing rights issues. However, had a rights framework been explicitly applied, it is likely that issues of ethnicity would have dominated discussion and masked deeper power struggles and inequalities within ethnic groups, communities and households. Furthermore, many of the humanitarian agencies operating in Kosovo, while carefully observing 'do no harm' and neutrality principles were unlikely to focus their programme strategies on rights issues. At a certain level, the use of participatory methods for assessment takes one step in the rights direction by ensuring that communities gain information, participate in the analysis of their needs and priorities, and gain access to decision making. The practical aspects of conducting an assessment within a situation of ethnic conflict are discussed in Section 3 on Methodology.

In the livelihood framework applied in Kosovo, rights were interpreted in the context of barriers to access goods and services. These barriers emerge from specific identifies (gender, ethnicity, social categories), locations (proximity to conflict zones), household economies, and so forth. Livelihoods analysis is people-centred, and CARE's application of the livelihood's framework focuses on households as the unit of analysis. For example, in the case of assets, whilst other levels of assets, such as natural resources or services are not neglected, they are analysed in terms of the entitlements that households have to those assets. How do households have access to goods and services, and why do some households have access while others do not? (Drinkwater, 2001).

3 Methodology

Two key methodological influences shaped the assessment design: the livelihoods framework and participatory learning and action approaches.

The terms of reference for the livelihood study in Kosovo specified the use of participatory methodologies. The Kosovo participatory livelihood assessment needed to complement and improve upon information gathered in other studies in Kosovo – mostly focussed on food security – as well as a World Bank LSMS planned for the end of the year 2000. Participatory methodologies for livelihood assessment had not previously been used in Kosovo.

In an assessment, the livelihoods framework can be viewed as a 'mental checklist' that guides the development of key questions and lines of enquiry. The analytical principals described in Section 2 above underpinned the development of the methodology at all levels.

The type of methodologies that CARE used over the past five years to analyse livelihoods and implement development programmes fall into two distinct types:

1. Short-duration participatory livelihood assessments that are used in the early assessment stages of a programme and inform programme design. This work is usually intensive, with each community participating for no more than a week at a time and generates a basic, yet holistic analysis of livelihoods. This is the methodology that was used in Kosovo;
2. The second type of methodology is generally implemented over a longer period of time and is less intensive. CARE engages with communities in this way as part of a programme's start-up phase. Initially, these longer-term approaches may generate detailed diagnostic and project design information, but ideally they should rise to an on-going, interactive approach to project implementation, monitoring and evaluation by involving and developing a sense of ownership amongst key stakeholders at the community level and above (de Haan et al. 2002).

The second type of methodology is appropriate when taken up by implementing agencies. Since the work in Kosovo was carried out by an inter-agency group and its primary objective was the generation of information for decision-making, a shorter, more intensive approach was chosen.

The short-duration assessment methodology is by nature more extractive, whereas the longer-term participatory approaches accompany project or programme implementation. In this case, since there were no specific activities planned in the communities that participated, the assessment did not go into an action planning or visioning stage. This would have been the next step in communities where specific activities were planned.

The question of raising expectations in an already fragile environment also led the assessment team to remain more focussed on developing strategic information rather than on moving into the implementation processes. Communicating these objectives to communities in a clear way was a high priority.

3.1 Stakeholder consultation

As a first step the assessment team led a stakeholder consultation process that included individual meetings with a range of humanitarian agencies and other institutions. An initial meeting with the members of the Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty clarified their expectations of the assessment in terms of desired outputs. Individual meetings with each member led to the identification of 19

themes and issues that they wanted to be covered by the study. These themes were then presented to the group in order to reach consensus. A table with a list of themes was sent to the consultation group for ranking. This ranking is summarised in Box 2. This was then presented in a third meeting with the consultation group to ensure transparency of the process.

Box 2 Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty theme ranking

1. Economic activities	11. Access to finance
2. Food security and agriculture	12. Housing/shelter
3. Health	13. Remittances
4. Distribution of poverty within communities	14. Participation
5. Water and sanitation facilities	15. Physical isolation
6. Institutions at the community level	16. Pensions
7. Household economy	17. Land holding
8. Gender	18. Time allocation in households
9. Education	19. Attitude towards new institutions
10. Social capital	

The stakeholder consultation process identified a set of objectives for the implementation of the participatory study. At the household and community levels, the primary goals of the study were to:

- Assess the current severity of vulnerability and poverty in terms of livelihood security and identify the social groups that are most vulnerable;
- Identify the principle constraints to and opportunities for livelihood security;
- Capture trends in vulnerability and poverty in the last decade;
- Assess households' access to various types of assets (natural, social, human, physical and financial) and the importance of these assets to household livelihood security;
- Capture households' livelihoods profile, that is, type of economic and productive activities undertaken by different members of the household;
- Capture intra-household gender and generational relationships in terms of decision-making power and access to assets;
- Undertake institutional analysis at the community level to determine the changes over time and how communities perceive these in relation to support, or lack of it, for individual livelihood and coping strategies.

3.2 Secondary data analysis

The team simultaneously carried out a literature review both in Kosovo, with the help of the Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty members, and in the UK. The purpose of the literature review was to establish macro-trends and to highlight gaps in available data. The available literature was analysed using the livelihoods framework and the analysis also contained a section on sectoral issues. Box 3 summarises the issues analysed through the secondary data review.

The first 'product' of the assessment was the literature review and a presentation of the methodology that would be used for the field-based assessment.

Box 3 Secondary data review areas of analysis

Post-conflict vulnerability and the poverty situation in Kosovo	
Preliminary poverty profile	
Sectoral considerations in livelihood security and poverty analysis	
Food and agriculture	Health services
Urban economy	Education facilities
Mining and industries	Social protection system
Cross-cutting themes	
Extended family system, clientalism and patriarchy	
Women in the post-conflict situation	
Governance	
Data gaps	
Poverty	Urban areas
Women	Seasonality
Youth	Social institutions
Children	

3.3 Preliminary field work

Prior to designing the assessment methodology, the assessment team spent several weeks in Kosovo reviewing secondary data, discussing the expected outputs of the study with a range of stakeholders, and making field visits. The purpose of the field visits was to give the trainers a sense of the appropriateness of participatory methodologies in a post-conflict situation and to gauge the following:

- Was it feasible to expect people to meet in groups?
- How approachable were households?
- What types of questions were appropriate and not appropriate given the current sensitivities?
- What were the best ways to approach communities?
- Who were the community leaders that could make the introductions and bring people together for discussion?

After discussion with local practitioners and field visits, the trainers felt that participatory methodologies would be not only appropriate but also a welcome change from the more extractive approaches used in the past and the 'anonymous' nature of the immediate post-conflict distribution of food and services to meet basic needs. Trainers got the sense that people were eager to talk about their situation and were enthusiastic about having a voice in the on-going dialogue about the future of humanitarian and development assistance in Kosovo.

However, security considerations would impact the implementation of the study in two ways. Firstly, work at Serbian and Albanian sites required team members with the necessary language skills, but more importantly, who were from the respective ethnic groups. There was no way that Serbian and Albanian teams could work together, nor would it be safe for Albanians to work in Serbian areas or vice-versa. Two exceptions during the implementation were notable. In one case, a team member who was half Albanian and half Serbian was able to work across the teams and sites; her insights were particularly valuable. In another case, an Albanian team member who had worked for CARE in Serb enclave areas was able to lead a team in a Serbian enclave.

The second impact was on the tools themselves. It was not possible to carry out group discussions in Northern Mitrovica due to the security situation. The assessment there had to be based on key informant interviews with purposively selected individuals. Separate guidelines and methodology were developed for this area.

