VCA toolbox
with reference sheets

International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation's Global Agenda (2006–2010)

Over the next five years, the collective focus of the Federation will be on achieving the following goals and priorities:

Our goals

Goal 1: Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

Goal 2: Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

Goal 3: Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.

Goal 4: Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

Our priorities

Improving our local, regional and international capacity to respond to disasters and public health emergencies.

Scaling up our actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction.

Increasing significantly our HIV/AIDS programming and advocacy.

Renewing our advocacy on priority humanitarian issues, especially fighting intolerance, stigma and discrimination, and promoting disaster risk reduction.

Photos: International Federation

2007

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

P.O. Box 372
CH-1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
Telephone: +41 22 730 4222
Telefax: +41 22 733 0395
E-mail: secretariat@ifrc.org
Web site: www.ifrc.org

Contents

Figures

Box

Abbreviations and acronyms

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
BPI	Better Programming Initiative
CAS	cooperation agreement strategy
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency (USA)
GIS	geographic information system
GPS	Global Positioning System
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
IEC	information, education and communication
IEM	Implicit Ethical Message
IGO	inter-governmental organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
PHAST	participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation
PMI	Indonesian Red Cross Society
PRA	participatory rapid appraisal
SitRep	situation report
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
TB	tuberculosis
TRS	tool reference sheet
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNHCR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
VCA	Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Acknowledgements

This document has been published with the support of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid-ECHO. We would also like to thank Jan Gelfand, Stéphanie Bouris, Graham Betts-Symonds and Iñigo Barrena for their invaluable contribution to the production of this document.

Children's focus group – VCA training in Argentina, 2004

Introduction

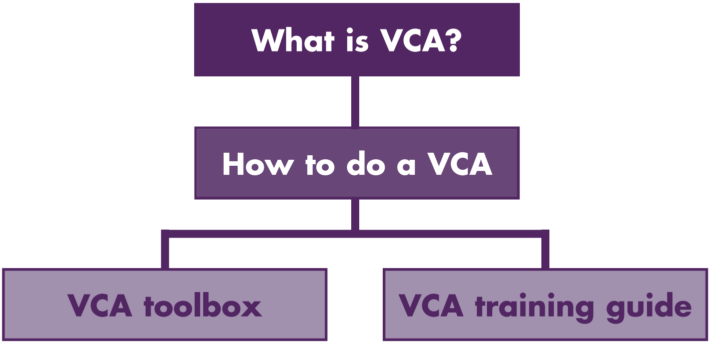
Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) is a participatory investigative process designed to assess the risks that people face in their locality, their vulnerability to those risks, and the capacities they possess to cope with a hazard and recover from it when it strikes. Through VCA, National Societies can work with vulnerable communities to identify the risks and take steps to reduce them by drawing on their own skills, knowledge and initiative. In sum, VCA helps people to prepare for hazards, to prevent them from turning into disasters and to mitigate their effects.

In the previous publication in this series, *How to do a VCA*, you learned how to set up a VCA and the various elements required to ensure its success. In this document, we turn to what, specifically, is involved in undertaking the research and the different information-gathering tools at your disposal.

In a typical VCA, quality research is carried out to obtain data that can be analysed for the purpose of planning programmes and projects designed to reduce risk and vulnerability. As with any research, the information you hope to obtain is directly linked to the objectives of the research, that is, you look for information that allows you to make better decisions and plan according to objectives (see *How to do a VCA*, pp. 30–32). In general, however, there are expected outcomes from a VCA process. These include:

- baseline assessment information that can become the entry point for an emergency needs assessment following a disaster;
- the community's understanding of its own environment in relation to known risks and hazards;
- the community's realization of its own capacities to cope with those risks and hazards;
- agreement between the community and local authorities on what actions are needed to prevent or reduce the effects of hazards;
- developing relevant projects in prevention, preparedness and risk reduction.

This toolbox looks at different participatory investigative tools that can be used by National Society staff and volunteers to accomplish a successful VCA. As shown in the diagram below, it forms part of a comprehensive four-part series of publications addressing all aspects of VCA.



Each document serves a specific purpose:

1 *What is VCA?* – The first publication is an introduction to VCA aimed at National Society and Federation delegation staff, donors and partners.
2 *How to do a VCA* – The second publication is a step-by-step guide to undertaking a VCA for National Society staff and volunteers.
3 *VCA toolbox* – The third publication is a description of research methods and instruction in how to use a variety of information-gathering techniques.
4 *VCA training guide* – The fourth publication is a hands-on, learning-by-doing training manual.

Cross references are made between all the documents in the VCA series to show clearly where the different tools fit into the overall VCA process.

It is **essential** that before using the toolbox you carefully read the first two publications in the series. *What is VCA?* explains the theory behind the concept, defines key terms, and places VCA within an overall programming context. *How to do a VCA* takes you step by step through the entire VCA process. As you become more familiar with that process, the use of this toolbox will become clear. No National Society should embark on a VCA based only on a reading of this toolbox.

In *all* cases, National Society staff should seek support from an experienced person either within their own National Society, from another National Society in the region or the International Federation country/regional delegation. This "VCA resource person" can guide you through the process, help you to avoid potential pitfalls, and share lessons learned. The resource person does not have to be present throughout the whole VCA process, but should at least be there to support you at critical moments.

Community mapping in Lesotho, 2006

How to use the toolbox

This toolbox provides a detailed explanation on how to undertake the research part of a VCA. It will help you to choose the **right tools** to suit your purpose and describes when and how to use them and what to do with the information collected.

It begins with a general discussion on the different research approaches and their usage. It also explores related issues such as participation, reliability, validity and bias, which have an impact on how you carry out the research and the quality of the information you get from it.

The bulk of this publication is devoted to the tools themselves. A series of tables provides an initial overview of the tools, all of which are appropriate to use in a VCA. For ease of reference, the various tools featured are divided into three sections: Process, Research and Methods.

The tools are then presented one by one in detail in the form of reference sheets. They begin with **Process Reference Sheets** (PRS), which provide instruction on how to use specific processes when working with data. These are followed by a series of **Research Reference Sheets** (RRS), which guide you through the implementation of the different investigative tools. Lastly, a number of **Methods Reference Sheets** (MRS) outline the different strategies and techniques for working with communities during meetings and workshops. Each "sheet" is numbered (e.g. PRS 1, RRS 2, MRS 3) and is referred to as such throughout the toolbox. It can be photocopied and distributed to the members of the VCA team to use in the field. However, the reference sheets should only be used once the VCA team is familiar with the whole document and has been trained in the use of these tools in the community.

Many of the tools are, by design, similar to those in the *Harmonized Community Tool Box,* which is available on the Federation Secretariat intranet site (https//:www.fednet.ifrc.org/).

The idea of this toolbox is to help you to understand what is involved in the different forms of investigation, as well as how to work with communities and what to consider when choosing specific tools. The toolbox will not answer all the questions you may have, so it is imperative that the person who is guiding the VCA process has a basic understanding of how to conduct research.

Box 1 **Terminology**

A number of basic terms come up repeatedly throughout this document. To ensure that their meaning is clear, they are defined in the context of a VCA as follows:

- **Methodology**: An entire process or approach (e.g. assessment of vulnerability and capacity) which brings together specific methods and tools to support the overall process.
- **Process**: A way of meeting an objective by implementing a series of planned steps.
- **Method**: A set and sequence of steps or tasks to be followed as part of a larger framework (methodology) and implemented by using a number of analytical tools. Examples include: hazard analysis, livelihood analysis, stakeholder analysis.
- **Tool**: A means or instrument to accomplish a specific task. Examples include: transect walk, timeline, semi-structured interview, seasonal calendar, community mapping, etc.

The basics of research

Usually, a variety of information is required to meet the objectives of a VCA and to achieve the ultimate goal of reducing risk. Research does not have to be a complicated process, but it does have to be done in a professional manner if the collected information is to be considered reliable and a valid basis for developing projects. The reliability/validity of the information gathered through the VCA is a very important consideration for potential donors. The choice of tools is also critical, and there are several things to keep in mind when making those decisions.

Before going into detail on each tool, let us explore some issues related to carrying out quality research. Being aware of the constraints and pitfalls is crucial in avoiding problems and ensuring good information is collected. While some of the discussion below may seem academic, it is important for those undertaking a VCA to understand the basic concepts of research so that they are clear on the strengths and limitations of different research approaches and tools.

Participation

VCA requires the active participation of Red Cross Red Crescent branch volunteers and members of the community concerned. It is vital that they have a genuine sense of ownership of the process if they are to assume responsibility for the success of the projects that stem from it.

Many ideas on how to reduce risk come from the community members themselves. When this happens and projects result from these ideas, there is a greater chance that the work will be long lasting. For example, during a brainstorming session, community members may realize that a church or a mosque would make an ideal temporary shelter during a disaster. Often, it takes a participatory process like VCA for a community to recognize capacities they have of which they were previously unware.

Reliability, validity and bias

If the data collected are not accurate, the conclusions based on the information will not be valid. It is also vital that the right tools be chosen and applied in the proper way. However, there are issues and limitations which must be considered no matter how well the tools have been implemented. At the end of the process, you must ask yourself whether the information you have collected is trustworthy and whether others will also find it so. The discussion below examines, in general terms, some of these issues. Constraints and pitfalls associated with specific tools will be addressed when we look at each individual tool.

Reliability and validity have traditionally been concerns associated with quantitative research, but they are equally important when using qualitative approaches. However, they may mean different things in the different contexts.

Reliability refers to the accuracy of the research method and of the information obtained through it in representing the situation being studied. Specifically, reliability asks the question whether the same results would be obtained using the same tool if it were to be carried out several times. Data are considered to be reliable if the same results are obtained regardless of who undertakes the research and how many times it is carried out within a short period of time. Would, for example, the women in a focus group give the same answers to the question "What are the main roles of women before, during and after a disaster?" if they were to be asked three days in a row in a focus group facilitated by three different people?

Because reliability is mostly concerned with measurement, which is quantitative, many believe that it does not apply to qualitative research. This is not the case. Reliability is relevant to data obtained by any research tool.

Validity is concerned with whether a tool actually measures what it is intended to measure. Is a self-administered questionnaire, for example, the best tool to obtain information from people who are unable to read or write? Is risk mapping an appropriate way of identifying power relations in a community? At the core of validity is the quality of the information collected. Validity highlights the need always to choose the right tool for the information you want to obtain and to employ that tool in a disciplined manner.

There is always a danger that the results of research may be distorted by the researcher or those interpreting the data owing to personal, social, cultural or other outside influences. This is known as **bias**. Such a concern may arise when undertaking a VCA. Here are some potential problems of bias and their possible solutions:

- **The community is treated as if it is one unit with the same interests**. Communities are made up of different groups distinguishable by a wide range of factors, such as race, social status, religion, etc., so you can not assume that what is said by one group represents the views or wishes of all groups. For this reason, it is very important when assessing vulnerability and capacity to talk to as many different groups in a community as possible. Communities are often divided on many issues, and you do not want to overrepresent the interests of some and underrepresent those of others. Remember that it is often the views of the most vulnerable groups that are underrepresented (see box 10 in *How to do a VCA,* p. 38).
- **The researchers identify more with one group in a community than another, affecting the way data is collected and the way it is interpreted**. If the researchers are shown to have a vested interest in the way the information is presented, then there may be sufficient reason to treat the recommendations or planning implications with suspicion. While it may affect the reliability and validity of the research findings, more importantly it may create tension in the relationship with certain sectors of the community. If the community does not trust the work and the people who they are working with, carrying out projects with their support will be virtually impossible. This is the reason for using a wide

variety of research methods – to avoid bias and reduce the chance of conflict. It is crucial that all members of the VCA team are aware of this and that steps are taken to prevent this type of bias. It may be necessary, for example, to conduct cultural sensitivity workshops for the team. VCA has the potential to strengthen relationships in communities or to cause tension among the different groups. It is imperative that you focus on connecting people rather than creating division (see Annex p. 167).

Quantitative versus qualitative research

Quantitative research is a process whereby numerical data are utilized to acquire information about a particular subject. It is mainly concerned with measuring and counting facts about things and the relationships amongst variables that affect what is being studied. Observations are described principally through the statistical analysis of the data. In simple terms, quantitative research is based on numbers that can easily be arranged in different ways and then used for comparison. It provides an objective view of a situation.

Qualitative research, by contrast, is based on an “overall” view of a situation, assuming that there are many different perspectives to understand it. It aims to capture the information that cannot easily be quantified, or which, if quantified, loses a sense of the “narrative” framework which gives it meaning. Qualitative research takes into account that perceptions change depending on which group in a society or community you are talking to and that understanding something cannot be separated from the situation or context. It is concerned with understanding things as they occur in the “real world”.

