



THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

Sweden
ODSG

8 October 2009

Excellency,

Thank you very much for your interest in the Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS). I am grateful for the two meetings your mission arranged and chaired earlier this fall, both of which provided excellent opportunities for my team to brief Member States on the GIVAS.

The exchanges in these meetings were very useful and were the beginning of what we hope to be a regular dialogue with Member States, as we move forward in operationalizing the GIVAS.

As mentioned in these meetings, we are seeking resources from Member States to support the implementation of the GIVAS. We currently have some seed funding; however, this will not be sufficient to cover the costs of making the system fully operational.

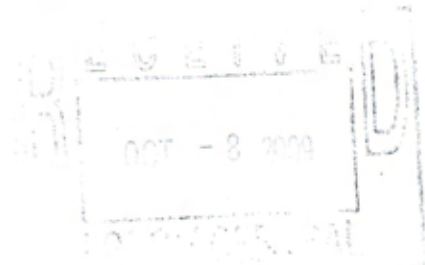
I have attached a summary concept note and our long-term budget for your consideration. At present, our shortfall is approximately \$9.5 million for the period 2009–2011.

I look forward to hearing from your mission on the possibility of a voluntary contribution in support of this project. Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Asha-Rose Migiro

His Excellency
Mr. Anders Lidén
Permanent Representative of Sweden
to the United Nations
New York



29-10579

Concept Note: The Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System

I. Background

1. Over the past decade, the international community has put in place a number of useful sector-specific global early warning mechanisms, ranging from systems tracking disease outbreaks and natural disasters to mechanisms that capture signs of droughts, famines and climate change to those that signal emerging complex emergencies. However, it has become clear in the context of the global food and economic crises that there are few mechanisms that are able to report across sectors on the immediate impacts that global shocks have on the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable populations¹. As a result, decision makers find themselves having to make difficult decisions based on projections and anecdotal accounts as opposed to collected data that can immediately signal changes in the welfare of the most vulnerable populations.

2. World leaders have recognized this information gap and have called on the UN to work with other global institutions to establish an effective mechanism to monitor the impact of a global crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable.²

3. On behalf of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General has initiated discussions to explore how a Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert system (GIVAS) could be established. This note describes initial thinking on GIVAS objectives and purpose and its conceptual and operational parameters. It also provides an initial discussion of sources and types of data to be collected.

II. Objective and Purpose of the GIVAS

4. The objective of GIVAS is to provide early indications of how an exogenous shock, like the financial crisis, is affecting the economic, social and political welfare of the most marginalized populations and countries. By analyzing both the exposure and resilience of populations to the changing environment, GIVAS will also be able to signal emerging vulnerabilities. Both features will fill the information gap that currently exists between the point when a global or international crisis hits vulnerable populations and when information reaches decision makers through existing channels. GIVAS will serve to galvanize both policy makers and communities to ensure that in times of global crisis, the fate of the poorest and most vulnerable populations is not ignored.

5. In particular, GIVAS will:

¹ There is an increasing trend to link early warning systems so that information on one type of shock provided by one system is taken into account by another. For example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Early Warning/Early Response combines information on vulnerability to food shortages, pests, animal diseases, human public health, children's conditions, population movements etc. The Global Impact and Vulnerability Data Platform will build on this network and expand it with additional data and tools for analysis.

² The request was formally made by Member States participating in the G20 Meeting in London in April 2009. It has been echoed by world leaders in a number of subsequent meetings with the Secretary-General over the past six months.

- Provide the international community with early, real-time evidence of how a global crisis is affecting the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable populations;
- Raise “red” flags on newly emerging and dramatically worsening vulnerabilities of global concern;
- Provide high-level decision makers with real time information and analysis to ensure that crisis-related decisions take appropriate account of the needs of the most vulnerable countries and populations;
- Bring the “voices of the most vulnerable” into high-level decision making forums;
- Monitor the duration of a crisis.

6. GIVAS will collect data and monitor trends on an ongoing basis. Special reports will be triggered by an exogenous shock that affects more than one country and has the potential to affect various dimensions of socio-economic welfare. GIVAS will track not only who is *most severely* impacted by the consequences of a global crisis, but it will also seek to identify population groups that experience the *most dramatic changes* in their wellbeing. Where possible, differentiated impacts on specific population groups (e.g., men/women, rural/urban, etc.) will be captured.