Another insight from the pre-assessment fieldwork was the importance of giving individuals and communities the time to express their very personal experiences of the conflict. In other circumstances, household interviews and group work in the communities could be expected to progress at a faster pace. However, in Kosovo, many individuals showed a desire to tell their stories, which, while similar to others in basic content (in that they dealt with the insurmountable human and material losses suffered), were deeply personal. This meant factoring in extra time for field work, so that team members could give each individual the time they needed to tell their story.

During the assessment itself, the leader of the assessment team also found that team members needed time to process the information they gathered that in many cases was deeply painful. Also, many of the assessment facilitators had themselves survived very traumatic experiences. This made it even more important to build a sense of team, to provide emotional support to those involved in the assessment, and to make extra time for 'downloading' and sharing some of the difficult emotions that surfaced.

3.4 Site selection

Eighteen study sites were selected. The number of sites was limited by the amount of time (four days) that could be spent at each site, and the number of facilitators and teams who could carry out the work in each community. The sites covered 18 out of 30 municipalities in Kosovo. Three principal criteria determined the site selection: food economy zones, rural/urban coverage and ethnic representation. The other factors considered were population size and NGO presence (to introduce teams to the community). The process of site selection was as follows:

1. Using the food security unit (FSU) of the FAO/WFP database, 37 sites were selected and stratified by food economy zone (for geographic coverage);
2. Urban sites were separated out, leaving 26 rural sites;
3. Fifteen rural sites were then purposively selected to ensure ethnic representation and representation of poor communities using the 1997 Human Development Index for Kosovo. Of the three urban sites, two were Albanian, and one was a mix of Serb and Roma populations. Of the 15 rural sites, nine were Albanian, three were Serb and the remaining three were mixed Albanian and Roma, and Gorani;
4. Three urban sites were then selected to represent ethnic and geographical spread.

The sites were not intended to be 'representative' of the Kosovar population but to capture the diversity of livelihoods in the province.

Nevertheless, some members of the Albanian assessment team felt that minority sites were over-sampled and the 'large' number of Serb sites was unfair. Two members of the Sub-Group felt that the Roma population was under-represented. And two assessment team members believed that the assessment should have covered more urban sites.

3.5 Design of tools and sequencing

The outcome of the stakeholder consultation and the initial field visits was a 'matching' of stakeholder information needs with participatory tools and the design of the sequencing of the participatory exercises in each community. Tools for the participatory livelihood assessments for the 18 sites were designed to capture the elements of the livelihoods framework that had not been covered in previous studies or by the secondary data review and the consultation group themes. Table 1 shows this matching of tools and themes within the livelihoods framework.

The participatory component of the study was designed to portray a picture of the situation in Kosovo from the perspective of the Kosovar people themselves. In addition, by using local development professionals as facilitators and analysts, the qualitative study benefited from the skills and interpretations of those currently active in helping the poor of Kosovo to improve their livelihoods.

As in other participatory work, the methods used were intended not simply to collect data but to provide a structure for community members and facilitators to analyse their own vulnerability, assets, livelihoods and coping strategies and priorities in an iterative fashion. The tools were designed to build on each other in an analytical sequence that explored the various elements of the livelihoods framework, then synthesised them into a holistic understanding of livelihoods at each site and, when combined with the secondary data review, across the province.

Figure 3 shows the sequencing of tools.

Figure 3 Sequencing of participatory tools

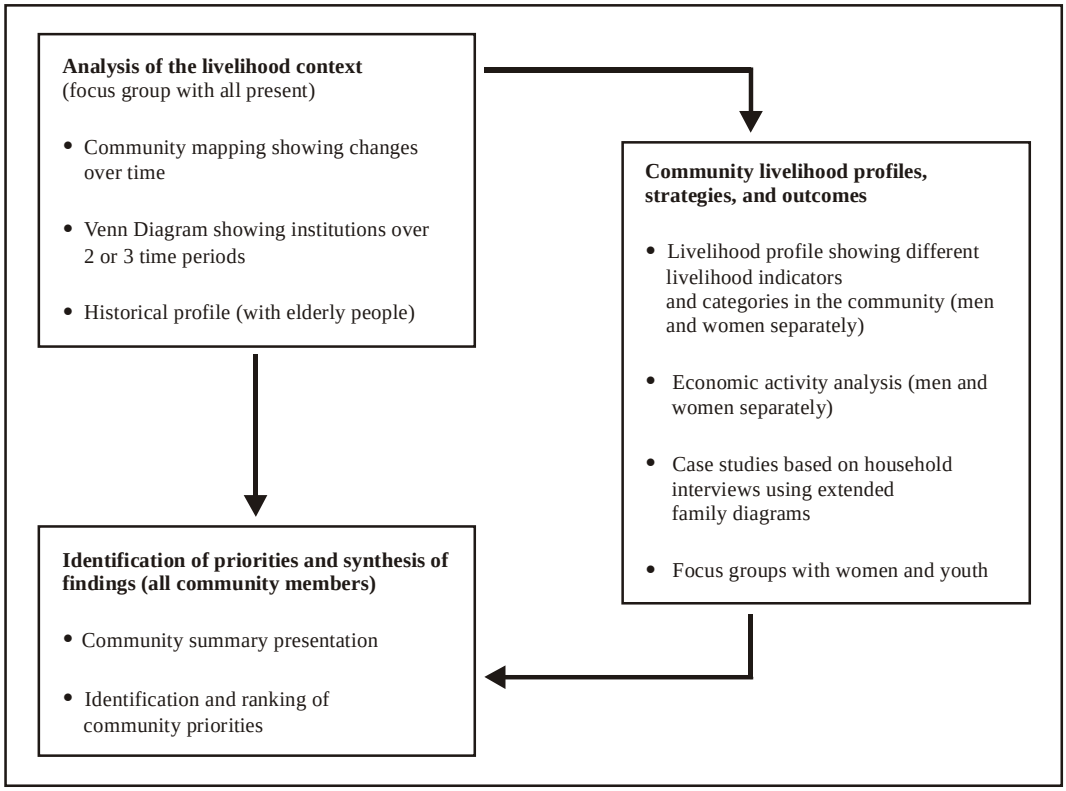


Table 1 Information to be collected and tools used in relation to stakeholder themes

Livelihood component	What we need to know	Principal collection tool	Other tools (triangulation and cross-checking)	Consultation group theme
Livelihood context				
Institutions	Presence and importance of community-level institutions Interaction of population with external institutions Control of resources by institutions	Venn Diagram	Household interviews Focus group discussions Key informants	Institutions at the community or neighbourhood level Attitude towards new institutions Participation
Natural resources	Food economy zone Presence of common property resources Availability and access to natural resources Access to land	Area mapping	Secondary data Key informants	Land holding
Infrastructure	Availability of education, health, social services Water and sanitation infrastructure, roads and transport infrastructure	Area mapping	Venn Diagram Household interviews Secondary data	Water and sanitation facilities Education Health
Cultural environment	Ethnicity Religion Gender	Secondary data	Livelihood profile Household interviews Focus group discussion	Participation Social isolation Social capital Pension Gender
Political environment	Broader political context in Kosovo Political parties at community level Access to voting Feelings of insecurity/uncertainty at household and community level	Secondary data	Venn Diagram Household interviews Key informants	Physical isolation Participation Attitude towards new institutions
Resettlement patterns	Number and dates of migration and resettlement Perceptions of security and risk Presence of landmines	Key informant interview	Mapping Household interviews	