Whereas quantitative methods use numbers to reach a conclusion, qualitative research uses words. Qualitative research requires thoroughness in the collection of information and the consideration of all the data in the development of ideas and making conclusions. It is by its nature subjective and often requires the researcher to interpret non-verbal signals, as well as what is actually said. If numbers don't tell the whole story, it is best to employ qualitative methods.

To illustrate the difference between quantitative and qualitative research, take the example of men and women using a cyclone shelter. With quantitative analysis, it would be easy to determine the number of men using the shelter compared with the number of women. However, if the numbers showed that more men than women were using the shelter, you would not be able to determine why simply by looking at the numbers. The "why" would only be revealed by applying qualitative research methods, i.e. by asking the women why they could not or would not use the shelter.

Similarly, a quantitative study will tell you how many people are housed in the shelter over a given time period. If, however, you want to know how the people living in the shelter *feel* about the situation, it would be necessary to talk to them and then make conclusions and judgements based on what they said and how they said it.

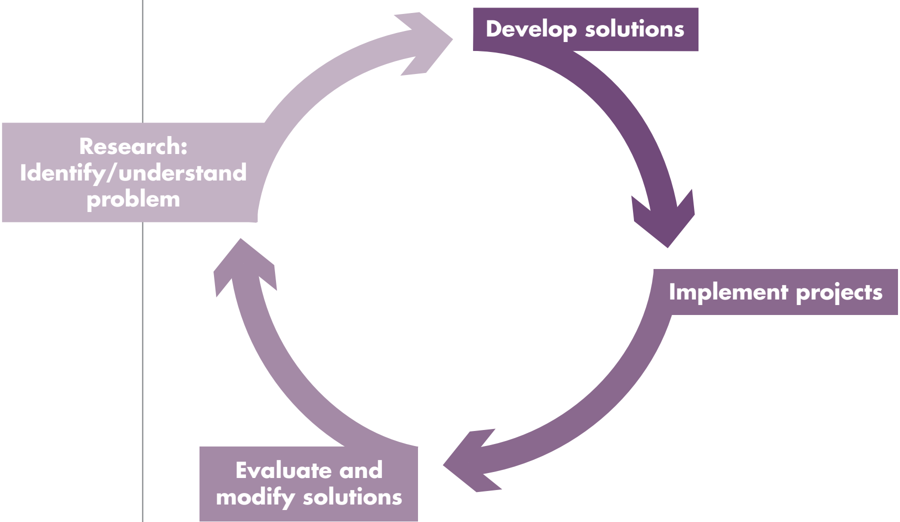
Another difference between the two approaches, using the same example, is that quantitative research is used to test a theory, such as "women do not use shelters because of a lack of privacy", whereas qualitative research draws conclusions from what is observed, i.e. it generates theory. The qualitative researcher will explore how women feel about being in overcrowded conditions and may conclude that "there is a greater risk of violence in an overcrowded shelter because people feel frustrated at not having privacy". It is harder to generalize with qualitative methods than with quantitative because qualitative methods are specific to the situation researched.

Quantitative research compares the relationships between different social units (e.g. social groups, government bodies, institutions, ethnic groups, men and women), whereas the understanding of those relationships is best gained from a description that allows for opinions as well as "facts" – which is what you get with qualitative research. The majority of tools used in a VCA are qualitative.

Both approaches have one critical thing in common: they are **systematic**, which means they follow a **strict process**. Rigour and discipline are key elements of any legitimate research.

It can be argued that VCA is neither qualitative nor quantitative but rather a combination of both. Research is used as a way to work with communities to understand the roots of a problem and find long-lasting solutions. In other words, you undertake research and then use the findings to create projects to bring about change – in the case of VCA, to reduce vulnerability and risk. The process is a relationship, as shown in the simple diagram below, between research and action that involves people in a community as the main participants.

Figure 1 The action–research framework of VCA in a project planning cycle



An overview of research processes, tools and methods

This section provides a quick overview of the different research processes, tools and methods involved in a VCA. It gives a brief summary of each one, together with its strengths and limitations, and highlights some of the issues to keep in mind when choosing whether or not to use it. Step-by-step instructions and tips on how to use each tool are provided in the individual **reference sheets** later in the document.

Processes

Process	PRS	Description
Collecting sources of data	**PRS 1**	It is important to know something about the community you will be working with, at least superficially, before undertaking any specific research. A wide range of information, both qualitative and quantitative, will already be available to the VCA team for analysis. The process of collecting the data can go a long way to diminishing the chance of bias. It will help you to understand the cultural and historical context in which the research will take place, including the physical characteristics of the study region.
Sorting and analysis	**PRS 2**	Data analysis begins with sorting. When sorting through the data collected, it is important to recognize what is useful and what can be discarded. Once sorted, the data can be analysed. Each tool provides guidance on how to carry this out. It is always a good idea to have somebody with data analysis experience to accompany this process.

Process	PRS	Description
Participatory evaluation	**PRS 3**	Monitoring and evaluation of both the VCA process and resulting projects are critical components of community work. Participatory evaluation is the process by which the quality and impact of interventions are assessed and measured in consultation with the VCA team and community members. A participatory evaluation also enables Red Cross Red Crescent and community project staff to find out how people feel about the project, what is working and what needs changing, and make adjustments accordingly.
Applying the VCA model principles	**PRS 4**	While the VCA team is working with a community, and especially in the initial phase of the process, it is important to consider the community's perspective, rooted in its cultural identity, beliefs and values. Applying the VCA model principles enables the team to better understand the natural, social and political environment in which it is working, encourages respect for a community's behaviours and capabilities within that environment and reduces the possibility of bias.
Better Programming Initiative	**PRS 5**	The Better Programming Initiative is an impact assessment methodology. It provides a framework in which to analyse the positive and/or negative impacts of aid programmes on communities recovering from violence, armed conflict or disaster. The initiative proposes an analytical approach to programming and helps programme staff avoid the possible negative consequences of aid in the contexts in which programmes are implemented and to strengthen collaboration with community groups.

Tools

Tool	RRS	Description
Review of secondary sources (quantitative and qualitative)	**RRS 1**	A review of secondary sources means collecting information that already exists, usually in the form of written reports or documents. It provides an overall picture of the community in which the VCA is going to be carried out. This review should be done prior to any field work, as the findings may influence the types of tools you choose to use in a given community.

Tool	RRS	Description
Community baseline data (quantitative and qualitative)	**RRS 2**	This is a list of questions designed to obtain much of the information needed for the creation of baseline data. It is important to undertake it early on in the process because it enables you to compare the situation before and after risk reduction projects have been implemented.
Semi-structured interview (qualitative)	**RRS 3**	A semi-structured interview is a form of guided interview in which only a few questions are decided upon ahead of time. The questions are open-ended, with the aim of stimulating an informal discussion on a given topic. This interviewing technique can be used both to give information (such as raising awareness of tuberculosis) and to receive information (such as finding out what people know about tuberculosis). It is one of the main data-collection methods used in a VCA.
Focus group discussion (qualitative)	**RRS 4**	A focus group discussion is an organized dialogue between a selected group of knowledgeable individuals in a community to obtain their views on and experiences of a given topic. It is particularly suited to obtaining several perspectives on the same topic. Focus groups also provide insight into people's shared understanding of everyday life and the ways in which individuals are influenced by others in a group situation. However, problems can surface when attempting to separate the individual view from the group view. It is very important that the facilitator has good group leadership and interpersonal skills in order to moderate such a group successfully.
Direct observation (qualitative)	**RRS 5**	Direct observation is a useful research tool as it helps the VCA team to understand the context in which the information is being gathered. All members of the VCA team should be constantly taking notes on what they are observing. It is essential to provide as much detail as possible and to describe the circumstances and the context that lead to certain observations. This will allow others to assess the reliability of the information. When carrying out direct observation, you need to confirm that you have properly understood what you observe as it is easy to misinterpret what you are seeing.
Mapping (qualitative)	**RRS 6**	Maps can be made by a community to indicate the position of risks and hazards. They can also be used to understand what a

Tool	RRS	Description
		community has in the way of resources and where they are located. Maps are also useful for stimulating discussion among community members about important aspects of the community. They can help a community to analyse potential problems and solutions.
Transect walk (qualitative)	**RRS 7**	A transect walk involves walking through a community to observe the surroundings, people, land use and resources. The route taken can be determined by drawing a line on a map of the locality that goes through or "transects" all zones in order to gain a representative view of the community. A transect walk is usually carried out early in the research process because it gives you an overall view of the community and helps you to observe things that may require further investigation later on during interviews or group meetings. The tool is even more effective when carried out in the company of community members.
Seasonal calendar (qualitative)	**RRS 8**	For a seasonal calendar, a chart is created with the months of the year along the horizontal axis and the events and activities significant to the community listed in the vertical axis. Completion of the chart by the community helps the VCA team to see the hazards and risks in terms of when they occur. The analysis can help a community to rethink its living habits according to its vulnerability to hazards.
Historical profile/ historical visualization (qualitative)	**RRS 9**	With a historical profile, a community can build up a picture of past events, track changes in the environment and behaviours and understand causal links. Awareness of these patterns can influence the decisions that community members take when planning projects. With historical visualization, the community creates a chart showing how key aspects of their lives have changed over time. It can show up changes in housing, trees, river levels, livestock and hazards and helps people to think about how their susceptibility to certain risks may continue to change in the future. It is a good starting point for a discussion on what projects would be relevant for the future.

Tool	RRS	Description
Household/ neighbourhood vulnerability assessment (qualitative)	**RRS 10**	This tool is useful for helping households – and by extension neighbourhoods – to assess their level of vulnerability so that action can be taken to reduce it. It assists in assessing how vulnerable the household/neighbourhood is in relation to likely hazards and risks, taking into account key factors such as type of housing, rivers, evacuation routes, electricity, gas and drainage.
Livelihoods analysis (qualitative) Coping strategies analysis (qualitative)	**RRS 11**	Livelihoods analysis and coping strategies analysis look at two separate but closely related issues. The tools can be implemented separately or together. Livelihoods analysis creates an inventory of a household's assets and how they are applied as a "bundle" to its income earning. It is a powerful tool to identify the areas of a household's vulnerability and what capacities it has to protect itself from hazards. Coping strategies analysis focuses on what people do when they are already affected by a hazard (e.g. drought). Coping strategies are what come into play when dealing with the hazard. They are what families (and communities) rely on to develop means to maintain their livelihoods during and after a disaster.
Institutional and social network analysis (qualitative)	**RRS 12**	This tool helps to gauge people's perceptions of the role and significance of various organizations within the community. It can stimulate discussion leading to identification of the role each organization can play not only in time of disaster but also in relation to disaster preparedness and mitigation activities.
Assessing the capacity of people's organizations (qualitative)	**RRS 13**	Listing the key organizations in the community, such as religious bodies, schools, financial committees, hospitals, coordinating bodies and local government, can help to identify the various types of support available to the community in time of crisis. This can be used to gradually build up a picture of local capacities. It is closely linked to capacity mapping.
Venn diagram (qualitative)	**RRS 14**	Venn diagrams are designed to collect social data by using circles to show the links or relationships between different parts of a community or institution. Because they reveal similarities and differences between institutions, partners, people and issues within a community, they can be useful in identifying problems

Tool	RRS	Description
		and possible solutions. Venn diagrams are especially relevant for institutional analysis as they can help to identify specific organizations that could be involved in implementing a community action plan or specific risk reduction projects.

Methods

Method	MRS	Description
Brainstorming (qualitative)	**MRS 1**	With brainstorming, participants are encouraged to think freely and contribute their ideas in relation to a given issue. It is a valuable method of collecting information and encouraging high levels of participation. It is an effective way of getting participants to think up and contribute ideas using as much spontaneity and creativity as possible. It applies to all stages of a project, including assessments to identify problems and possible solutions, planning and evaluation.
Ranking (qualitative)	**MRS 2**	Ranking means placing something in order. It can be used to identify problem areas and preferences quickly and to decide priorities. It can also be used to assess or prioritize people's expectations, beliefs, judgements, attitudes, preferences or opinions. Ranking is a useful follow-up to other tools to take participants one step further in their critical thinking as well in the analysis of a given situation. Caution: Do not use ranking for sensitive issues, such as ranking wealth or assets, as it is understandably viewed as intrusive and can cause division and tensions in a community.
The wall method (qualitative)	**MRS 3**	The wall method is one of the most effective ways of sorting and analysing VCA-generated data. As the name suggests, the method requires the use of the walls of a good-sized room so that large amounts of data can be displayed at one time and then sorted into categories. The wall-mounted data can then be organized into clusters. A cluster is a number of similar data bits arranged together on the wall. Once all the data have been assigned to a cluster, it should be possible to spot the main emerging themes.

