

Overview of the Vulnerability Assessment Capstone Project

The project is made up of a series of exercises walking each capstone group through various steps of a vulnerability assessment. For the capstone leader, this can serve as a rapid prototype for a vulnerability assessment they are planning on conducting, helping to explore and identify needs and approaches for a fuller VA. For other participants, this exercise increases understanding of and comfort with key elements of VAs by allowing to see what they look like in practice and to work through common sources of frustration and confusion in a learning environment.

Exercise 1: Objectives, scope, and scale. Focuses on clarifying

- The problem, decision, or question being addressed by the capstone
- Important contextual information, including who will use the results
- What target(s) make sense given the above
- What temporal and spatial scales make sense given the above

Exercise 2 - 4: Sensitivity, Exposure, and Adaptive Capacity

- Using a series of worksheets or key questions, participants explore the vulnerability of the selected target(s).
- Based on information easily at hand, with a goal of understanding how particular characteristics contribute to vulnerability rather than of creating a thorough, state-of-the-art vulnerability assessment
- Includes consideration of how to present this information based on the users.

Exercise 5: Tools and Approaches. Based on the goals, objectives, users, and other contextual information, capstone participants clarify and consider

- Characteristics of the audience or users that inform the choice of tools and approaches
- Resources (e.g. technical capacity, time, money)
- What tools and approaches (e.g. qualitative vs. quantitative, visual vs. textual, descriptive vs. prescriptive) make sense given users and resources

Exercise 6: Information, Resources, and Uncertainty. Focuses on

- Identifying information necessary to complete the vulnerability assessment, not by creating an exhaustive list of changes and impacts but by focusing on the goals and objectives and what is needed to achieve them
- Approaches to getting that information and other necessary support
- Approaches to identifying and working with key uncertainties relevant to the decision or problem at hand

Exercise 7: Synthesis, Dissemination, and Measuring Success. Focuses on:

- How to get VA results to the desired audience, and to provide them in a way that is most likely to be used
- How to measure the success of the dissemination strategy
- How to measure the degree to which objectives have been achieved