Livelihood component	What we need to know	Principal collection tool	Other tools (triangulation and cross-checking)	Consultation group theme
Processes (rules, regulations, etc.)				
	Impact of rules, regulations and policies on households and communities Potential impact of taxation Access to passports Impact of judicial processes	Venn Diagram	Secondary data Household interviews Key informants	Perception of new institutions Institutions at community level Participation
Household assets (what they are and how they are used; in part determines households' ability to recover from stresses and shocks)				
Social	Exchanges of goods and services Assistance to or from extended family networks Membership in community groups Nature of interactions with other households	Household interviews	Livelihood profile	Social capital Remittances Physical isolation Gender Distribution of poverty within communities Participation
Physical	Housing Agricultural implements Vehicles Machinery Shops Household-level water and sanitation facilities	Household interviews	Livelihood profile	Household economy Shelter Distribution of poverty within communities Water and sanitation Food security and agriculture
Human	Education level Ability to work Dependency ratio	Household interviews	Livelihood profile	Education Health Gender Household economy Time allocation Participation Food security and agriculture

Livelihood component	What we need to know	Principal collection tool	Other tools (triangulation and cross-checking)	Consultation group theme
Financial	Livestock Savings Remittances Access to credit	Household interviews	Livelihood profile	Access to finance Household economy Remittances Distribution of poverty within communities Pension Food security and agriculture
Natural	Land Access to common property resources	Household interviews	Livelihood profile	Distribution of poverty within communities Land holding Household economy Food security and agriculture
Livelihood strategies (production, processing, exchange and income-generating activities)				
	Pre-war activities Type of activities undertaken by each household member, level of contribution to household economy Coping strategies Access to employment Income generating activities Access to credit Contribution of remittances to household livelihood	Household interviews	Economy activity analysis Livelihood profile Key informant interviews	Distribution of poverty within households Remittances Pension Gender Food security and agriculture Economic activities Household economy Access to finance Time allocation
Vulnerability to shocks and stresses				
	Pre-war condition of household Coping strategy of household during war Ability to recover from war Time of return Process of resettlement Current status of household Barriers to recovery; other stresses (e.g. illness)	Household interview	Economic activity analysis Livelihood profile Key informant interviews	Shelter/housing Distribution of poverty within communities Institutions at the community level Remittances Social capital Economic activities Household economy Pension, Gender Access to finances

Tools used in participatory analysis do not stand alone; in combination they paint a holistic picture of livelihoods at the household and community levels and allow facilitators to validate information through triangulation.

The tools are flexible and thus provide a framework for dialogue and discussion. Therefore, additional information will arise and or may not come up at all, depending on participants' priorities and interests. The design of the methodology cannot prescribe or predict all the possible information that will emerge.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the validity of information is proportional to the quality of interaction between facilitators and participants. If participants (and facilitators for that matter) do not understand the objectives of the assessment or trust the facilitators, then the information that emerges may not present the real picture.

3.6 Training and implementation

The Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty members nominated employees from their organisations to the team based on language skills, gender balance, facilitation skills and interest in training in participatory methods. The 16 Albanian and four Serbian facilitators came from a range of different agencies and backgrounds. None of them had experience with participatory methods, or with the livelihoods framework, but they had all worked in implementation or monitoring of field activities.

The training hinged on a field-based programme[2] that aimed to expose the facilitators to a range of principles and methods and to allow them to test and evaluate these in a field setting, and then to adapt and refine the tools and reporting formats used. The facilitators developed field proficiency in methods, principles, and behaviour over the course of the first week.

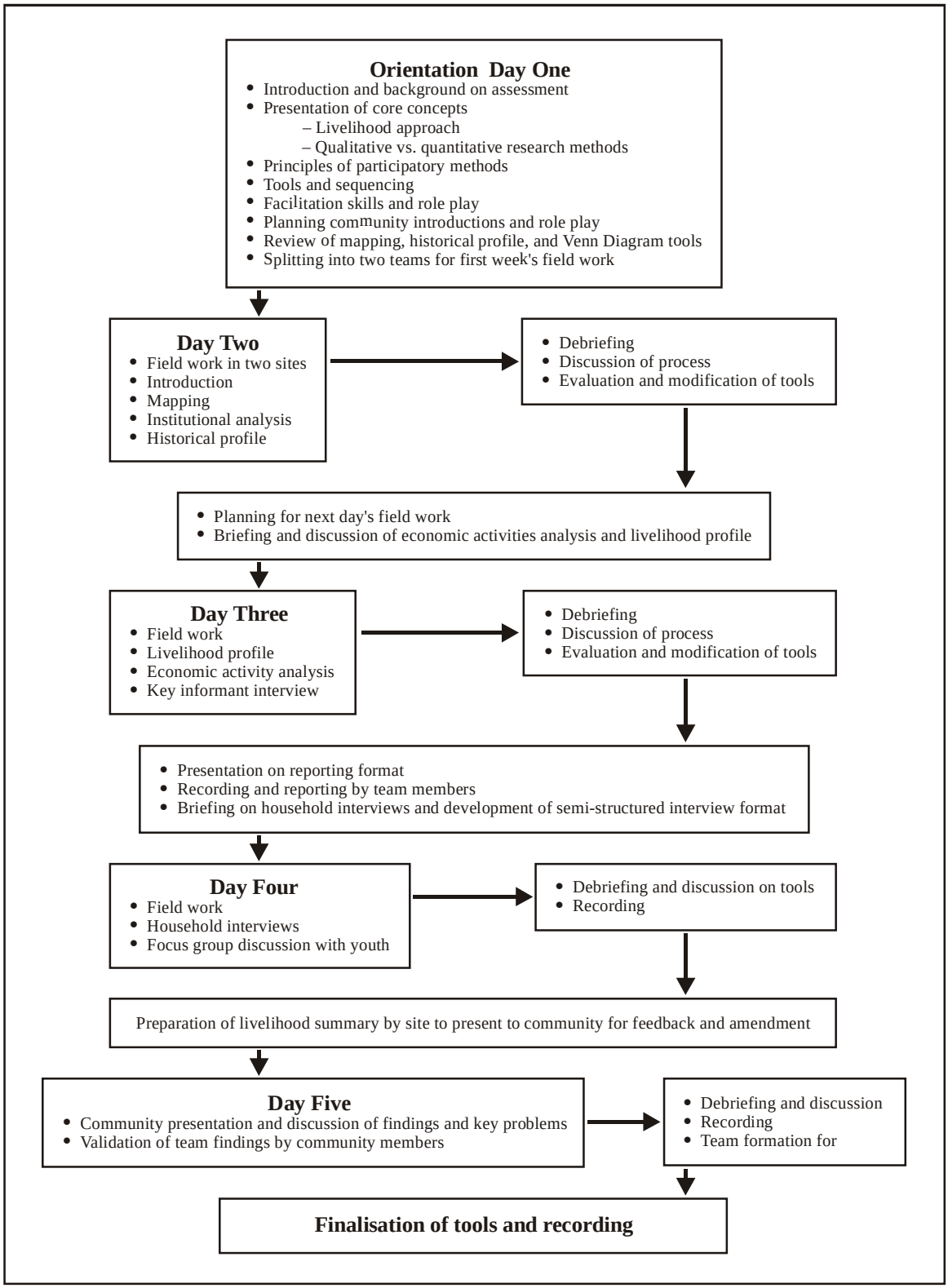
During this week, two sites – one urban and one rural – were assessed using a standard set of core tools and sequencing. The facilitators manual provided to the teams included sections on the livelihoods approach, participatory methodologies and tools, step-by-step guides to each activity, including objectives, process and expected outputs, and examples from other participatory assessments in other countries.