Method	MRS	Description
Problem tree (qualitative)	**MRS 4**	The problem tree is a flow diagram which shows the relations between different aspects of a particular issue or problem. It can help to build a picture of the major problems facing a community. From there, community members can look for the root causes that need to be addressed in order to reduce vulnerability.
Community meeting (qualitative)	**MRS 5**	Community meetings provide the opportunity to gather people together to share information and focus on a specific purpose or theme. They can involve the whole community or a representative group. Smaller community meetings allow participants to express themselves more freely.
Working together	**MRS 6**	Throughout this four-part VCA series, much discussion is devoted to the need to work with other organizations when conducting a VCA. Moreover, Red Cross Red Crescent work needs to connect communities and avoid increasing tensions among people. This tool, while related more to planning than to research, takes the information gathered through other tools and helps the VCA team explore, in cooperation with the community and other organizations, ways of working together to meet common goals.

Choosing which tools to use

Choosing which tools to use requires thinking carefully about which ones are best able to give you the information you need using the available resources. The right tools can be determined by asking yourself some of the following questions:

- What information do you want to obtain?
- Do you have the expertise to implement the tool?
- How much will it cost?
- What are the time requirements?
- How many volunteers are available to take part?
- Do branch volunteers possess the capacities to implement the tool correctly, collect accurate information, analyse it and interpret it? If not, are there others, such as the VCA resource person, who can help?
- What kind of training is needed?

- Is there a capacity to analyse the information generated by the tool?
- Does the tool help you build stronger relationships with the community? Does it encourage participation?

Often what is needed is a combination of several tools, but *not* all, in order to meet the objectives you have set for the VCA. Different tools may overlap or coincide. For example, you may be carrying out a focus group discussion, while also carrying out direct observation of how the participants interact. In fact, direct observation is more powerful when combined with other tools such as semi-structured interviews, as the interviews allow you to confirm your observations.

Let us use brainstorming to illustrate how one tool can serve a variety of purposes. How to conduct a brainstorming session is described in greater detail in MRS 1 (see p. 133).

Brainstorming (in which participants are encouraged to think freely and contribute their ideas in relation to a given issue) is a method of collecting information *and* encouraging high levels of participation. It is effective when used with a number of tools (especially focus group discussion, seasonal calendar, historical profile, livelihoods analysis, institutional and social network analysis, problem tree and Venn diagram) and in the follow-up analysis (especially in community meetings, ranking discussions and participatory evaluation). Brainstorming is a powerful way of engaging people in the process. It also helps to ensure the participation of people who may otherwise be shy and lacking confidence to speak. Because it is possible to use it in a wide range of contexts, it is not really a "tool" but a method that can be used *with* many of the tools.

Brainstorming involves gathering a lot of ideas and information quickly: it is called brainstorming because it allows people's minds to flow freely, even if the process is somewhat chaotic and lacking in structure to start with. It requires quick-fire responses and thus encourages spontaneity and creativity. It can be applied to all stages of a project, including information collecting, problem solving, planning and evaluation.

Through brainstorming, it may also become apparent that other tools (e.g. semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions) should be used to make further analysis.

As can be seen from the brainstorming example above, every activity and all experiences are a source of information. However, sometimes the tool needs to be adapted to the situation, perhaps because of cultural or social expectations. Those implementing the VCA need to be flexible, creative and able to improvise. The reference sheets give guidance on how to use a tool, but none is a template. You will have to tailor each tool to the culture, context and issues you are examining.

Key message

There is no need to use all of the tools, as time will not allow for this and several achieve the same ends.

In *How to do a VCA*, you will find a sample schedule for a field test, along with a list of possible tools to use. This "practice day" not only offers volunteers and community members the chance to get a better sense of how to apply the methodology, but also provides a quick overview of the community and issues affecting it. This can be later expanded through more in-depth investigation and analysis.

Gender awareness

Whether in disasters or in ordinary, everyday life, the experiences of men and women can differ. Mortality rates for women tend to be higher in certain types of disaster. Women and girls may be less well nourished and may have worse access to health care than men and boys. The Red Cross Red Crescent is committed to fair and equal treatment of women and men in all its programmes.

When carrying out a VCA, you need to be aware of how gender issues can influence the way the information is collected, analysed and used to decide on priorities and activities.

In some societies attitudes to gender may be at odds with those that the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement aspires to promote. When working at community level, it is possible that the people who are involved in the VCA process are not fully sensitized to the issue. As a result, it may be difficult to enable women to participate fully in the process, or to collect information that reflects men's and women's different experiences of risk. This will need to be handled sensitively, while realizing that the process of carrying out the VCA will not be sufficient to change years of habit in the locality. However, it should still be possible to try to collect information that enables you to understand the different levels of risk experienced by men and women and to ensure that priorities and follow-up activities are based on the fair treatment of men and women and reduce risk for all people.

The process of information collection and using the tools also involves being aware of the differences between men and women. For instance, you may need to schedule sessions for some tools so that women are able to attend at different times of the day from men. You may need to deal with opposition to the idea of holding separate sessions for women. Keep in mind that it is possible, and in some cases desirable, for a woman to facilitate or co-facilitate the meeting.

What capacities are required

Each tool requires a set of skills in order to implement it correctly. The star rating indicates the skills and capacities needed for that tool (one star means a lower level of skill, five stars means a high level of skill). Participants mainly need visual, oral and/or written skills. For those tools that require good facilitation skills (two stars and above), the people involved need to have relevant experience or training.

RRS	Tool	Visual	Oral	Written	Facilitation
1	Review of secondary sources			★★★	★★
2	Community baseline data			★★★	★★
3	Semi-structured interviews		★★★	★★★	★★★
4	Focus group discussions	★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★
5	Direct observation	★★★	★★	★★★	
6	Mapping	★★★	★★	★	★★
7	Transect walk	★★★	★★	★	★★
8	Seasonal calendar	★★★	★★	★	★★
9	Historical profile/historical visualization	★★★	★★	★★	★★★
10	Household/neighbourhood vulnerability assessment	★	★★	★★	★★★
11	Livelihoods and coping strategies analysis	★	★★	★★	★★★★★
12	Institutional and social network analysis	★★★	★★	★★	★★★★
13	Assessing the capacity of people's organizations	★★★	★★	★★	★★★
14	Venn diagram	★★★	★★	★★	★★★★★

Source: Adapted from FAO (1990) "The community's toolbox", D'Arcy Davis Case. Available at http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/x5307e/x5307e00.htm

Process Reference Sheets

PRS 1

Collecting sources of data

What it is

As discussed in How to do a VCA, a VCA process should begin well before you start talking to people in the community. It is important to know the community, at least superficially, before undertaking research and choosing tools. A good place to begin is with existing sources of data to find out more about and get familiar with the community you will be working with.

A wide range of information, both qualitative and quantitative, will already be available to the VCA team. Examining these sources will help you to understand the cultural and historical context in which the research will take place, including the physical characteristics of the study region. It can also go a long way to diminishing the chances of bias.

The quality of information is dependent upon the quality of the source, so you must choose the best, while recognizing that everything and everyone is a potential source of information. So, what are these sources? In research, many different sources are used.

Primary and secondary sources

While there is some debate about what constitutes a primary or secondary source (or even tertiary source), let us look at what is meant generally by these terms within the context of a VCA.

Primary sources refer to raw data or information in its original form which has yet to be analysed, interpreted or evaluated by others.

Secondary sources are those that interpret, comment, analyse and evaluate primary sources. In other words, they come after the primary sources have been presented to others for their opinions.

Examples of primary sources	Examples of secondary sources
■ Original research documents ■ Sets of data such as a national census ■ Reports ■ Government documents ■ Newspaper and magazine articles (if they describe an event) ■ Photographs, diaries, letters ■ Interviews ■ Surveys ■ Field research (resulting from several of the tools included in this toolbox) ■ National risk maps	■ Data analysis documents using original sources such as government publications or census ■ Newspaper and magazine articles (if they analyse an event) ■ Fact books ■ Commentaries ■ Bibliographies ■ Textbooks ■ Handbooks

Both primary and secondary sources offer important information for the VCA team. Secondary sources can provide an initial assessment of the community and identify things that affect it. A thorough review of secondary sources can yield a wealth of information and can help to validate information obtained through primary sources. Sometimes, however, secondary sources may oblige you to reconsider the interpretations you have come up with based on your primary sources.

One thing that you will need to do is a review of existing documents. The reduction and classification of this material into smaller, more easily analysable elements will provide part, but not all, of the information required for the creation of **baseline data**. Baseline data constitute a compilation of the initial information you collect from the VCA, including facts, numbers and descriptions. In other words, it is the information gathered through a variety of tools in systematized form. Baseline data allows you to measure the impact of any risk reduction projects comparing vulnerability, capacity and risk after the project implementation against the initial findings. You can do this because you have the data from the VCA. It allows you to demonstrate to the community and to donors the impact and value of your participatory project.

The first two research reference sheets (RRS 1, p. 48, and RRS 2, p. 54) provide more detailed instruction in, respectively, how to carry out a review of secondary sources and what information to include in community baseline data for a VCA.

People – community members, volunteers, elected officials, public workers, etc. – will always be your best primary sources of information. Access to people can take many forms – individual and group interviews, focus groups, workshops, observing people's daily activities and how they interact with each other, and sharing experiences and activities whether directly related to the research or not. Simply talking to people can provide a wealth of important information.

PRS 2
Sorting and analysis

What it is

Sorting and analysing data was introduced in *How to do a VCA*. However, let us revisit some of the techniques and issues in more detail.

Each reference sheet provides some guidance on how to analyse the data collected through the various tools and methods. As mentioned earlier, one of the important products of a VCA is the creation of baseline data (see RRS 2, p. 54). To do this, a thorough analysis needs to be carried out of the information collected from all sources in order to have a full picture of the situation in the community. This represents a true baseline study.

Data analysis begins with sorting. One of the most important issues when sorting through all the data collected is to recognize what is useful and what can be discarded. In most VCAs, there will be information that is either not needed or is of such poor quality that it is better left out. If in doubt, always ask a specialist or a resource person. In fact, it is always a good idea to have somebody with experience of data analysis to accompany the process.

There are simple, though sometimes laborious, ways of dealing with data manually. A good way of empowering the community is to involve it in manually sorting the data and making sense of it.

Ranking is one method of sorting and systematizing information. It involves putting a set of data into order based on agreed criteria. The method, described in greater detail in MRS 2 (see p.138), can be used with a number of different tools. For instance, having collected information from a community on the risks it faces, the list can be ordered according to what risks the community members think are the most dangerous or need to be dealt with most urgently. This is often best done using the wall method (MRS 3, p.143).

Ranking information can be used to identify problem areas and preferences and to decide priorities. It can also be used to assess many things, such as people's expectations, beliefs, judgements, attitudes, preferences and opinions. Since different groups within the community may have different ideas about what is important or not, ranking should be done in separate groups. For instance, women often rank information differently from men; or young people may produce a different list of priorities from older people, even when they live together in the same household. There may be differences between ethnic groups, or migrants living in the community may give alternative interpretations. All of these perspectives need to be captured: in fact, it is through awareness of people's different priorities that a more effective programme of action to reduce vulnerability can be designed.

One note of caution: Do not use ranking for sensitive subjects or issues that could cause divisions and tensions in a community, for example ranking households in a community according to their assets or wealth. This process is understandably seen as intrusive, as people do not want to expose their wealth in front of others especially if it places them amongst the poorest families. You need to be aware of these issues no matter what tool you are using.

PRS 3

Participatory evaluation

What it is

Evaluation of the process and outcome of a project is essential in order to help the project work better and distil learning from good and bad experiences. Participatory evaluation can be planned for set times throughout activities, occur mid-way through the project or after specific stages. During a participatory evaluation exercise, community members, the National Society, other National Societies or external evaluators look at the impact, achievements and results of a project or ongoing programme.

Definition

Evaluation is the objective and systematic assessment, focused on the beneficiary level, of an ongoing or completed project, its design, implementation and impact. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives using the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, impact, relevance and sustainability. (Extracted from *Project Planning Process*)

Use it to...

- Provide accountability.
- Revisit previous activities (e.g. community map, ranking, Venn diagram) to evaluate what has changed in the community since the activities were first carried out. Changes which may have occurred may be outside the scope of the logical framework but still be critical to consider as a consequence of the project.

Example
To make food more secure, a chicken-raising project was started in the community. The participating women learned to manage a budget, raise money and enter information on the computer. Becoming computer literate was not an expected outcome of the project, but after taking part in the project all of the women were comfortable with basic data entry on a computer.