III. The GIVAS Network

7. GIVAS will provide a platform which will link existing UN System and partner data bases with real time data collection efforts that the initiative seeks to catalyze. It will bring together both lower frequency (i.e., collected on a yearly or less frequent basis) and higher frequency (i.e., collected on a quarterly, monthly, or weekly basis) quantitative and qualitative data. GIVAS will focus on assessing the resilience (capacity to respond to a crisis) and exposure (existing transmission channels for the shock) of individuals and households. It will also provide the base-line for assessing whether perceived trends on the ground were “abnormal” and likely to be a consequence of the external shock being monitored.

8. Where possible, data will be drawn from existing data sources compiled by UN agencies, governments, and NGOs. Particular attention will be given to incorporating existing early warning and monitoring systems that already compile large amounts of data (e.g., IASC Early Warning Early Action System, GIEWS, FEWS, General Data Dissemination System, etc.). The higher frequency or real-time data may need to be collected at sentinel sites in specific countries. Data will be collected using a variety of methodologies, including mobile communication tools (i.e. text messaging), quick impact assessment surveys, satellite imagery and sophisticated media tracking systems.

9. GIVAS will have to overcome a number of challenges with regard to its data inputs such as varying degrees of country coverage, limited data comparability and different data reliability. Methods for dealing with low quality data and data gaps will need to be adopted.

10. Data shortcomings are likely to be particularly acute in the case of the higher frequency indicators. For this reason a phased approach for collecting high frequency indicators will need to be adopted. In the first phase, GIVAS may need to base its analysis on a **sample of proxy countries** where data collection efforts are currently more developed and solid. However, over time, all effort will be made to expand data collection efforts across the globe.

11. While the scarcity of real time data may be partly due to data collection gaps (or in some cases a lack of rapid data transmission), it is also a function of dispersed and isolated data collection efforts. GIVAS will need to benefit early on from building a strong **network of data collectors**, both from within and outside the UN system, to bring data collection efforts together in a more systematic manner. Member States and NGOs will be critical partners in this enterprise. In addition, the GIVAS will actively promote innovation in data collection through partnerships with academic institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector partners.

12. Quantitative data collection will be complemented by “softer” **qualitative information** collected through media scans (e.g., InStedd), wikis, opinion polls (e.g., social weather stations) and “eye witness accounts”. This will add an important human angle to the data collected, and can help cross-validate real time data points. As much of this softer information will come in unfiltered, careful thought will need to be given to how to avoid overloading GIVAS with too much information “noise”.

13. The establishing of a system that brings together diverse strands of data will in itself be an important contribution to the international community. Many data platforms are closed: they allow use only by members of the organization or even require payment. The proposed platform would be open and thus would provide a “public good” to the international community. Moreover, existing data platforms and indicator frameworks tend to be sector-specific. As a consequence, they encourage narrow problem-solving. By drawing together a broad range of data streams GIVAS will facilitate the analysis of complex interconnected dynamics which seem to be more characteristic of the emerging global challenges which we face today. Finally, once established, GIVAS will be cost effective as it will eliminate the need for different agencies and partners to develop their own systems.

IV. GIVAS Analytical Framework

14. GIVAS will rely on a well-developed analytical framework that will focus on answering a series of “**big questions**” deemed to be important to decision-makers at the national, regional and global levels as they seek to address emerging vulnerabilities. They could, for example, include questions such as:

- Who appears to be most severely affected by the global crisis?
- How are people being affected?
- How are individuals and households coping?

- If no action is taken, what potential longer-term consequences would the international community be faced with?
- Are there any red flags indicating developments that could signal trouble for the future?

15. These questions will be answered by careful analysis of the quantitative and qualitative drawn together by GIVAS. Different analytical approaches and frameworks will need to be considered, as will software packages that allow for some automated analysis of incoming data. The quality of GIVAS analysis will determine how seriously its findings will be taken by decision makers. As the system will rely partially on real-time data, which is often less rigorously collected and vetted, it will be important to establish *clear quality standards for rapid data collection*, which all participating partners should observe. Moreover, it would be crucial that the analysis provided by GIVAS fully discloses *data limitations*. A data reliability and data analysis tool reliability index will need to be developed which will help users understand the limitations of the different data streams or data analysis tools available on the platform.

16. It may also be advisable to establish an Expert Advisory Group composed of well respected experts in the fields of data collection and vulnerability analysis to lend its findings additional credibility.

V. Communicating GIVAS findings

17. Packaging and effectively communicating GIVAS findings will be essential if it is to have an impact on decision making. A range of GIVAS products will need to be designed and carefully tailored to the needs of different users: world leaders, UN agencies, development practitioners, the media and the global public. High-level gatherings, such as the General Assembly, the G8/20 Summits, Regional Multilateral Forums, and the World Economic Forum, will present important strategic communication opportunities throughout the year for the Secretary-General to share broad messages drawn from the analysis made possible by GIVAS.