As the team became more familiar with the concepts and tools, additional reporting and analytical exercises were introduced. In this fashion, the level and pace of training evolved in tandem with the learning and skills of the facilitators. This style of experiential learning assumes that the participants themselves are experts on local issues and their areas of expertise; therefore they control the pace of learning and the content of the participatory enquiry. Similarly, this learning-by-doing approach was appropriate because it involved participatory methods in poverty assessment that had not been tested previously.

During and after the first week of field work, the team of facilitators modified and refined the tools and developed the reporting formats, including site reports, thematic summary guidelines, and guidelines on gender and youth. The activities of this week of orientation and training are shown in Figure 4. After the initial training week, four teams each of four Albanian facilitators assessed four communities each over the course of four weeks. One team of four Serbian facilitators assessed three sites in the Northern, predominantly Serb areas, and one team of four assessed a village located in a Serbian enclave in the south-east of the province.

[2] For a more detailed description of various training methodologies see Pretty et al. (1995).

Figure 4 Orientation and training sequence for the Assessment team working in the ethnic Albanian sites



3.7 Analysis

When using quantitative methods, it is appropriate to speak of data collection and analysis phases as separated in time. Participatory livelihood analysis, however, includes communities in the analysis of their own situation and context. In this sense, tools are analytical tools, not data-collection tools. In the process of the assessment itself there are several levels of analysis that occur.

Each tool represents the perspective of a group or individual vis-à-vis a particular situation or condition. Group tools are designed as consultative mechanisms through which participants analyse a specific issue. For example, the Venn Diagrams represent a group analysis of the importance of various institutions to themselves and to the community. In this sense, the output from the tool tells us what a group of people in a certain area think of their interactions with external and internal institutions and the relevance of these institutions to their lives. By comparing one tool to another or different versions of the same tool developed separately by men and women, facilitators are able to draw conclusions about social processes. For example, by comparing the economic activity matrix generated by women to that generated by men, facilitators gain insight into the different perceptions of men and women vis-à-vis the value and importance of specific activities to households.

By comparing two different tools, such as the livelihood profiles with household interviews, facilitators can validate the information generated by each tool. For example, if on the livelihood profile, access to remittances is identified as a key livelihood indicator that differentiates those who are better-off from those who are worse-off, the facilitator can highlight this issue in a household interview, and by taking the interviews as a set, determine whether or not this indicator, developed by a group, is relevant at the individual household level. In addition, the facilitator can assess whether or not those participating in group activities represent the norm for a specific community, or if they represent those who are slightly better-off and have the time and information required to participate in group activities at the community level. This is the basic principle of triangulation that drives the sequencing and analysis of participatory methods.

After conducting the three-day sequence of tools, the facilitators met and summarised key issues at the area and household level within the livelihood framework. This livelihood summary was presented to the community in a group meeting. The community members present then discussed the summary issues and developed a third column on a matrix that contained their conclusions about each issue. In this manner, the facilitators worked together to compile a site summary based on lessons from all the tools combined then shared this with the community for validation and to draw conclusions.

At the end of each site assessment, the facilitation team came together to prepare their site reports and compile a summary based on the key themes used in the original design of the assessment methodology. At the end of each week, facilitation teams came together in Prishtina to present and discuss their findings. They analysed differences and similarities between the four sites studied during the week, thereby taking the first step in aggregating findings across the different sites. These various analytical processes built into the methodology itself, served to increase the validity of data through cross-checking and engaging the facilitation team in interpretation and analysis of the community-level data.

The teams participated in a five-day analysis workshop that began with a presentation and discussion of the findings from the literature review and macro-analysis. The field teams then presented their findings from each site based on a livelihoods framework, compared differences and similarities between sites, and made presentations based on key themes across all sites. The final assessment report represents the final level of analysis that draws the macro-, meso- and micro-level findings together.

4 Key Findings

4.1 Overview

The analysis was structured following the logic of the HLS framework. It started with a review of broad livelihood context and went on to assessment of key household assets. Further enquiry looked at how assets are used to build livelihoods within the opportunities and constraints formed by economic, social and political contexts (OPMG with CARE International UK, 2001). Specific barriers to building livelihoods were considered as sources of vulnerability. Livelihood profiles were further presented as distribution of different livelihoods. These profiles were used to identify the incidence of poverty and to define the categories of the poor, i.e. those people facing livelihood insecurity. Policy and programming implications were drawn throughout the analysis but were finally summarised, as the study communities perceived them.

4.2 Livelihood context

Prior to and at the time of the assessment, the livelihood context in Kosovo was in a dynamic process of change. The formal institutions associated with the previous regime eroded with the abolition of Kosovo autonomy in 1989. For the Albanian population these institutions were replaced by informal structures of local leadership, parallel social services, and social support organisations. With the end of the conflict and the introduction of the UNMIK administration new transitional institutions were put in place, superseding many informal institutions. New political parties were introducing divisions along political lines and were also marginalising traditional forms of social organisation. While parallel structures of government and social organisation were no longer as effective as they were before the conflict the new institutions linked to international organisations were hard pressed to meet the needs of the population. The overall livelihood context picture was further complicated by massive displacement of the population, the consequences of which had not been overcome.

The erosion of social and physical infrastructure that began long before the conflict was considerably exacerbated by massive destruction of household assets in the course of the conflict. The general lack of infrastructure together with security constraints considerably limited the livelihood possibilities.

The post-conflict situation brought in new changes and new income opportunities in trade, small businesses and jobs with international organisations, and in construction. However the new opportunities were only open to a minority. Unemployment remained very high due to the absence of jobs in the formal sector; major constraints to productive farming (especially to agricultural trade and marketing) undermined the welfare of rural populations. Thus livelihood options for many households were narrowed to a limited range of coping strategies: reliance on remittances from relatives working abroad, subsistence farming for household consumption, extended family/ community safety nets, and humanitarian aid for the poorest.

The analysis provided substantial evidence of the gravity of poverty. Due to the multiple nature of the causes of poverty it affected families in all major demographic categories, not only such socially vulnerable groups as widows, orphans, the elderly or disabled, but also households of working age, i.e. able-bodied persons who pursue economic activity.

4.3 Perceived changes in livelihoods, their causes and effects

In most communities, respondents believed that poverty had increased since the conflict. Importantly, though, in a significant proportion of the communities there had been no perceived change in the level of poverty, and at one site, the level of poverty had even fallen. However, according to the 18 different site reports, there was little agreement between male and female respondents both about the level of poverty (men in general said that poverty levels were considerably higher than women) and about changes in the intensity of poverty (in eight communities men said that the level of the 'very poor' increased since the conflict, whilst women thought that the levels of the very poor had increased in only four communities).

This mixed evidence points to the possibility that the short-term humanitarian transfers of food and other support, together with the new opportunities presented by the post-conflict reconstruction of the economy allowed some households to maintain or even improve their livelihoods. This is more likely to apply to ethnic Albanians than Serbians who were greatly restricted in their mobility and their access to markets in the post-conflict period.

Whilst the conflict had clearly reduced the livelihood options of many households, it was not the conflict alone that was the cause of poverty in Kosovo. Poor infrastructure, low educational levels and skills standards, often low levels of public and private investment in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy are all indicators of a low-productivity, low-income economy that existed prior to the 1990s. And whilst estimates of per capita gross domestic product (GDP) vary widely, given the diversity of living standards described in the site reports, it appeared likely that a relatively high proportion of the population had been living on less that US$2 per head per day long before either the conflict or the ethnic divisions that occurred during the 1990s. Furthermore, the site reports suggest that in the comparatively underdeveloped economy of the 1980s, poverty levels were likely to be highest in more remote rural areas where the agricultural resource base was thin, but where, nevertheless, agriculture was still the principal source of income. In addition to the low levels of productivity, such areas were likely to suffer from poor public service provision. Again, individuals in households where the household head was either a woman, or an elderly person, or disabled or young were more likely than other individuals to live in poverty.