Gender
Is separate data collected for men and women? Are indicators gender sensitive? How has the project made an impact on the lives, behaviours and attitudes of men or women?

How to
Evaluation can be carried out against a project plan or logical framework to review indicators and the set objectives. It can also be done by revisiting exercises such as a community map (see RRS 6, p. 75), Venn diagram (see RRS 14, p. 126) or ranking (see MRS 2, p. 138).

Step 1
Clarify the reasons for an evaluation.

It is important to clarify the rationale for an evaluation. Generally an evaluation is carried out to ensure that the project is achieving its objectives, that the indicators are being met or at the request of the donors or National Society.

Questions that may be helpful in determining the reasons for an evaluation include:
- Why are we carrying out an evaluation?
- Who is the evaluation for?
- Who is participating in the evaluation?
- What do we want to know?

Step 2

Plan the evaluation.

The time that is taken to carefully prepare and plan a participatory evaluation is time well spent. It helps everyone to know why and how they are carrying it out.

Prepare a timeline with the participants, clarifying exactly what activities will happen and when and who will be responsible.

Example

Evaluation task	When	How long	Who	Completed
Detailed explanation of the purpose of the evaluation, background of the project, the current state of the project, the key issues for the evaluation to examine, who will participate, how long it will take and how it will be written up and shared with the community	3 months before starting the evaluation	1 week	Participants and facilitator	
Review project documents (e.g. assessment activities such as community maps, notes from focus group discussions or questionnaires)				
Report of evaluation	Within 3 weeks of finishing	5 days	Team leader	
Feedback workshop with community	Within 1 week of report	2 days	Evaluation team	

Step 3

Select the evaluation team.

Determine who will be the key people responsible for collecting and analysing the information for the evaluation. These may be people from within the community, National Society staff or external professionals.

Tip

When putting together the evaluation team, it is important to ensure that members are able to communicate effectively with the participants and have experience in carrying out an evaluation and that there is gender balance.

Step 4

Conduct the evaluation.

For each evaluation question and indicator that is chosen, the evaluation team identifies where information is available and how it will be obtained. Some information may be available in an unanalysed form and require some effort to analyse. Other information may not be readily available and will have to be gathered.

If information is not readily available, it must be decided which information – gathering tool will be used to obtain it. Keep in mind that it is possible to use one tool to gather information for a number of different indicators. Refer to the reference sheets for information-gathering tools which may be useful in participatory evaluations:

- community meeting
- ranking
- review of secondary sources
- semi-structured interview

Step 5

Compile, analyse and share the results.

In an evaluation team, one person is generally responsible for writing a report summarizing the key findings, recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluation. Input can be sought from community members while the report is still in draft form.

Once the evaluation report has been finalized, the National Society branch should share it with local government contacts, NGOs or other relevant parties.

Constraints and pitfalls

Undertaking a participatory evaluation is time consuming and requires the commitment both of community members and of those conducting the evaluation.

Cross-checking the information collected is important to ensure that it is accurate and reflects the views/input of as many community members as possible.

Next steps

Incorporate the recommendations from the evaluation into the current project by deciding with the community what actions will be taken, when and by whom.

Share the information and lessons learned with other implementing agencies.

PRS 4

Applying the VCA model principles

What it is

While the VCA team is working with a community, and especially in the initial phase of the process, it is important to consider the community's perspective, rooted in its cultural identity, beliefs and values. Applying the VCA model principles enables the team to better understand the natural, social and political environment in which it is working, encourages respect for a community's behaviours and capabilities within that environment and reduces the possibility of bias.

Element of analysis	Describe what you have noticed, heard or seen
Environment refers to the places where a VCA is conducted, which may be a village, a town or a group of apartment blocks, or to the social and economic factors that influence the behaviours of the people in a community.	
Behaviours refer to the actions taken by people operating in the **environment**.	
The actions of people will to some extent be controlled by the capacities or **capabilities** that people perceive themselves to have.	
Beliefs and values are extremely powerful because they are deeply embedded in our beings. They are what is	

Element of analysis	Describe what you have noticed, heard or seen
important to people, reflecting what they want and what they do not want.	
Identity is even more deeply rooted because it is about our very sense of self and of who we are. Analysis of identity necessitates putting oneself in the other person's position.	

Adapted from the Collaborative for Development Action's Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) Check-list, originally created at the LCP workshop in Monrovia, Liberia, 1996. Derived from a model by Dilts R (1991).

PRS 5

Better Programming Initiative (BPI)

What it is

The Better Programming Initiative (BPI) is an impact assessment methodology. It provides a framework in which to analyse the positive and/or negative impacts of aid programmes on communities recovering from violence, armed conflict or disaster. The initiative proposes an analytical approach to programming and helps programme staff to avoid the possible negative consequences of aid in the contexts in which programmes are implemented and to strengthen collaboration with community groups.

The BPI is a simple tool developed through five logical steps to support planning, implementation and analysis of aid programmes, particularly in post-conflict and post-disaster recovery situations (see Annex on p. 167).

Characteristics of the BPI:
- It is a capacity-building initiative that provides an analytical tool to understand the potential impact of a planned intervention on prospects of recovery.
- It is a participatory process that engages as many stakeholders as possible in analysing the programming context.

- It provides an opportunity to analyse areas of difficulty, identify alternative options and promote a systematic approach based on lessons learned.
- It builds on the experience of the National Society and its partners, taking into consideration the findings of previous assessments and evaluations.
- It complements and enhances other International Federation planning systems and tools.

Objectives of the BPI:
- Raise awareness of how aid programmes can positively or negatively influence recovery and reconciliation.
- Provide training in the motivations behind violence and the functions served by conflict and division in disaster-affected areas, and how to avoid exacerbating them.
- Support analysis, using a tool that ensures a more systematic approach by delegations and National Societies engaged in programming in areas affected by or at risk of conflict or disaster.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** should have a good understanding of group dynamics, be able to maintain the focus on the chosen topic and be able to guide the group smoothly through the different steps of the process.

How to

Step 1

a. Analyse the context.

- Identify the main groups that are in conflict or that have the potential to develop destructive inter-group conflict.
- Consider the nature and the scope of the actual or potential conflict or tensions.

You can use the BPI filters to implement the above two actions by identifying the causes of the conflict or existing tensions.

You can use the historical profile to understand the origin of the existing tensions and how inter-group relations have evolved over time.

b. Identify the dividers (elements, conditions, actions, attitudes or situations that create tensions or conflict between groups) and connectors (elements, conditions, actions, attitudes or situations that potentially promote capacities for peace and interlink the people).

- What are the dividers and connectors between these groups?
- In the area of the intervention as a whole?
- In the sectors of the intervention?

c. Categorize the dividers and connectors.

Dividers	Connectors
1 **Systems and Institutions**: Religious, political, economic systems, e.g. apartheid, segregated schooling.	1 **Systems and Institutions**: Shared institutions, shared interest in restoring or creating essential systems or institutions, e.g. rehabilitating a hospital in a multi-ethnic area of Kabul.
2 **Attitudes and Actions**: Dehumanization, violent campaigns, mistrust, fear, e.g. Rwanda genocide.	2 **Attitudes and Actions**: Compassionate, peaceful or humanitarian attitudes or activities, sports, e.g. vaccination days.
3 **Values and Interests**: War economies, relationships, use of land, exploitation of natural resources, e.g. mining, logging, mineral extraction.	3 **Values and Interests**: A common interest in trade, maintenance of a resource, e.g. common interest of Bhutanese refugees and local population in maintaining access to water and forestry, in Nepal.
4 **Experiences**: Displacement, destruction of property, loss, discrimination, e.g. collective punishment.	4 **Experiences**: Shared experiences of war, common exposure to natural disasters, economic hardship, e.g. displacement and survival in Sudan.
5 **Symbols and Occasions**: Flags, national holidays, marching, music, e.g. Orange parades in Northern Ireland, Independence Day in Puntland, Somalia.	5 **Symbols and Occasions**: Shared national or religious symbols and events, festivals, e.g. Ramadan, Christmas – times of peace.

Step 2

Describe the aid programme.

Describe in detail the aid programme and the actions that are planned or under way. Answer the following questions: Why? Where? What? When? With whom? By whom? How?

Other institutional issues to be considered include:
- the mandate for programme implementation;
- role of headquarters, fundraising, policies, symbols;
- donor influence and policies.

Step 3

Identify the impacts.

What is the impact of the aid programme on the context?
- Aid programmes will become part of the context where they are implemented. Aid always has an impact (positive or negative) on the dividers and connectors.
- Are dividers being increased or reduced by the programme?
- Are connectors being reinforced or weakened by the programme?
- Analyse the impact on dividers and connectors one by one.

How aid affects conflict[1]
Aid interacts with conflict through two media:
1. Resource transfers: All aid programmes involve the transfer of some resources – food, health care, training, etc. Experience shows that when outside resources are

[1] Adapted from Anderson, Mary B. (ed.) *Options for aid in conflict: Lessons from field experience.* Cambridge MA: Collaborative for Development Action, Inc., 2000. (http://cdainc.com/dnh/publications.php)

introduced into a resource-scarce environment where people are in conflict with each other, the local people see these resources as representing power and wealth and, thus, they become a part of the conflict. People in conflict attempt to control and use aid resources to support their side of the conflict and to weaken the other side. There are five patterns by which resources feed into, prolong and worsen conflict. These include:

- **Theft**: Aid resources may be stolen or taxed by actors who use them to support the conflict.
- **Distribution**: Aid is given to some people and not others. The selection of beneficiaries may mirror the divisions in the context and inadvertently increase the tensions between groups.
- **Market effects**: Aid's resources influence wages, prices and profits. These can reinforce conflict or economic interdependence.
- **Substitution effects**: Aid takes the place of resources that should be used to meet civilian needs, allowing these to go to the war effort.
- **Legitimization effects**: Aid can legitimize some people and activities and delegitimize others. These impacts may reinforce conflict.

2. Implicit ethical messages: The Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) Project has identified seven types of implicit negative ethical messages. While it is clear that aid through resource transfers can have a significant impact on conflict dynamics, the actual impacts of the seven implicit ethical messages described below are less clear.

Arms and power

When aid agencies hire armed guards to protect their goods from theft or their workers from harm, the implicit ethical message perceived by those in the context is that it is legitimate for arms to determine who gets access to food and medical supplies and that security and safety derive from weapons.

Disrespect, mistrust, competition among aid agencies
When aid agencies refuse to cooperate with each other and even worse "bad-mouth" each other (saying things such as "we don't work the way they work; we are better and they get it wrong"), the message received by those in the area is that it is unnecessary to cooperate with anyone with whom one does not agree. Further, you don't have to respect or work with people you don't like.

Aid workers and impunity
When aid workers use the goods and support systems intented as aid to people who suffer for their own pleasures and purposes (as when they take the vehicle to the mountains for a weekend holiday even though petrol is scarce), the message is that if one has control over resources, it is permissible to use them for personal benefit without being accountable to anyone else who may have a claim on these resources.

Different value for different life
When aid agency policies allow for evacuation of expatriate staff if danger occurs but not for care of local staff, or even worse, when plans call for removal of vehicles, radios and "expats", while local staff, food and other supplies are left behind, the message is that some lives (and even some goods) are more valuable than others.

Powerlessness
When field-based aid staff disclaim responsibility for the impacts of their aid programmes, saying things such as "You can't hold me accountable for what happens here; it is my headquarters (or the donor or these terrible warlords) who make my aid have negative impacts", the message received is that individuals in complex circumstances cannot have much power and, thus, they do not have to take responsibility for what they do or how they carry out their work. And, of course, this is what is

heard from people involved in civil wars, i.e., "I can't help what I do; someone else makes me do it."

Belligerence, tension, suspicion
When aid workers are nervous about conflict and worried for their own safety to such an extent that they approach every situation with suspicion and belligerence, believing, for example, soldiers at the checkpoint "only understand power" and "can't be trusted to be human", their interactions with people in war zones very often reinforce the modes and moods of warfare. The message received is that power is, indeed, the broker of human interactions and it is normal to approach everyone with suspicion and belligerence.

Publicity
Finally, when headquarters of non-governmental organizations use publicity pictures that emphasize the gruesomeness of warfare and the victimization of parties, they can reinforce the demonization of one side in a war and, thus, reinforce the sense that all people on that side are evil while everyone on another side is an innocent sufferer. This is seldom the case and undermines the humanitarian principle. This, too, can reinforce the modes and moods of warfare rather than helping the public, or the agency's own staff, find an even-handed way to respond to those on all sides who seek and want peace.

Step 4

Identify the programme options.

For each divider and connector:
- Brainstorm programme options with others.
- Assess whether they will decrease negative effects and increase positive ones.
- Check the options for their impact on the other connectors and dividers.