18. Given general information overload, GIVAS products will need to find creative ways to attract interest. In the past, **data presentation** has often been dry (using traditional pie, bar and area charts) and not always accessible. In the last few years, data visualization – bringing together disciplines such as graphic design, computer science and statistics – has become more exciting. GIVAS will explore the use of new data presentation formats (such as interactive graphics, infographics, geographic information systems and mappings) and new technologies (such as Gapminder's Trendalyzer software). Analytical data “snapshots”, for example, could be developed to highlight vulnerability diamonds, correlations between specific indicators, trend developments over short time spans, and “overlays” between different crises.

VI. Operational Framework and Governance

19. GIVAS operational set up will have to be a light and non-bureaucratic structure that builds on and connects existing global alert mechanisms and rapid data collection initiatives. In order to ensure its sustainability, GIVAS should avoid – where possible – creating new, cost-intensive structures. The operational framework will be composed of three building blocks.

- *A small analytical team:* The team will be responsible for vetting, analyzing and packaging the collected data streams for GIVAS. The unit or network of analysts would be funded by extra-budgetary resources, and staffed by a small project staff as well as individuals seconded from agencies. The team will need to have a close link to the UN's highest levels of decision-making, but should also be able to retain a certain degree of analytical and creative independence.
- *An open platform:* GIVAS will provide the connective tissue that brings together data collected by the UN System and its partners. This platform should be accessible to the UN System, NGOs, Member States, as well as the wider public.
- *A network of partners:* The success of GIVAS will depend greatly on how effectively the system manages to bring together the data collection capacities of various partners in the field. Rather than designing new rigid coordination structures, GIVAS will connect its partners through a loosely-tied partner network.

20. The governance arrangements for GIVAS will need to be equally light and flexible. The following mechanisms could be envisioned (but more discussion will be required):

- *An Expert Advisory Group* that would be composed of highly respected experts (from both within and outside the UN system) in the fields of vulnerability assessment, statistics, information mapping and rapid data collection. The Group would provide regular advice to the GIVAS team.
- *A DSG chaired Taskforce* (continued from design phase) that would serve as a UN system coordination mechanism. It would meet every 4-6 months to provide guidance to the GIVAS team.
- *A Partner Network* that would connect data providers and other interested partners (through a wiki or other networking tools) to promote regular exchanges of experiences and ideas on innovative data collection methodologies. Partners would also have an opportunity to meet face-to-face during an *Annual Partner Colloquium*. The colloquium would provide a networking opportunity, and act as a sounding board and source of ideas and innovation.

VII. Partnerships

21. Building strong partnerships beyond the UN system will be crucial to allow the GIVAS to provide a credible and sound indication of how vulnerable population groups

are experiencing the different effects of a global crisis in their lives. As described above, GIVAS will actively promote outside partnerships for the following purposes:

- *Data collection:* New rapid data collection methodologies are being piloted by many, diverse partners in the field, including universities, government-associated institutes, civil society organizations and the private sector. In order to allow GIVAS to build on this increasingly rich information source, it would need to actively reach out to partner organizations to explore how to draw on these ongoing data collection efforts. In this regard, a mapping of rapid data collection initiatives should be completed to obtain a better understanding of existing efforts. Careful thought would also need to be given to partnership agreements, including the design of common quality standards for data collection.
- *Innovation:* Rapid data collection is a new and quickly expanding field. In order to harness the full potential of these new technologies, the UN should pro-actively engage with the thought leaders in this field.

27. In addition, it will be important – starting during the design phase – to actively reach out to UN Member States. Governments will play a central role as potential users and providers of information to GIVAS. There needs to be a clear understanding from the beginning among the UN membership of what the GIVAS would deliver for Member States (its “value added”), and even more importantly, what it would not be doing. Potential misperceptions and concerns should be addressed as early as possible.