But what did respondents themselves believe were the causes and consequences of poverty? Clearly, the direct and indirect consequences of the conflict were seen as the most important causes of recent changes in the level of poverty. Many households lost income-earning family members and such income-generating assets as agricultural equipment, livestock, vehicles and shops. Financial assets and consumer durables (housing, domestic equipment and jewellery) were depleted either through direct losses, or through expenditure on emergencies, or through attempts to maintain standards of living above current income levels.

Indirect causes included loss of:

- Access to agricultural and common land (land mines, security problems);
- Markets and market access through decreased mobility (weakened transport infrastructure, internal travel and border restrictions, insecurity);
- Formal-sector employment (employment in enterprises and in the administration);
- Effective entitlements (pensions, social security entitlements, supportive family and social networks);
- Lower demand (depressed economy, smaller and ethnically fragmented markets).

Furthermore, a combination of both the direct and indirect consequences of the conflict made important social services unaffordable or unavailable to householders. These included health care because medicines are too expensive, schooling because schools are too distant and public transport is not available, and sanitation and waste disposal because some systems do not function.

However, remittances from overseas family members and the significant growth in some markets (i.e. construction) helped maintain some incomes and employment for some households in some locations. At one of the 18 sites, both male and female respondents believed poverty levels had decreased since the conflict. At another site, women thought there was effectively no poverty, and at a third, women (but not men) thought that poverty levels had fallen.

Respondents thought that female-headed households were more likely to be poor than other types of households. In particular, female heads of large households with large numbers of dependants (i.e. both young and elderly household members) were thought especially likely to be poor. Households headed by the elderly or by the disabled were also thought likely to be poor, as were households of young adults (e.g. young adult brothers with a divorced sister and her children).

The consequences of poverty, according to the respondents, were that the poor eat poor-quality food and live in old mud or stone houses with one or two rooms. These houses lack even the most basic facilities and amenities. The poor depended heavily on handouts from neighbours and from humanitarian organisations. In most cases, children from poor households did not receive more than elementary and primary education. Poor householders could not afford medical treatment if they had to pay for medicines. They dressed very poorly and had difficulty in finding money to buy detergent to wash their clothes. The poor had no means to recover losses incurred in the conflict or to rebuild their lives and their assets without assistance.

In other words, in their economic and productive lives, the poor had few productive or human assets with which to generate income. In consequence they depended on private and public transfers to supplement their incomes. They saved little or nothing and in some cases were depleting their asset base. As a consequence, their consumption levels were low and that in turn weakened their ability to develop their human capital through schooling and medical care.

4.4 The priorities of respondent communities

The priority need expressed by almost all communities was for the creation of jobs and for the growth of employment. Communities did highlight the need to create formal-sector employment, but also raised the importance of small business development and local public works as a means of retaining young adults in rural communities. In particular, they insisted that any such initiatives should ensure that project identification and management should include local government and local organisations. Furthermore, they felt that youth training and skills development programmes should accompany employment-generation initiatives.

Both rural and urban communities identified the need for improved roads and public transportation, both in order to increase access to markets for their goods and to improve access to agricultural inputs, education and health services. They also identified improved electricity supply as an important priority.

In the agricultural and livestock sectors, most communities believed in the importance of large-scale investment in the agricultural sector. In addition, many communities requested assistance in replacing and repairing agricultural equipment; in encouraging humanitarian organisations to distribute livestock to the poor; and, finally, in reviving the former agricultural co-operative unions.

As regards access to credit and financial services, only relatively few communities mentioned these are being a major priority, however, in several cases communities thought credit important for business start-ups, for agricultural equipment and inputs and for livestock investment. Consumption credit (for schooling, health care, housing, food and clothing) was not mentioned. The assistance of humanitarian organisations for housing provision was seen as a priority for most communities.

In the case of education, many communities mentioned the importance of upgrading primary school provision. This included priorities for improved buildings, for the number of classrooms, and for the availability and quality of school furniture. In the case of health, the priorities centred around the costs of consultation and treatment (both considered unaffordable), the lack of primary health centres or the doctors to staff them, and the lack of ambulance services. In the case of water supply and sanitation, most communities cited the need for working/operational piped water supplies and sewage systems.

In the case of public transfers, four communities said that food aid should continue to be provided as many poor households were entirely dependent on it. However communities felt that other needs were becoming more important and that food aid should not continue. Five communities stressed the need for peace and improved security so as to ensure freedom of movement; at least six communities stressed the importance of developing women's vocational skills and education; many communities suggested the need for local-level cultural institutions. Finally, many communities expressed views towards humanitarian organisations, and in particular, eight of the 18 communities suggested that NGOs should maintain direct contact with villagers/beneficiaries.

4.5 Policy and programme implications

The participatory poverty assessment in Kosovo provided a basis for planning interventions to address livelihood provisioning, protection, and promotion needs of poor households. The assessment suggested that if poverty reduction was to be a major goal for policy making and programming, then action was needed at macro-, meso- and micro-levels.

However, continued enforcement of personal security remained a high priority, particularly in enclaves and in Mitrovica. In addition, members of the assessment team and communities felt that until a political solution to the status of Kosovo vis-à-vis the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had been reached, the security situation would not improve, nor would the long-term future of Kosovo be without conflict.

Any economic policies would need to be implemented within the broader political context. At the macro-economic level, large-scale investment and restructuring was a prerequisite to reducing unemployment in the long term. Revival of formal-sector employment was a major objective conditioned by large-scale structural reforms that include a stable macro-economy, revival of infrastructure, strengthening of law and order, development of financial markets, and harmonisation of external trade.

At the meso-level there were a number of issues that needed consideration. These included agricultural market development and the stimulation of a local marketable surplus through local procurement of food aid; harmonisation of the taxation and regulatory regimes; and early removal of travel restrictions that restrict the development of trade. Expanding opportunities for women in the formal labour market, both urban and rural, and also, as agriculture has contracted, in their opinion individual income-generating activities is a particular policy priority.

At the micro-level a range of community-level initiatives might best be supported through NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs). Such initiatives might include measures to support small business development in order to assist household livelihood diversification strategies. In particular, these might focus on petty traders in urban areas and on women and home-based income-generating activities.

A range of sector-specific policy measures included targeted support to the poor and vulnerable. Poverty relief programmes needed to differentiate between the different types and causes of poverty. Some households still required direct provisioning of food and non-food items, while others required longer-term assistance that would allow them to rebuild their assets and increase their resilience to future stresses and shocks.

Social protection programming faced the challenge of supporting individuals and households who did not have access to informal safety nets, without increasing the burden on families who were assisting others. Multiple instruments were recommended that firstly identify individuals who receive no family support for direct assistance, and secondly provide indirect support to extended families who are supporting other individuals or households.

There was a continuing need to monitor shelter and food security and the provision of needed assistance. A widespread, though not universal, priority was more intensive assistance in housing reconstruction. This suggests that, if a move from relief to development were feasible, given security and political considerations, some caution would need to be exercised with respect to the phasing out of the existing relief programme in this specific area.

More generally it appeared that aid dependency might be an increasingly large impediment to the transition from emergency to development. In light of this it was concluded that aid donors themselves might want to further develop their exit strategies.

4.6 Specific contributions of livelihood assessment findings

A fair question to ask at this point is ‘What did the livelihood assessment add to the existing knowledge within Kosovo at the time of the assessment?’ The two main contributions centred around firstly, the introduction of and training in participatory methods of livelihoods analysis and community interaction upon which each agency could build both the processes and the content of their programmes, and secondly, a better understanding of vulnerability dynamics in the immediate post-conflict period which complemented previous agency analysis and the quantitative World Bank LSMS study.