Identifying beneficiaries
- Establish clear selection criteria
- Include community members in selection process
- Include respected people from among non-beneficiaries
- Be open and transparent
- Reinforce economic interdependence

Recruiting expatriate staff
- Value experience and knowledge of the local language
- Value analysis and understanding not just speed
- Promote shared responsibility for programmes with local staff
- Strengthen civil society structures

Deciding what to give
- Prioritize aid that helps the collective rather than individuals
- Prioritize aid with general rather than specific use
- Avoid aid that is easy to steal and sell and that has high market value
- Provide as broad a coverage as possible
- Consider what would be done with any surplus

Hiring local staff
- Include staff from all groups
- Prevent militia or conflict group control of selection
- Create spaces for dialogue and exchange

Choosing local counterparts
- Have realistic expectations
- Choose NGOs that cross conflict divides and work with all groups
- Look for counterparts that are respected by all sides
- Share information and analysis

Determining how to provide aid

This is an area where there are the most options.
- Opt for small and timely
- Include all groups, local staff, authorities in decision-making
- Be transparent and communicate
- Be creative
- Use and strengthen civil structures

Brainstorming for options

For each impact (positive or negative) as a side effect of the planned programme:
- Brainstorm programme options that will decrease negative effects and increase positive ones.
- Check the options for their impact on the other connectors and dividers.

There are always options. We can always do better.

Step 5

Revisit the analysis periodically.

The process of analysis must be repeated:

- when you have adopted a different approach following the options identified, in order to validate it;
- at different points in the programming cycle (aid programmes change in a short programming cycle);
- when the context changes (complex conflict and post-conflict contexts are highly fluid and dynamic).

Under the tree, community focus group, Lesotho, 2006

Research Tools

The VCA Toolbox contains a variety of community investigative techniques and are the research tools of the community based VCA practitioners.

The reference sheets that follow are meant to complement what has been said in the earlier part of this document. Each reference sheet corresponds to a specific research tool and is designed to provide step-by-step instruction in how to use the tool. In addition, it offers tips and suggestions to help ensure that the tool collects the information for which it is designed. While the reference sheets are mostly self-explanatory, they are best used with the help of somebody experienced in their application.

Most of the information in the reference sheets comes from the International Federation's *Harmonized Community Tool Box* or the original *Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Toolbox* (October 1996) or has been adapted from *Make that Change: Community Based Disaster Management*, a publication produced in the Caribbean by the International Federation's Sub-regional Office in Port of Spain (2003).

The purpose of this *VCA toolbox* is to help you to feel comfortable undertaking a research and to get familiar with the various information-gathering tools at your disposal to carry out a VCA. The next and final document in this series, the *VCA training guide* is a learning-by-doing manual for volunteers who will go into communities and carry out an actual VCA. With each step covered, you are getting closer to acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to carry out a real VCA.

Research Reference Sheets

RRS 1

Review of secondary sources

What it is

A review of secondary sources means collecting information that already exists, usually in the form of written reports or documents. This exercise enables you to gain an overall picture of the community. The assessment you are carrying out is unlikely to be the first one to be done in the community concerned. The challenge is to track down the reports and results of earlier assessments and to identify the people involved. A review of secondary sources includes researching documents and reports produced by other organizations, local government authorities and social institutions.

The secondary sources from which you gather information should not be restricted to documents only about the community itself but should include all external sources of information that may be useful to the VCA. These may be risk maps or information on climate change and changes in land use that may affect river runoff, infrastructure plans, etc.

Use it to...

- Get an overview of the situation based on the work already done by others.
- Cross-check information gathered by other means.
- Get an idea of the challenges facing the community and a history of what has been done so far to address them.

Skills needed

Secondary sources mostly take the form of written material. Therefore, an ability to read and understand quite complex materials is a requirement. The **facilitator** also needs to be very clear in his or her instructions to the rest of the team and keep the review focused on the objectives to avoid ending up with too much information of marginal relevance.

Benefits

A review of secondary sources can be a time- and cost-effective way of getting a broad perspective of the issues facing the community. These sources may provide information that cannot be gathered at the community level (including about infrequent hazards or evolving risks such as climate change).

Statistical information can be useful to establish a baseline for indicators to be measured against later.

Gender

In many circumstances, primary documents are written by men about men. Keep this in mind when consulting secondary sources. Look also for sources that have been written by women or about women.

How to

Step 1

Determine what information you want to collect.

A wide range of information is available and is needed to provide an adequate picture of the situation in a community. In order not to get overwhelmed, it is important to remain focused only on the information necessary and relevant to the VCA and the kind of project that will stem from it.

Step 2

Make a list of potential sources of information.

Sources of information

Libraries
- Local library
- University library
- Local, regional and state government libraries
- Related organizations
- Clearing houses
- Journals or magazines
- Books
- Newspapers
- Maps (aerial, GIS, topographical, satellite imagery)
- Data and statistics
- References

Other organizations
- Other National Societies
- International Federation and its reference centres
- International non-governmental organizations (e.g. Oxfam, World Vision, CARE)
- Networks and coalitions
- Local, regional and state governments
- Specialized government institutes (e.g. National Disaster Management Office, Meteorological Office)
- Private sector or business suppliers
- Other needs assessments
- Reports (situation reports, project reports, annual reports)
- Data and statistics
- Budgets
- Expert opinions from key individuals
- Expertise (e.g. experience conducting focus groups)
- Testimonies
- Guidance

Internet
- UN organizations (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO)
- World Bank
- Government sites
- Foundations
- Educational institutions and universities
- Summary reports
- Data and statistics
- Access to libraries
- Links to related websites

People
- Government officials
- Local authorities (police, health care workers, fire fighters, social workers, etc.)
- National Society colleagues
- (I)NGO workers
- Community leaders (elders, religious leaders, health or school officials)
- Teachers
- Groups (e.g. women's group, farmers' group)

Step 3

Collect the information.

Some types of information you might want to consider collecting:

- Location and geography of the community.
- Main economic activity and income breakdown (by household, by person).
- Access to community (road infrastructure and transportation methods).
- Population (total, births, deaths, distribution, age, occupations, migration).
- Community resources (services available to community members).
- Community organizations.
- History of risks in the community, including health risks such as Ebola or malaria outbreaks, or disaster risks such as earthquakes.
- Vulnerable areas, such as hazard-prone areas or densely populated areas where there are many vulnerable people, e.g. a low-income area.
- Changes in hazards (climate change, changing river runoff due to deforestation, etc.) and changes in vulnerability (e.g. migration, economic developments, etc.).
- Location of emergency shelters and environmental hazards.
- Political parties or social movements active over the past number of years.
- Security issues in the region.

Step 4

Analyse the information.

The information gathered will provide a first impression and overview of the community in question, the problems it is facing and the capacities it has to address them.

Look for any information gaps that remain after you have reviewed the secondary sources. These gaps will be the basis for further investigation using other tools.

After the VCA has been conducted, the information from secondary sources can also help to interpret the information gathered through the other tools.

Constraints and pitfalls

There can be volumes of information available on a topic or no information at all. If there is an overwhelming amount of information, being clear about the objectives of your research will assist in narrowing down the focus and ensuring that the most effective sources of information are used. Focus on relevant sources rather than collect every possible bit of information or known source. When no specific information is available about the community, find out what you can get about the wider region.

Information can become quickly outdated or can be influenced by political opinion. It is important to know when the source was authored and the original purpose for which it was written.

Tip

If the data being examined have been collected by an official body such as the National Statistics Office, it is reasonable to assume that the information is reliable. However, it is advisable to examine other sources of information as well. This will enable you to triangulate the data available. If that is not possible, find out what data-collection methods were used (the tools, people surveyed, timing, etc.).

Proceed with caution when conducting research on the Internet, as information on web sites can appear authentic even when it is not. Assuming false information is true because it is deemed to be from a reliable source is a major pitfall. You will need to verify the authenticity of the source and cross-check the information with other sources or tools such as semi-structured interviews (see RRS 3, p. 60).

Next steps

To assist in analysing the information collected, ask yourself the following questions:

- What new learning has come of this?
- What priorities have others identified?
- What are the major trends?
- Does the information conflict with other sources such as semi-structured interviews?

Use the answers to these questions to guide the selection of other tools, such as semi-structured interview (p. 60), livelihoods analysis (p. 112) or community meeting (p. 153), to cross-check the information gathered during the review of secondary sources.

Information from secondary sources can be very useful to have before carrying out a VCA. It is important that team members have access to the information before they go into the community. In some cases, it will be quite clear how the information should be used in the context of the VCA. In other cases, the information might be relevant but sensitive, for example a new government policy that is creating vulnerability, or difficult to explain, for instance a new risk is emerging owing to climate change. Team members need to think in advance how to tackle such issues, prepare a common approach and seek advice if they are in doubt.

Synthesize and summarize the information and share it with the community members. What are their views on it? Does it accurately reflect the situation in their community?

RRS 2
Community baseline data

What it is

Disaster Management Community Baseline Data is a checklist devised by Jim Good and Charles Dufresne of InterWorks to assess a community's vulnerability to disaster and its capacities to respond (InterWorks, 21 April 2001, www.interworksmadison.com). While the checklist is useful for disaster preparedness and other areas of community work, you will need to adjust it for the purposes of a VCA. Some of the questions have been adapted/edited here.

Categories and information needs

1. Location of community

- Department
- Municipal
- Community
- Rural
- Sub-urban (within 5 km of urban services)
- Urban
- Other names or special notes

2. Physical description of community

- Location is mountainous
- Includes floodplain or flash flooding hazard
- Coastal
- Elevation above sea level
- Ease and ability to access this community during floods, landslides, post-hurricane damage

3. Climatic conditions, including extreme events and changes in climate

4. Demographics of the community

(if you do not get this information from the local authorities, you can collect it through the VCA process)

- Total adults (> 20 years)

- Total youth (13 years to 20 years)
- Total children (5 years to 13 years)
- Infants, toddlers and young children (under 5 years)
- Average family size (related family members under same roof)
- Gender make-up of the community

5. Local contact information

- Mayor (community development officer, town or village clerk) name and contact information
- Head of emergency committee and contact information
- Cooperative primary contact
- Other key community leaders and contact people

6. Local authorities, organizations

- Who has the highest level of authority in this community?
- Who has the highest level of government affiliation or authority in this community?
- Who has highest authority: religious group, civil society organization, political authority?
- What NGOs and local community-based organizations exist in the community? What are their areas of programming and expertise?

7. Human vulnerability to disasters

- What people are most at risk during disasters (ages, gender, occupation)?
- In what specific ways are they vulnerable?

8. Health and nutritional conditions

- Malnutrition rate for children under 5 in the community
- Infant mortality rate for this community
- Most common illnesses among the general population (measles, HIV/AIDS, influenza, pneumonia, dengue, cholera, typhoid, diarrhoea, intestinal parasites)
- Most common illnesses among youth and children (measles, pneumonia, malaria, meningitis, diarrhoea, intestinal parasites)
- Public education about health issues? Yes or no?
- Public education received by _______________ on which of

the following: sanitation, disease, diarrhoea, nutrition, pre-natal care, HIV/AIDS

9. Health services

- Clinic type(s)
- Total number of beds available at clinic(s)
- Average number of free beds available
- Number of physicians resident in the community
- Number of nurses resident in the community
- Number of public health or maternal and child health care agents in the community
- How far is the nearest health clinic? Where is the nearest health clinic?
- What health services are provided at the community level?

10. Physical vulnerability of the community

- Trees
  - Heavily wooded
  - Mixed wooded and open agricultural areas
  - Mainly open areas with only occasional tree cover
- Grade
  - Buildings are built on level ground (0–2% grade)
  - Buildings are built on low slope (3–5% grade)
  - Buildings are built on medium slope (5–10% grade)
  - Buildings are built on high slope (> 10% grade)
- Situation of community on or near streams that do or may flood
  - River bank, not elevated structures
  - River bank, but with elevated structures
  - Flood plain
  - High ground
- Important physical structures, buildings and infrastructure most vulnerable to disasters
  - List types and the kinds of disasters they are vulnerable to

11. Infrastructure and access

- Roads to access the community
  - Concrete
  - Asphalt

- Macadam/gravel/limestone
- Unpaved/dirt
- Vulnerable to flooding, mudslides?
- Bridges
  - Are there bridges leading to the community?
  - Types of bridges
  - Vulnerable to flooding?
  - Weight limit
- Nearest airstrip
  - Location of nearest airstrip
  - Distance from community
  - Paved
  - Unpaved
  - Marked
  - Unmarked
  - Description
- Power
  - Overhead electricity distribution
  - Local generator and network
  - Individual power only (individual generators)
  - No electrification
- Communications
  - Radio (type, who, where)
  - Telephone (type, who, where)
  - Fax (type, who, where)
  - E-mail/Internet (type, who, where)

12. Food

- Typical food stocks/type consumed
- How families acquire their food
- Typical food distributed for short-term emergency
- Food reserves at family level
- Food reserves at community level (shops, warehouses, programmes, etc.)