GIVAS Proposed Draft Budget as of 28 September, 2009

Description	Unit	2009	Unit	2010	Unit	2011	Unit	2012	Total	Comments
GIVAS report										
GA/G20 Report (1st report)	1	\$67,650		n/a		n/a		n/a	\$67,651	
Quarterly Reports)	1 at 20,000	N/A	2	\$40,000	4	\$80,000	4	\$80,000	\$200,000	
SUB-TOTAL		\$67,650		\$40,000		\$80,000		\$80,000	\$267,650	
GIVAS Multimedia Costs										
G8 film (July)	1	\$39,000		\$45,000		n/a		n/a	\$84,000	
GIVAS web site creation		\$9,000		n/a		n/a		n/a	\$9,000	
GIVAS web maintenance		\$5,000		\$10,000		\$10,000		\$10,000	\$35,000	
GIVAS film/video testimonies		\$10,056		\$15,000		\$15,000		\$15,000	\$55,056	
SUB-TOTAL		\$63,056		\$70,000		\$25,000		\$25,000	\$183,056	
Staff Costs										
Project Manager (D1)	1	\$49,666		\$298,000		\$298,000		\$298,000	\$943,666	
(P5)	3	seconded		\$800,100		\$800,100		\$800,100	\$1,600,200	
(P4)	2	seconded		seconded		\$451,800		\$451,800	\$903,600	
(P3)	2	seconded		seconded		\$338,000		\$338,000	\$676,000	
Project Assistant	1	\$16,280		\$97,700		\$97,700		\$97,700	\$309,380	
SUB-TOTAL		\$65,946		\$395,700		\$1,985,600		\$1,985,600	\$4,432,846	
Support Costs										
Rent		\$9,166		\$55,000		\$55,000		\$55,000	\$174,166	
Common service costs		\$4,000		\$25,000		\$25,000		\$25,000	\$79,000	
Communications		\$3,000		\$10,000		\$10,000		\$10,000	\$33,000	
Staff Travel		\$50,000		\$75,000		\$75,000		\$75,000	\$275,000	
Staff Vacancy advertising		\$10,000		n/a		tbd		tbd	\$10,000	
SUB-TOTAL		\$76,166		\$165,000		\$165,000		\$165,000	\$571,166	
Design and Development										
Indicator and analytical Framework										
Consultants	2 for 2 months	\$45,200	2 for 2 months	\$45,200		n/a		n/a	\$90,400	
Partner consultations	2	\$50,000	3	\$100,000		n/a		n/a	\$150,000	
Travel (consultants)		\$20,000		\$30,000		n/a		n/a	\$50,000	
SUB-TOTAL		\$115,200		\$175,200		n/a		n/a	\$290,400	
Technical Platform										
Technical Advisor		\$10,000		\$10,000		n/a		n/a	\$20,000	
Travel(Technical Advisor)		\$4,000		\$2,000		n/a		n/a	\$6,000	
Data Integration consultancy		n/a		\$200,000		\$100,000		\$50,000	\$350,000	
SUB-TOTAL		\$14,000		\$212,000		\$100,000		\$50,000	\$376,000	
Data Collection										
Rapid Data Collection Advisor		\$10,000		\$10,000		n/a		n/a	\$20,000	
Brainstorming to Develop parameters for GIVAS partnerships		\$50,000		n/a		n/a		n/a	\$50,000	
Sentinel site support funds		n/a		\$100,000		\$100,000		\$100,000	\$300,000	
National systems support funds		n/a		\$100,000		\$100,000		\$100,000	\$300,000	
RIVAF trust fund support		n/a		\$100,000		\$100,000		\$100,000	\$300,000	
SUB-TOTAL		\$60,000		\$310,000		\$300,000		\$300,000	\$970,000	
Partner Outreach										
Partner Retreat		\$0		\$150,000		n/a		\$150,000	\$300,000	
Partner brochure		\$0		\$20,000		n/a		n/a		
Advisory Board meeting		\$0		\$5,000		\$5,000		\$5,000	\$15,000	
Annual Partner Colloquium		\$0		\$200,000		\$200,000		\$200,000	\$600,000	
SUB-TOTAL		\$0		\$375,000		\$205,000		\$355,000	\$935,000	
Fundraising Costs										
Development of fundraising strategy		\$0		\$22,000		n/a		n/a	\$22,000	
SUB-TOTAL		\$0		\$22,000		\$0		\$0	\$22,000	
TOTAL		\$462,018		\$1,764,900		\$2,860,600		\$2,960,600	\$8,048,118	
Contingency (10%)		\$46,202		\$176,490		\$286,060		\$296,060	\$804,811.80	
Sub-Total		\$508,220		\$1,941,390		\$3,146,660		\$3,256,660	\$8,852,930	
Program Support Costs (13%)		\$66,069		\$252,381		\$409,066		\$423,366	\$1,150,880.87	
GRAND TOTAL		\$574,288		\$2,193,771		\$3,555,726		\$3,680,026	\$10,003,811	