Lessons learned using participatory approaches are described in Section 5, and the specific contributions of the participatory livelihoods assessment to the World Bank and other agencies’ programmes are described in Section 6.

Five areas where the participatory livelihoods assessment contributed to a better understanding of vulnerability in Kosovo are summarised below.

4.6.1 Vulnerability of extended networks

The tool used to structure household interviews involved drawing a ‘map’ of the members of an extended household, documenting the assets of each household member and tracing the flows of resources and support between members. These diagrams included household members who were

living overseas or elsewhere in the province. The household interviews highlighted the importance of extended networks in the coping strategies of Kosovars. It was very clear that those without an extended network were a great deal more vulnerable that those who were part of an extended network (see Box 4). This finding was consequently substantiated by the quantitative World Bank survey.

But more importantly, the exercise made it clear that targeting of social assistance and even direct provisioning needed to be based on an understanding of extended support networks, not just individuals. In addition, the importance of supporting the networks also emerged. Indeed, while certain families appeared able to absorb additional members and provide for their basic needs, in the long run, these families risked becoming more and more vulnerable as they spread their assets through an ever-increasing circle of extended family members. While these families were able to emerge from the conflict with some assets intact, overall average household assets in Kosovo would decline if these families did not also receive support.

Some agencies and documents discussed host-family fatigue in such surrounding states as Macedonia and Albania and even further afield. However, the vulnerability of extended families in Kosovo had not been addressed by humanitarian agencies at the time of the assessment.

Box 4 Example of family support to a widow in Prishtina

Xhevrie Sejdiu is a 33-year old widow with six children – two boys and four girls. Her oldest child is 14 and her youngest is three. Her husband was killed in the conflict and she moved to the area from Prapashtica after her house was burned down. She owns land in Prapashtica but it is right on the border and she is unable to stay there. Her brother, who lives nearby, helped her find the place she is living in now, and has been helping her meet her daily needs. Her other remaining brothers and sisters are unable to help since they are all very badly off. Of her other brothers, one was killed in the conflict, and another was wounded.

The family is currently living in two rooms with a corridor that serves as a kitchen. The water and toilet are outside. Bathing the children is especially difficult in winter and they often fall ill due to the cold. Xhevrie's main aspiration is to find any job so that she can support her large family. Besides the assistance she receives from her brother, Xhevrie survives on food aid. She has also registered for social assistance and hopes to start receiving help soon.

Xhevrie's brother, Rexhep Ibishi, works at trading in the market. He makes around 255–306 euros a month depending on business. He owns the house they live in, which he bought 6 years ago. It has three rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. It also has running water and electricity. His family had some savings from before the conflict so they have been able to fix up their house using this money. Their other main expenses are food and clothes. Their main concern at the moment is security for their daughters because they have heard that there have been some kidnappings in the area.

His wife's brothers are quite well off and they help her out if she needs help and even sometimes when she doesn't. The whole family is helping Xhevrie as much as they can.

4.6.2 Nature of remittances

The agencies operating in Kosovo realised that remittances played a significant role in the livelihood strategies of Kosovars. However, such remittances themselves were very difficult to quantify. Furthermore, since most of the flows occurred through informal channels, developing financial institutions and taxation systems became extremely complicated.

Nearly all of the studies that had taken place in Kosovo made the distinction between rich and poor households by land-holding size and access to remittances (Lawrence, 1999). However, fewer studies made deeper distinctions between the level and regularity of such remittances (Lawrence, 1999 was an exception). The participatory livelihoods assessment found that simply receiving remittances was not a sufficient indicator of well-being. The assessment found that relatively wealthy households have access to substantial amounts of regular remittances over several years. This implies that relatively better-off households can afford to educate family members and send them abroad, where they are formally employed as legal immigrants. Access to a regular flow of remittances has allowed such households to build up their assets over the years and to diversify their livelihoods strategies. Access to high levels of regular remittances allowed these households to recover quite quickly after the conflict both in terms of housing reconstruction and restarting business and trading activities.

Some poor households mentioned having access to remittances, but the amounts were small and irregular. Site data indicated that members of poor households go abroad primarily as illegal immigrants and casual labour in very low-paid jobs. They send small and irregular remittances that are used mainly for consumption purposes and are not sufficient to build up assets or make significant changes in households' well-being.

Simply put, the association between remittances and well-being is not valid in all situations. It is the size, regularity and duration of access to remittances that makes the significant difference in the well-being of a household.

4.6.3 Land holdings as proxy for livelihood status

The size of a household's land holding had been identified as a key livelihood indicator by agencies in Kosovo. However, the participatory assessment showed that the size of a land holding was not a sufficient indicator, since the ability of families to cultivate their land had been significantly disrupted by the conflict. Prior to the conflict, 65% of the population lived in rural areas and more than 90% of the rural population was engaged in arable agriculture and livestock activities, either on a full or a part-time basis. Dependence on farming grew during the 1990s as a result of industrial decline and a decrease in employment (of Kosovar Albanians) in public service.

After the conflict, the significance of land ownership for the well-being of households varied considerably across areas. Indeed, in the Central Highlands and Western Hills, households with relatively large land holdings reported cultivating only part of their land to meet subsistence requirements, since markets had collapsed. Also, households throughout the province who own land that had been mined were clearly unable to cultivate their holdings. The assessment revealed a considerable decrease in the amount of land cultivated in the post-conflict period. Box 5 compares the constraints to land cultivation in the pre-conflict and post-conflict periods.

Box 5 Pre- and post-conflict constraints to land cultivation

Pre-conflict	Post-conflict
• Poor quality of soil and associated low returns to investment • Low productivity of land due to lack of irrigation facilities • Lack of labour • Old age and inability to work hard • Lack of agricultural equipment • High taxation on land payable to the State and low returns derived from investment • Lack of access to agricultural co-operatives for credit, input supplies, agricultural extension services, and marketing facilities	• Loss of agricultural equipment • Loss of animals (horse/s) by poor households who use animal traction for land preparation • Loss of access to land in border areas due to security reasons • Presence of land mines and cluster bombs • Lack of access to capital to invest in agriculture • Lack of access to adequate and timely availability of agricultural inputs • Breakdown of irrigation systems during the conflict • Unfavourable competition in the market due to absence of taxation on agricultural imports • Loss of cross-border markets with Serbia and Montenegro

4.6.4 Dependence on agriculture

The pre-conflict dependence of the Kosovar population on agriculture had shifted during the conflict period and had decreased in importance. The importance of remittances and the decrease in cultivable land, suggested that liberating labour from agricultural activities might be an important opportunity for rural livelihoods. Therefore, most communities saw employment generation in rural areas as a high priority.

4.6.5 Status of women and girls' access to education

Few studies in Kosovo focussed on the status of girls or women. The participatory livelihoods assessment found that women's status in the household was closely associated with both their participation in the formal economy and their education levels. Increased levels of decision making were associated with higher education levels.

Girls' access to education was significantly affected by their proximity to a school. While boys attended school even when the schools were relatively far away, girls were less likely to attend secondary school if it was far away. In particular, girls without brothers were less likely to attend due to the perceived security risks of travelling alone to school.

5 Lessons Learned

Following the assessment itself, CARE International UK undertook a lessons-learned review of their experience leading the participatory assessment in Kosovo. These lessons sought to answer the question of whether or not CARE International UK was in a position to continue to conduct assessments such as that in Kosovo for multiple agencies in the emergency context. As such, the lessons focussed on issues of capacity, consultant selection and management, interaction with the country office, logistics and so on.