13. Housing and shelter

- Basic house construction type (describe)
- Other prominent construction types in the community (describe)

- Average house size (per family in sq m)
- Availability of emergency shelter
- Condition and construction type of emergency shelter
- Location of mass shelter

14. Water

- Water source for community (describe)
- Water source vulnerable to flooding
- Water source dependent on electrical pumps?
- Quality of the drinking water source
- Potable
- Non-potable, but not polluted
- Polluted source

15. Sanitation

- Typical sanitation in use by individual families/shelters (describe)
- Sanitation arrangements in place for mass shelter
- Are sanitation arrangements adequate for the number of people to be housed in the mass shelter?

16. Planning/preparedness

- Preparedness planning
  - Is there an emergency preparedness and response plan in place?
  - When was it written and who is the primary contact?
  - Does the community have community-based response teams?
  - What are the linkages between the community and other actors? (local authorities, NGOs, community-based organizations, etc.)
- Early warning
  - Is there an early warning system?
  - Are community members familiar with this system and what it means?
  - If yes, do community members consider it to be a reliable system?
  - Has this early warning system been used successfully in the last five years?

- Evacuation
  - Are there evacuation procedures?
  - Does the community understand these evacuation procedures and evacuation routes?
  - Does the community recognize and respect those with the authority to announce an evacuation?
  - Have these evacuation procedures been used successfully in the last five years?
- Response skills and resources
  - What emergency response skills and resources exist in the community (e.g. first aid, search and rescue, public health)?
  - Have community members participated in emergency response or evacuation drills and simulations?
  - Damage Assessment and Needs Assessment

17. Emergency response resources

- Is there a stockpile of emergency items?
  - Food (describe)
  - Blankets (number)
  - Tents (number, type)
  - Stretchers (number)
  - First-aid kits/bandaging material (number of kits)
  - Ambulance
  - Other vehicles that could be used in emergency response (describe)

18. Local capacities for disaster mitigation and response

- Physical/material resources and capacities
- Technical skills/human resources in the community
- Social/organizational capacities in the community

RRS 3

Semi-structured interview

What it is

A semi-structured interview is a form of guided interview in which only a few questions are decided upon ahead of time. This interviewing technique is often practised by journalists and can be used both to give information (such as raising awareness about tuberculosis) and to receive information (such as finding out what people know about tuberculosis).

When conducting a semi-structured interview, the interviewer does not use a standard survey questionnaire; instead, he or she has some general topics to cover through the discussion. Relevant topics (such as hazards) are initially identified and the possible relationship between these topics and the issues are analysed. These issues, such as the capacity to organize, prepare and respond and the ability to recover from a particular hazard or threat, become the basis for more specific questions which do not need to be prepared in advance. Many, perhaps most, of the questions will be formulated during the interview. These questions are usually prompted by what the respondent says.

Interviews can take the following forms:

- **Key informant interviews** – Talking to people who can provide specialized information which might not be known to the general community, for example the village nurse or doctor.
- **Individual interviews** – One-on-one interviews are useful when the subject is sensitive or difficult to talk about in groups.
- **Group interviews** – Used to gather information about the community from a large body of knowledge. However, care needs to be taken not to cause tension by raising sensitive issues in a group setting. Such issues are better left to individual interviews. Difficult issues that need to be discussed in a group are better dealt with during project planning meetings with the community than during the data-collection phase of the VCA.

Use it to...

- Gain a deeper understanding of the issue than is possible with a questionnaire.
- Examine values and attitudes as well as understanding and knowledge.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** will need some previous experience of interviewing to make sure appropriate and relevant questions are asked, as well as to keep the conversation focused on the issue. He or she should also have skills in recording information. It may take some practice for the interviewer to get used to asking direct rather than vague questions. More skill is required of the interviewer than for questionnaires or surveys as he or she need to be able to probe further on the basis of the responses received.

Participants should have some knowledge and/or experience of the topic. They must be able to express themselves clearly and, if necessary, to read the question, although this can be asked directly by the interviewer.

Benefits

The interviewer can go further in-depth on the basis of the information shared by the respondent.

There is more flexibility in the questions asked than with a standard questionnaire. The technique is less one-sided, as it allows the interviewee to ask questions of the interviewer as well.

The information obtained from a semi-structured interview will provide not just answers, but the reasons for the answers.

When people are asking questions to each other, they may be more open to discussing sensitive issues, particularly if the interviewer is not from the community. This tool also allows direct contact with potential beneficiaries.

Gender

Pre-test the basic questions with both men and women to make sure the questions are understandable and sensitive to the context. When analysing the data, it can be disaggregated by sex. If possible, have women interview women and men interview men.

How to

Step 1

Decide who will do the semi-structured interviews.

For the sake of consistency, it is recommended to create a small team of interviewers, generally of two to four people. These may be people from outside the community or from within the community, such as local professionals who have knowledge and experience of the topic being explored and, preferably, have some experience of conducting interviews (e.g. social workers).

Step 2

Decide who will be interviewed.

When conducting a semi-structured interview, you may want to do so with a small group of people at once to save time and to enable them to share ideas. Alternatively, you may prefer to carry out the interviews one on one to get individual perspectives on the same topic.

Step 3

Decide on the topic and guide questions.

Preparing an interview guide and some general questions in advance ensures that all areas are covered.

Step 4

Conduct the interview.

Keep the interview informal and mix questions with discussion.

Sample topic: How do people in this community cope with flooding?

Guide questions:
1 What are the problems caused by flooding (economic, social, etc.)?
2 What are the overall coping strategies?
3 What are the coping strategies for each problem?

Tip

Interviewers can do practice interviews with each other and/or with a few community members to get familiar with the questions and receive feedback on their two-way communication skills. Try to avoid questions that lead to "yes" or "no" answers. Instead, use "open questions" which allow people to elaborate on their responses.

Step 5

Record the information.

Write only brief notes during the interview. This will help build the interviewee's trust. Immediately after the interview, write your notes in detail so you do not forget anything important that was said.

If the person agrees, you could video- or audio-tape the interview. Be aware, however, that people may be more reluctant to speak freely when they are being recorded.

Step 6

Analyse the information.

Analyse the information at the end of each day of interviewing. This can be done with the rest of the interview team or individually. Cluster similar answers together and identify the key issues emerging from the interviews.

Step 7

Discuss the results.

Discuss the overall results of the analysis with community members so that they can challenge the perceptions of the interview team. This can make the process even more participatory.

Constraints and pitfalls

As with all participatory approaches, talking with people takes a fair amount of time.

This method more than others can be heavily biased by the culture, gender and perspectives of the interviewer or the interviewee.

Ensure that, in an individual interview, the interviewee understands and trusts that the responses will be confidential. If using a recording device, such as a tape recorder or video camera, be sure to ask the interviewee's permission.

It is important to take brief notes or to keep some sort of record but do not intimidate people by writing throughout the whole interview. Complete your notes immediately after the interview while it is still fresh in your mind.

If the interview is being carried out in a group setting, people may interrupt one another or not wait for their turn. Or they may go off the topic completely. The interviewer will need some facilitation skills in order to manage the discussion and ensure that everyone has a chance to express themselves.

A common failing among interviewers is to ask leading questions, i.e. questions phrased in such a way as to suggest the desired answer. Other problems that can arise are: failure to listen closely; repeating questions; failure to probe when necessary; failure to judge the answers (i.e. fact, opinion or rumour); and asking vague or insensitive questions.

Next steps

Use responses from interviews on how the community views a problem to inform planning for intervention.

If you have recorded the interviews either on video or audio tape, playing the recording back to the participants can be a way of sharing the information with community members. Make sure you get people's permission to do this.

A lot of extra information may surface during interviews. Team meetings can help identify similarities in responses. Though it may not be immediately relevant to the work in hand, it may be useful to other areas of Red Cross Red Crescent work, such as health, disaster management or organizational development. The information may also be useful to external parties, such as government officials and NGOs.

RRS 4
Focus group discussion

What it is

A focus group discussion is a qualitative information-gathering tool whereby a group of selected individuals, guided by a facilitator, are invited to give their thoughts and views on a specific issue. Depending on the topic, a focus group discussion can be useful at any stage of planned research. It is usually held at a later stage in a VCA. The participants are from similar and often specialized backgrounds, who through their interests or profession are involved with the issue. Although the discussion may focus on a specific topic, the group members may talk freely and spontaneously about the issue.

A focus group discussion

Use it to...

- Identify causes of and possible solutions to problems in implementing a project.
- Gauge the impact of activities, including the impact of health or disaster education on people's awareness.
- Get an idea of the way specific groups of people think about a particular matter.
- Generate discussion on a specific topic, such as family planning needs, road safety, gender participation, disaster preparedness, climate change.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** needs to be able to capture accurately the voices of participants either by recording and then transcribing what they say or by taking detailed notes. The facilitator should also be able to keep the group focused on the topic, manage group dynamics and mediate any discussions or conflicts that may arise.

Participants must have some knowledge and/or experience of the topic in question. They must be able to express themselves clearly. Depending on the facilitation model, it is not required that they be able to read or write.

Gender

Keep gender issues in mind when organizing a focus group discussion. Is the location accessible to everyone? Schedule the activity so that the relevant people can attend; there may be different times of the day when it is easier for men or for women to attend. Find ways to draw out more reticent participants. Consider whether it would be more appropriate to hold separate sessions for men and for women. Is there a woman who could facilitate the women's focus group?

Note

A focus group discussion is best conducted in a group with similar experience of an issue (e.g. people who have an understanding of water and sanitation).

How to

Step 1

Determine the purpose of the focus group discussion.

Decide on the specific focus of your discussion and set clear objectives. This will assist you in selecting the most appropriate questions to get the discussion going.

Step 2

Decide who to include.

Participants should be selected in such a way that they will feel comfortable to talk about the issue in front of each other, taking into consideration age, gender, race and economic background.

Identify a list of participants on the basis of their role in relation to the topic and each other. You may want to set some criteria for participation. For example, if the issue is potable water, you may want to include women who use the well, the local women's committee, the district health officer and the minister for water and sanitation. You may not want to include them all at the same time, however, to ensure that people are comfortable with expressing their ideas in front of each other.

Tip

The facilitator's role in a focus group is to stimulate and support discussion. It is not to be an expert on the issue. The participants are the experts, and the facilitator should be able to take a back seat and encourage everyone to participate and share information.

Step 3

Determine the questions you will ask.

Examples of questions include:

- What are the roles of the different agencies?
- What kind of assessment has the local government agency carried out?
- What do people do when their crops fail?
- Are crop failures happening more or less frequently than in the past? Why?

- What are the available resources?
- Do you have a (disaster, health, community) committee?
- Do you have a regional and/or local disaster plan?
- Who is responsible for disaster coordination?
- What were the responses to disaster in the past?
- Do you have a contingency plan?
- When was it developed? Reviewed?

Step 4

Select the recording method.

Choosing a recording method for the focus group discussion is especially important as the purpose of this tool is to capture the voices of the participants in their original form. This can be done either by audio-taping the discussion or by taking thorough notes. Ensure participants are in agreement with the conclusions of the discussion and reassure them that the information recorded is being used only for the research.

Step 5

Encourage equal participation.

Keep the discussion flowing, focusing on the objectives determined ahead of time, as well as the guide questions. It may be necessary to guide the participants by using phrases such as: "Interesting point, but let us stay focused on the issue, which is..." or "That is a valid point, but we should discuss it later during another meeting."

Step 6

Summarize the points made.

At the end of the discussion, summarize the key points made, ensure the participants are in agreement on the points, and invite additional comments.

Constraints and pitfalls

Language differences among participants can make this type of tool very difficult to use. One way to overcome this is to organize the groups according to the language they speak and make this one of the selection criteria for participants.

Focus group discussions may not be appropriate for sensitive topics on which community members may not want to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions openly. This may include topics such as sexual behaviour, gender-based violence or stigmatized issues such as HIV/AIDS. In such cases, smaller group discussions or one-on-one interviews would be more appropriate.

Next steps

Cluster information. This involves identifying the main similarities and differences in the points raised by the participants. Was agreement reached? Is there a topic that needs to be further explored either through secondary sources or another tool?

For a description of how to cluster information as data bits on a wall (see MRS 3, p. 143).

