

Module 7

Identifying and supporting vulnerable groups

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Introduction

The main objective of a land access and resettlement process is to ensure that the impacted households' standard of living is enhanced, or at least maintained. It is, however, widely recognised that some households are more vulnerable to risks of poverty.

Households that are particularly vulnerable include landless squatters and tenants and those with limited labour resources, such as households headed by women, the elderly and those in poor health. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) defines special or "at-risk" groups as "people who, by virtue of gender, ethnicity, age, physical or mental disability, economic disadvantage or social status may be more diversely affected by displacement than others and who may be limited in their ability to claim or take advantage of resettlement assistance and related development benefits" (IFC 2012a).

The IFC requires projects to identify vulnerable groups during the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA)—Performance Standard 1 (IFC 2012b)—or through the social baseline studies component of resettlement planning. However, most ESIA baseline studies are not thorough enough to identify vulnerable households, and therefore vulnerability to impoverishment should be identified in the resettlement action plan (RAP) baseline studies. This requires special measures to engage with vulnerable groups (eg through focus groups) and ensuring that employees are aware of the distinct needs of these groups (such as the elderly, disabled, etc).