The lessons presented below, however, centre more on broader questions about the methodology and its application in Kosovo. Where possible, lessons are followed by recommendations for those who may consider carrying out similar work in the future.

5.1 Constraints of the 'emergency mentality' to the use of participatory methods

Because participatory methods had never been used in Kosovo, the assessment team went to great lengths to brief and prepare everyone involved, including, in some cases, other members of the assessment team, who were accustomed to quantitative surveys and economic analysis.

While principles of participation may be second nature to those familiar with the methods, in the Kosovo context, a lot of work went into sensitising members of the Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty and other stakeholders to the basics of participatory approaches. The leader of the assessment team was pleased when one of the facilitators mentioned that they had used focus groups in their agency with regularity. When she probed further, she found that they referred to meetings in which they informed communities that they would no longer be receiving food aid as 'focus group discussions'.

Misunderstandings of the process occurred throughout. A large part of the problem was the limited amount of time certain members of the assessment team spent in the field. This was largely due to lack of resources and too few 'consultant-days' budgeted.

If all members of the team had been involved in the field work, and if members of the Inter-Agency Sub-Group on Poverty had participated themselves, many of the misunderstandings could have been avoided, the overall quality of the final report would have improved, and findings would have been more readily taken up by the implementing agencies.

However, another characteristic of agencies working in conflict situations is the prevailing sense of urgency that makes people feel that they have no time for reflection and analysis or even basic field work, even when the security situation permits more interaction with local communities. Even the single week-long analysis workshop drew very few of the agency heads from their responsibilities for more than an hour at a time.

Another barrier to deeper engagement of Sub-Group members was the sharp hierarchical division between Kosovar employees and their 'international' supervisors. There were only two Kosovar members of the Sub-Group (both ethnic Albanians). The other members were all either directors or department heads in their respective agencies and 'did not have time' for field work. Nor did they have the language skills. The humanitarian community in Kosovo was very much aware of this situation, as mentioned in a previous section, and many organisations were taking steps to promote their Kosovar staff into positions of greater responsibility and scaling down the numbers of their

international personnel. One NGO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) made a concerted effort to bring their Kosovar staff into Sub-Group meetings and decision making.

Whereas each agency participated in the assessment by devoting members of their staff to the month-long exercise, only a few agency leaders engaged in a substantive way with the process. The exceptions were remarkable. The Director of Save the Children–US (SC–US) in Kosovo dedicated a significant amount of time to editing and reviewing the reports and attended every meeting of the Sub-Group. CARE International UK, as the implementing agency also became much more involved. Finally, an FAO representative in Kosovo participated substantively in both the design of the methodology, the site selection, and the analysis.

Another major issue for the continuity and engagement of the Sub-Group was the high turnover of international staff in emergency programmes and their relatively short contracts. The composition of the Sub-Group altered significantly over the course of a few months, and the major champion of the participatory assessment left Kosovo just as field work began.

With hindsight, the team could have taken several steps to reduce these constraints by:

1. Encouraging Sub-Group members to attend each weekly meeting where findings were summarised and discussed;
2. Spending more time in Prishtina meeting with agency staff individually;
3. Encouraging Sub-Group members to participate in some of the field work carried out by their own agency staff;
4. Increasing the number of presentations and workshops, but conducting mini-presentations in each agency at times convenient to them;
5. Broadening the group of stakeholders involved in the assessment to include non-Sub-Group agencies and more Kosovar institutions.

5.2 Limitations to turning analysis into action

In retrospect, this was the greatest weakness of the assessment process. Like most good intentions, taking the analysis into each agency and working through the implications for their programming was planned in the original terms of reference and became a victim of limited time and budget. Originally, the analysis workshop was to be followed by a workshop on programming implications of the findings. Delays in editing of the report and a subsequent decline in interest amongst the Sub-Group meant that in a sense the assessment findings became eclipsed by negotiations around the drafting and editing of the report and its quality. In the end, a second group of consultants, accompanied by CARE International UK staff had to rewrite the report. This time should have been spent discussing the potential implementation and policy considerations in light of the assessment findings.

This issue is linked to the perennial problem of contracting external consultants to lead learning processes. Often, consultants leave with more of the learning than they are able to leave behind. Nearly all agencies in both longer-term development and humanitarian contexts farm out some of their most valuable learning opportunities, e.g. evaluations, monitoring reviews, assessments, programme and project design to external consultants. This problem is not unique to either Kosovo or to this assessment.

In theory, the members of the Sub-Group could have taken the findings back to their agencies and held discussions or workshops with their colleagues. Perhaps a more realistic strategy would have been either to have one of the assessment team members stay in Kosovo for the duration of the assessment and for a short period afterwards to provide the critical follow-up, or to formalise a

process whereby each Kosovar team member presented and discussed their experience and findings with their colleagues.

Despite these limitations some organisations did integrate the findings into their programmes as discussed in Section 6.

5.3 Managing potential ethnic tension and bias

In Kosovo, ethnicity permeates every nuance of life both for Kosovars and for non-Kosovars living in the province. The language you speak, your name, the way you pronounce Kosovo (or Kosova), or the way you greet people, all demonstrate your ethnic affiliation and in extreme cases can be life-threatening. This threat had implications for the implementation of the assessment and because of it accommodations had to be made in both the methodology and logistics.

In such a context, accusations of bias in humanitarian practice provide a constant backdrop against which all actors manage both their everyday work and their overall programmes. The assessment was no exception. During the analysis workshop, in which the results from both Serbian and Albanian sites were presented to the Sub-Group (no Serbians were present) an Albanian team member questioned the site selection, suggesting that the Serbian sites were selected because they were known to be more 'poor'.[3]

On the other hand, there were other Albanian team members who made the observation that the Serbians were indeed experiencing significant poverty, personal suffering and decline in their livelihoods. One pointed out that 'they are now in the same situation as the Albanians were before the NATO bombing'.

The Serbian team, when asked if they had any similar observations did not comment. Like many of the Serbian community members interviewed, they preferred 'not to talk about politics'.

The decision to keep the Serbian and Albanian teams separate and working in their own communities (with a couple of exceptions) was the right one. Yet the following efforts might have promoted a better shared understanding between the teams:

1. Showing video tapes of the sites and assessment work in the different ethnic areas to each team;
2. Holding carefully arranged meetings between team members if they were willing and interested;
3. Making an effort to recruit other minority groups into the assessment team (such as Bosnian Muslims, Gorani or Roma);
4. Recruiting of more individuals who were comfortable working across the ethnic divide, then providing the necessary security and protection to the teams.

[3] The results the World Bank report which were not known at that time, show that indeed, Serbian populations had higher incidence of poverty that Albanian populations.

5.4 Making the link between the political, economic and social context and household livelihoods

One of the core questions underlying the assessment was 'What were the effects of the recent conflict on livelihoods in the province?' In this sense, the assessment was centrally concerned with exploring how individuals and their families coped with and adapted to the various changes (both short and long-term) taking place in Kosovo. To understand how certain groups were more or less resilient required knowledge of their livelihoods over the past decades. These changes in Kosovo can be understood as shocks or simply trends of long and short duration. For example, the transition from a centralised economy to a market-based economy; the (unresolved) change in the relationship between the Province of Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the administrative status of Kosovo under UNMIK, the dramatic displacement of thousands of Kosovars leading up to the NATO bombing.