RRS 5
Direct observation

What it is
Direct observation is a process of observing objects, people, events and relationships. It is used throughout the assessment process. It can be an easy means of gathering data on how people interact with each other and go about their daily activities. Direct observation can be done individually or with community members.

When carrying out direct observation, you need to confirm that you have properly understood what you observe as it is easy to misinterpret what you are seeing.

Use it to...
- Document behaviour, physical aspects of a community and activities.
- Fill in information "gaps" that cannot be filled through other tools.
- Support observations and conclusions made while using other tools.

Skills needed
The **facilitator** should remain alert at all times in order to observe the surrounding environment, staying aware of possible biases and making sure information collected in this way is cross-checked through other tools. Skills in systematic recording of information are very important.

Benefits
Direct observation is an essential research tool as it helps the VCA team to understand the context in which the information is being gathered. This enables them to validate the conclusions reached

through the use of other tools to gain a more complete understanding of the community and the relationships between its members.

Direct observation makes it possible to describe things that may be hard for participants to verbalize.

Gender

When observing the community, take the opportunity to talk to both men and women. Understand the problems from both male and female perspectives, taking into account factors such as age, disability, socio-economic status, ethnicity, etc. Observe any differences in access to services or in the hazards and risks facing men and women in the community.

How to

Step 1

Decide what areas you are going to focus your observations on.

While you should always be carrying out informal observation, you will still need to make a list of things to look for specifically. Such a list might include:

Demographic information

- Distribution of the population (age, work, gender)
- Daily routine (school-aged children in school, adult present with children at home, working in the fields)
- Family structure (nuclear or extended family present, child-headed households)
- Community interaction

Infrastructure

- Types of housing and other infrastructure, use of latrines
- Construction materials, design and proximity of buildings
- Types of roads
- Green spaces and playgrounds
- Sports facilities

Health, sanitation and other essential services

- Sanitation (sewers, availability of running water, functionality and type)
- Availability of electricity, water and telephone
- Basic services
- Distance people have to travel to schools and health centres
- Animals in the street
- Institutions present

Daily activities

- What people eat
- Where they shop
- Religion – churches, mosques, temples, etc.
- Recreational activities
- Types of transportation used

Visible vulnerabilities and capacities

Step 2

Assign tasks.

Make sure that all members of the VCA team are assigned to observe certain things, although all members should be observing all aspects as well. By assigning specific areas to different team members, you will ensure that all aspects are covered.

Step 3

Record the data.

You should be constantly observing, whether in a structured way or informally, so always take notes and instruct everyone else to do so as well. Be careful to note everything you see. It is equally important that you record under what conditions you observed things and as much detail as possible. This will help the team to remember the context and increase the validity of the observation. For example, a crowd will behave differently if at a soccer match than when shopping in a market.

Step 4

Summarize the information.

At the end of the day, all notes should be put in a clean and concise format. This should be done by each individual so that the entire group will be able to understand the observations made during the data systematization and analysis process.

Constraints and pitfalls

A challenge with this tool is that it is very subjective. Interpretation of information may be biased and is subject to change. The results of this activity should be verified later by the community. Careful recording and systematization of the information will contribute significantly to proper verification of the information by the community.

It is important to be respectful, as in many cases you are observing people without their knowledge. If you are observing a meeting or activity, you must ask the participants' permission to do so.

Like any other tool, direct observation requires careful planning and must follow basic research rules. It also needs to ensure that the people observed are representative of the overall population.

If direct observation is not carried out with discipline, it can be hard to systematize and analyse the data collected.

Federation resources

- *Gender Perspectives: Tools and Checklists*

Next steps

Cross-check information observed through the use of other tools such as interviews.

Tip

Be careful how you act and be sure that you are discreet when observing people. If you are observing a formal event, seek prior permission. If you want to take photographs or audio-tape it, request permission from the participants to avoid potential misunderstandings.

RRS 6

Mapping

What it is

Mapping is a way of setting out in visual form the resources, services, vulnerabilities and risks in a community. Maps can be used to indicate the location of health clinics, schools, water sources and shelter or to identify locations at particular risk such as areas prone to floods or health hazards, indicating which groups are vulnerable.

Maps facilitate communication and stimulate discussion on important issues in the community. They help people to understand complex relationships and allow visual comparison of information.

Use it to...

- Find out about the resources that exist and identify appropriate activities (e.g. first aid).

- Gain a common understanding of issues facing the community.
- Stimulate discussion on resources and risks in the community.
- Obtain general information relevant to specific issues.
- Assist community groups with planning and designing projects.

Skills needed

Mapping is a simple but powerful tool. It does not require previous experience of the **facilitator** and mostly relies on visual input from **participants**.

Benefits

Maps can give a broad overview of a particular area of interest, such as health, disaster risk or financial and human resources and how they have changed over time.

Community mapping can cover many different sectors in one go and can therefore be less time-consuming than using a combination of other information-gathering tools.

Mapping is a visual exercise and enables communities to see quickly and analyse the linkages, patterns and inter-relationships between issues and risks they face, hazard location, service distribution or resources.

Community maps are useful for assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Gender

Community mapping allows both men and women to illustrate their experiences and knowledge of where they live. Very often, maps drawn by groups of women illustrate different resources, priorities, interests and problems than those drawn by groups of men. Get men to draw one map and women another and compare them.

How to

Step 1

Determine who will participate.

When selecting participants, you will want to find both men and women and possibly children who are familiar with the area and are open and willing to share their knowledge and experiences.

Mapping can be done in small groups, which gives everyone the opportunity to provide input. Larger groups are useful if you want to get a variety of perspectives in the community at one time. Mapping can be done individually and then participants are brought together to compare their maps. It can also be done in gender-specific groups (i.e. all men or all women), after which you bring the two groups together to compare the similarities and differences.

Step 2

Decide what purpose the map will serve.

There are three main kinds of community map:

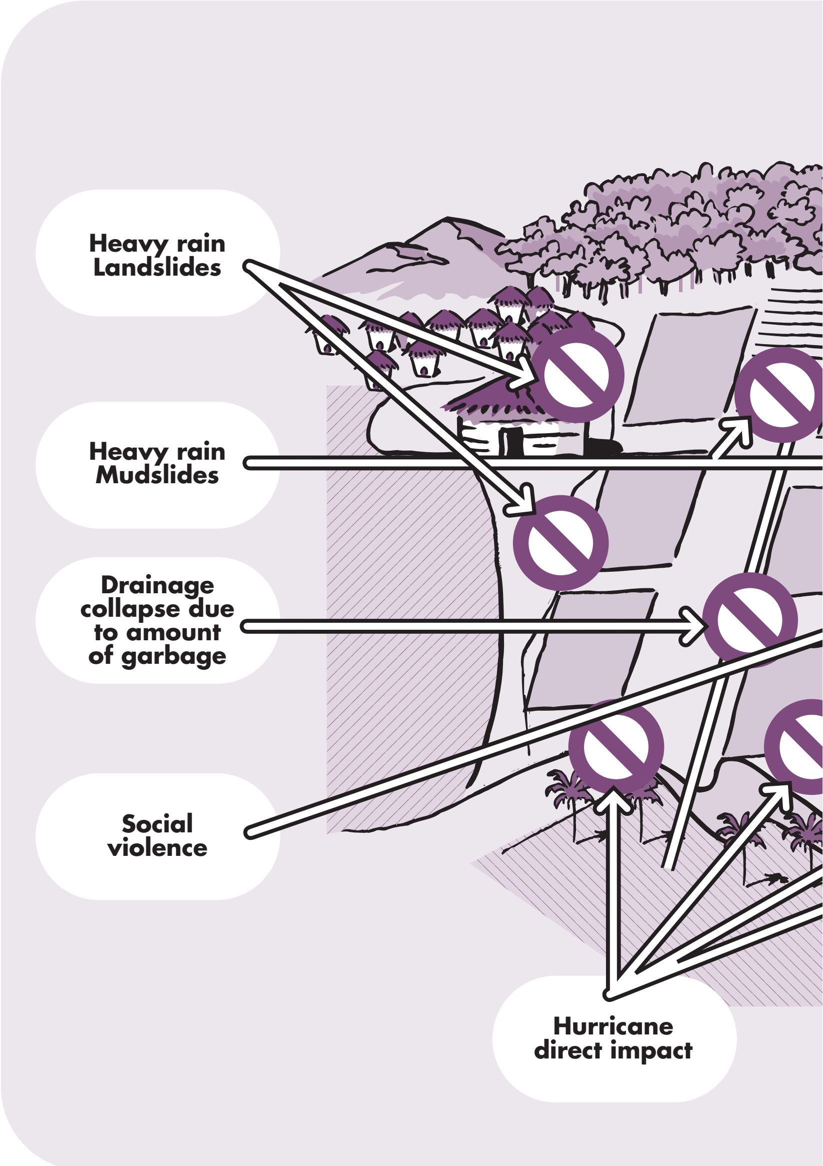
1 **Hazard/risk map** – To show hazards or risks and which ones pose a threat and when, which ones are unpredictable or occur after heavy rains. Also shows where risks have been getting worse or identifies vulnerable populations in the area.

2 **Spatial map** – To get an overview of the main features of an area in relation to its surroundings. Map features could include the arrangement of houses, fields, roads, rivers and other land uses and which resources are assessable and owned by the community or individuals.

3 **Capacity resource map** – To show local resources and capacities as well as gender differences or land use zones.

1. Hazard/risk map

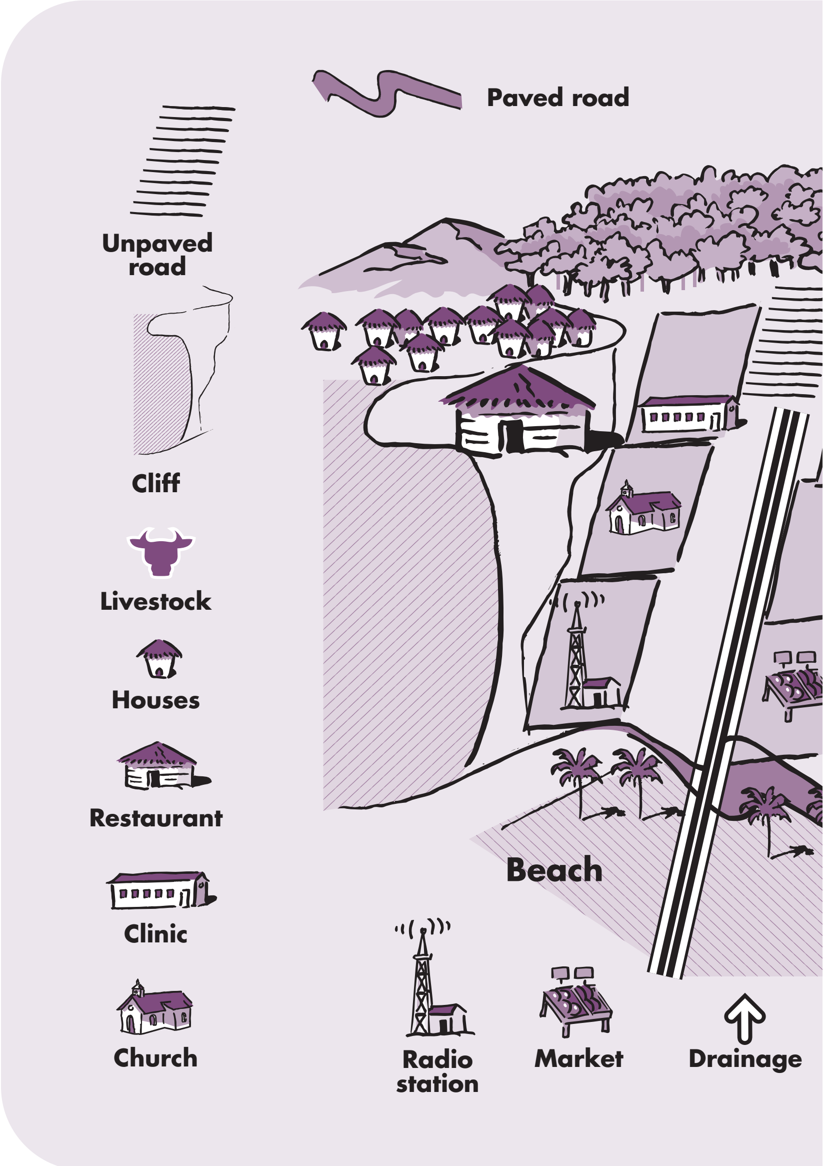
Example (from *Make that Change*)