In simple terms, the impact of these trends on households and communities is directly apparent: the decline in industry (an example is the closing of the Trepca mine) and resulting unemployment; the loss of life and livelihoods resulting from the conflict period; the low education levels of the Albanian rural population. However, other trends, have a long-term impact on sustainable livelihoods, and their consequences, were less apparent – such as the high levels of industrial pollution, the long-term process of state building led by an external agency, the erosion of the Albanian 'parallel structures' built up during the 1980s and 1990s.

Three major challenges faced the team in Kosovo as they drew links between the broader trends and experiences of individuals and their families. Firstly, the conflict itself stood in the way of deeper analysis of long-term trends. The assessment team partly overcame this by assessing the process of change over several time periods: the pre-conflict period of the 1980s and 1990s, the conflict period itself, and the period since the NATO bombing. However, this differentiation did not apply across the board. Two isolated Serbian communities had been little affected by the conflict. Indeed no dramatic changes had punctuated their recent past. They were more affected by what they perceived to be a slow decline in economic opportunities and the long-term out-migration of their family members to other parts of the region.

Secondly, available data was very scarce. At the time of the assessment, many organisations and agencies were going through similar processes of analysing and documenting the status of the Kosovar population. But little of the information had been published. Data on the pre-conflict period was also difficult to come by.

A related issue was the lack of any government structure. There were no ministries to consult, no extension services, no archives, no government officials. Perhaps information on Kosovo could have been found in Belgrade, but the validity and acceptability of such data would have been highly questionable. Simply put, there was no state in Kosovo to serve as a repository of information about the province.

Thirdly, the assessment took place in two stages: a literature review and consultation stage, and the field assessment. Consequently the assessment team was split between those focussed on the review and those managing the field assessment. Thus, analytically the two types of information became difficult to merge into one coherent picture.

With hindsight, integrating the literature review and consultation process into the field work might have mitigated these challenges. For example, team members could have worked in the field for a few days and then gone back to municipal centres to interview key informants with specific knowledge about the area where field work took place. This would have allowed for more

triangulation and probing of key findings. Similarly, this would have given a better picture of the meso-level, i.e. the institutions more directly in contact with communities. A recent livelihoods assessment in Zimbabwe used this methodology with success (Turton et al. 2001).

Involving a broader range of stakeholders from other institutions in Kosovo, particularly the nascent municipal governments and service providers might also have helped to bridge the macro–micro gap.

5.5 Substantiating the qualitative findings with quantitative data

The qualitative community-level data could have been better substantiated with more quantitative data from the household interviews. On average 10–15 households per site participated in interviews. In this assessment, these interviews were analysed as case studies, illustrating specific vulnerabilities and adaptations. Specific issues were covered in each interview, following a guideline for a semi-structured discussion. While the 'cluster diagrams' contained some basic data on each household, the quality of the notes from each interview varied dramatically, making it difficult to compare household interview data across sites.

One way the team might have improved the quality of interview data and introduced more quantitative information would have been to provide a cover sheet for each interview covering specific facts about the household interviews. The danger here is that assessment facilitators limit themselves to simply collecting this information and not probing for a better understanding of household livelihoods.

5.6 Assessing urban and rural livelihoods using the same methodology

Overall, the assessment team found that the same methodology was useful in exploring both rural and urban livelihoods. However, there were a few significant differences (CARE International UK, 2000). For example, at a rural site, even in a context where households have been displaced and the village has been significantly changed as a result of the conflict, both in terms of infrastructure and in terms of the population itself, participants in the assessment could generalise about the livelihood activities and status of their neighbours and the community as a whole. In the urban areas, due to the lower levels of social cohesion and organisation and high rates of in-migration and displacement, it was difficult for people in group interviews to talk generally about their area. They simply did not know what other people in the area did for a living, for example. This implies the need to carry out the assessment in several parts of an urban area, or at least to conduct key informant and household interviews in a range of neighbourhoods to get a better sense of the diversity of livelihoods in an urban setting.

6 Influence on Agency Practice

In this particular case, the extent to which the assessment influenced the practices of the various agencies operating in Kosovo is extremely difficult to assess. The reasons for this are many. The assessment team consisted primarily of outsiders to the agencies operating in Kosovo, or Kosovar staff who had limited influence over decision-making at the programme level. Therefore, follow through depended on a range of actors with whom the assessment team had limited contact following the assessment. Follow-up became difficult as the high turnover of both Kosovar and international agency staff meant that those who participated in the assessment may have gone on to jobs where the findings were less directly relevant. Despite attempts by the authors to pursue and question those who had been involved, information on the use of the findings was hard to come by.

Nevertheless, evidence of the impact of the work can be traced in three areas:

1. The incorporation of the findings in the policy documents of international agencies that underlie their programming in Kosovo;
2. Specific projects designed by NGOs to address vulnerabilities identified in the assessment;
3. The influence of the training received by two dozen Kosovar implementing staff, how it was reflected in their work with communities, and in the subsequent training in participatory techniques that these individuals carried out in their own agencies and organisations.

An example of the first influence can be found in the World Bank policy and strategy document for their programme in Kosovo (World Bank, 2001). The World Bank participated directly in the assessment through one of their staff members who followed the teams and participated in the analysis workshops over the course of the assessment. At the time, the World Bank was in the process of determining how they would work in Kosovo and delineating their own programme. The participatory assessment and their subsequent LSMS provided the information behind the development of their programme.

A World Bank document ‘Conflict and Change in Kosovo: Impact on Institutions and Societies’ devoted a chapter on ‘Vulnerability and Coping Strategies’ to comparisons between the findings of the quantitative and qualitative assessments (World Bank, 2000).

Table 2 summarises and compares correlations of vulnerability determined through the two assessments. Generally findings from both assessments corroborated with a few exceptions. For example, the quantitative assessment found Serbian households to be poorer than Albanian households. Due to the small size in the qualitative assessment, the same conclusion could not be drawn. Also, while the qualitative assessment found female-headed households more likely to be poor, the quantitative assessment found them only slightly more likely to be in extreme poverty.

According to the World Bank participant in the assessment, the Bank viewed the qualitative assessment as the equivalent of the Participatory Poverty Assessment carried out by the Bank in other countries (Taies Nazem, personal communication, May 2002).

The second influence surfaced in NGO programmes, where specific findings and/or site assessments informed the design of particular projects. In the case of CARE International UK a project centred on restocking of cattle in mountainous regions of Kosovo was based on the findings that in certain parts of the population, livestock were a critical household asset that in many cases was severely depleted during the conflict. Other projects on education and health were encouraged by the findings to take a broader livelihoods view and incorporate other community issues and concerns into their sectoral programmes using participatory methods.

Table 2 Correlations of vulnerability: comparing findings from qualitative and quantitative analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analysis	Vulnerability correlations	
	Qualitative analysis	**Quantitative analysis**
Currently displaced	Geographically isolated	Rural
Damaged dwelling	Large household size	Southwest and Northern regions
Mud or stone housing	Female-headed households	Serbian
Latrine/outdoor toilet	Elderly-headed households	Diaspora returnee
More than four people per room		Temporary dwelling
Large number of elderly		Labour market non-participant
Large number of children		
Unemployed		
Less than one hectare of land		
Little or no farm equipment		
Little or no livestock		
Disabled-headed households		
Little education		
Poor health		

Perhaps the most significant influence of the assessment was on the assessment facilitators themselves. Many of them went on to positions of higher responsibility in their respective organisations and have reported back that using participatory approaches has greatly enriched their own work. In one case, a participant claims to have trained as many as fifty other Kosovar staff in his organisation and others. One of the assessment team is now a monitoring and evaluation specialist in his organisation; he uses participatory methods in monitoring and has trained numerous staff in these methods.

Finally, a number of the facilitators have formed a network and meet occasionally to share experiences and knowledge of participatory approaches.

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