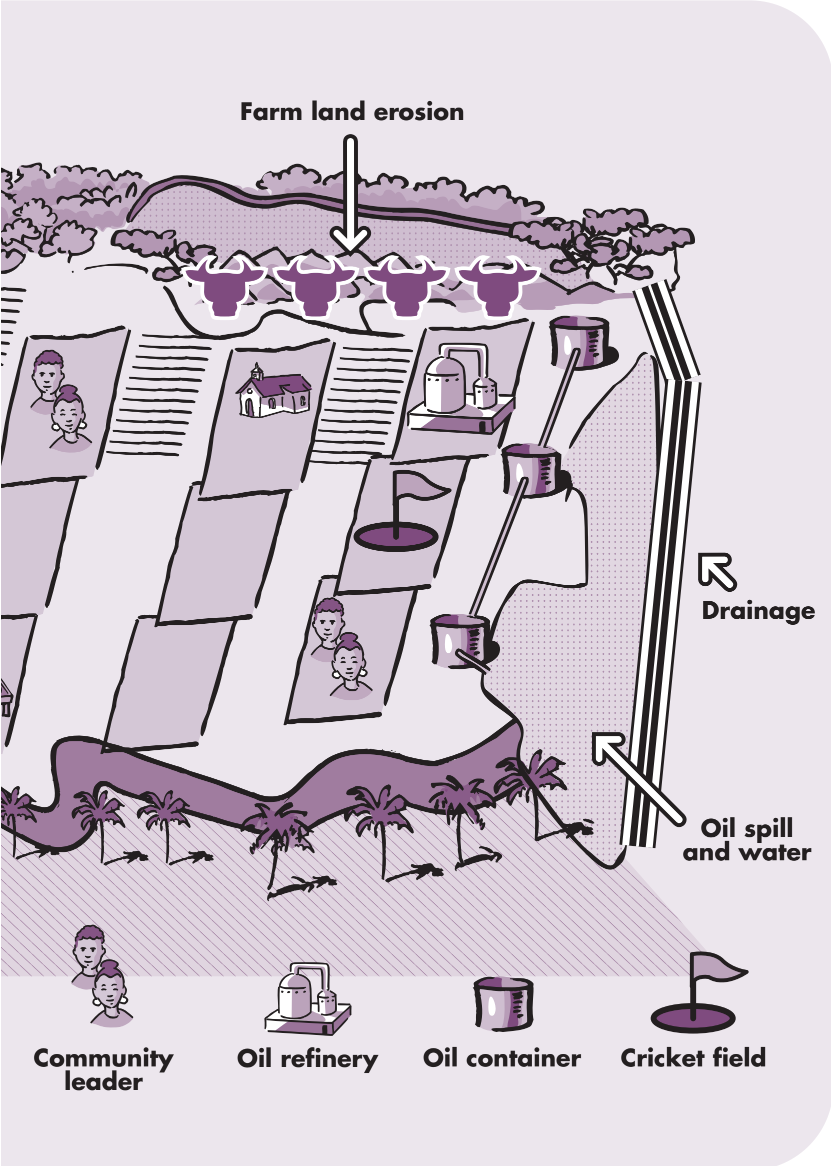



Droughts
Land degradation
Wooden houses
Oil spill

2. Spatial map

Example (from *Make that Change*)




Farm land erosion
Drainage
Oil spill and water
Community leader
Oil refinery
Oil container
Cricket field

Example

(from Indian Red Cross Society, *Training of Trainers Curriculum for Community Based Disaster Management*)

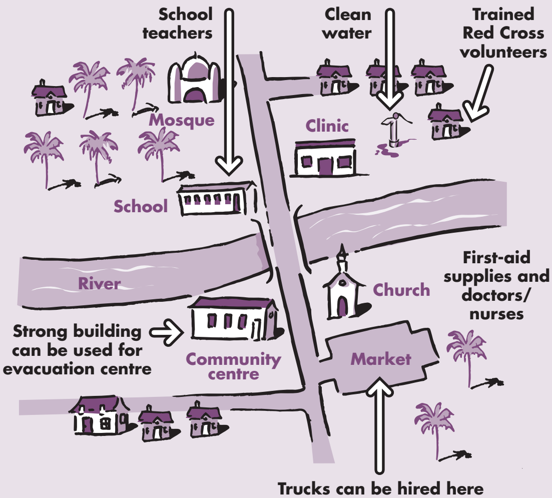
If this tool is used for planning, various activities, community resources, important places, risks and hazards can be drawn on the map or overlaid.

If this tool is used for monitoring, changes can be recorded on the maps/photographs at various stages of the project or used by other partner agencies for comparison.

If this tool is used for evaluation, a comparison of maps and/or photographs at different times will be useful.

Vulnerable places

Capacity



Step 3

Decide what kind of map will be drawn.

There are a number of different ways of organizing a mapping exercise. For example, people can fill in or draw a map individually and then compare theirs with those of the rest of group to create a community map. This may be especially worthwhile if different interest groups in the community are involved as they will each have different perspectives. To better understand these perspectives, it is a good idea to do a transect walk (see RRS 7, p. 86).

Maps can be drawn on the ground or in the sand or on a flipchart or blackboard. Depending on what purpose the map will serve, the method used to capture it must be carefully chosen. It is best to make the map out of material that can be preserved. Laminating the flipchart paper after the map has been drawn will preserve it to be shared with other agencies or used at a later stage in the project.

Some maps, such as aerial photographs, GPS printouts, urban planning blueprints and district maps, have already been printed. These can be used as a starting point, then overlaid with a clear plastic sheet to sketch the areas of importance agreed upon in Step 2.

Tip

If you want to use the map at a later stage, it is important to use good quality paper and to put the map on view for community members. Agree with the group on a central location, such as the community centre or government office, where the map can be displayed.

It is also a good idea to take photographs and/or make a video to keep an accurate record of the map (especially if drawn on the floor or on the ground).

Constraints and pitfalls

Aerial photographs or GPS printouts may be difficult to obtain and/or expensive to buy. They may also be too detailed or difficult to read and interpret. District maps or urban blueprints may reflect administrative boundaries and may not accurately represent the community.

Mapping can require a lot of time and space to work in. Participants need to be informed in advance of how long the session may take.

Conflicts may result if inequities become apparent or old hostilities are rekindled.

A cross-section of people is required to validate the overall perceptions of the community. It is suggested you visit the area that has been mapped with community members to verify the information (see Transect walk RRS 7, p. 86).

One person may dominate or direct drawing if mapping is done by the group as a whole and if the facilitator does not adequately guide the group.

Next steps

Analyse the information presented on the maps. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

Use this tool at a later stage to monitor the progress of a project. What has changed? What improvements have been made or new issues have come up?

Use the map as a source of information to plan projects with vulnerable community members.

Use it as a tool to generate discussions with community members about the problems in the community, such as:

- What can the community **change**?
- How can the community **influence** change with the support of others in the medium term?

- What must the community **transform** that requires long-term support and technical and financial means?

RRS 7
Transect walk

What it is

A transect walk involves walking through the community to observe the people, the surroundings and the resources. It is used to note the sites and topography of the area and to understand inter-relationships in their natural surroundings. It is a useful exercise to do in the assessment stage to get a feeling for the issues and capacities which exist in a community. In the programming and evaluation phases, it can be used to see what changes have occurred in a community.

A transect walk is usually done early in the research process because it gives you an overall view of the community. Thus, it enables you to observe things that may require further investigation later on during interviews or group meetings. The tool is even more effective when used in the company of community members.

Use it to...

- Build trust with the community by being visible.
- Cross-check oral information.
- To see first hand the interactions between the physical environment and human activities, behaviour, values, attitudes, practices and capabilities over space and time.
- To identify issues that might be worth further exploration.
- To identify danger zones, evacuation sites and local resources used during emergency periods, land use zones, health issues, commercial activity in the community.

- To identify problems and opportunities, which may include areas such as:
  - housing or sanitary conditions;
  - food available and sold in open-air markets;
  - informal street commerce;
  - roles of men, women and children.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** does not need extensive previous experience to use this tool but should be able to record and systematize the information gathered.

Participants accompanying the facilitator should have a good understanding of the community.

Gender

When walking through the community, take the opportunity to talk to both men and women. Observe the services, hazards and risks that apply to men and women.

How to

Step 1

Identify the route to be taken.

Once a mapping exercise has been carried out (spatial map, hazard/risk map, capacity and resources map), the group should pinpoint the area most at risk, which is where you are going to carry out the transect walk.

The route can be decided by drawing a line on the community map that goes through or "transects" all zones in order to gain a representative view of the community. Another possibility is to walk from one point to another, for example from north to south, or from the highest point to the lowest point, from the mountains to the waterside.

Step 2

Identify what you want to look for on the walk.

Make a checklist of the locations or area that you want to visit. This may include:

- **social environment**: church, sports fields, shopping areas, restaurants, main areas of concentration (children, adolescents, adults);
- **physical environment**: characteristics of housing construction, roads and streets, drainage, etc.;
- **neighbouring communities**: How close is the neighbouring community? Does the neighbouring community have any influence in the community you are working with? For example, does garbage from community A affect community B? Do people from community B go to community A to access health care?

Step 3

Do direct observation and interviews.

Direct observation of the selected area is fundamental. While walking, stop in different places, look at all possible elements of the analysis (see diagram pp. 90 and 91 for the recommended features to look out for).

Take time during the walk to stop and talk to people.

Try to better understand the changes over time, which can be done by triangulating with secondary information.

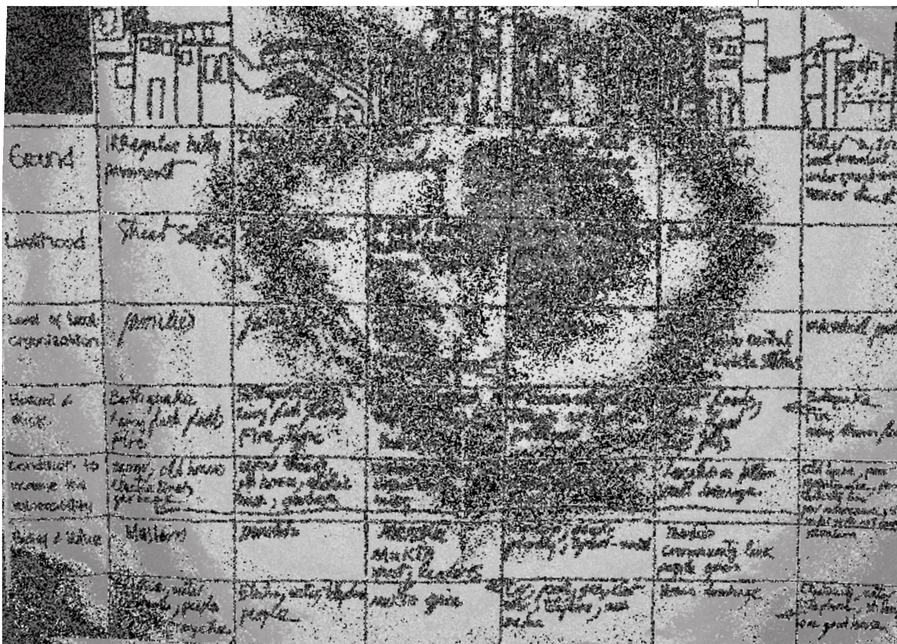
Step 4

Record the information.

Write down what you see and hear as you go along. Later this can be transferred to a transect diagram (see pp. 90 and 91).

Constraints and pitfalls

Being new to the community, you may not know the areas to walk through. It is helpful to bring others such as a translator, community leaders or government officials with you, but be aware that they may influence what you do and that their presence may alter the way people respond to you.

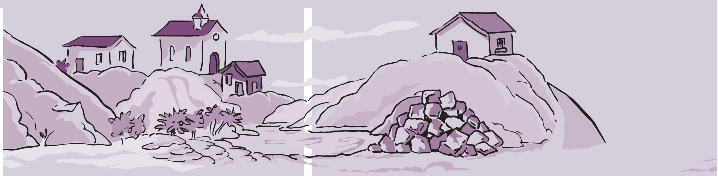


Transect walk, VCA, Izmir, Turkey, 2006

Step 5

Draw a diagram of what you saw.

Example (from VCA training in Eritrea)



Type of ground	Hilly, slopy, valley	Rocky, hilly, valley
Livelihoods	Irrigation, farming, settlements, health, school, hay storage, water harvesting	Settlements, farming, soil erosion control measures, water harvesting
Risks/hazards	Soil erosion, water contamination, mosquito breeding	Erosion, mosquito breeding, unprotected dam
Conditions that increase vulnerability	Slopy ground, stagnant nature of water, deforestation, use of artificial fertilizer	Stagnant nature of water, slopy ground
Beliefs and values	Church, aloe for medicine	Aloe for traditional medicine
Capacities	Rocks, catchments, food production, water pump, water harvesting	Dam, catchments, food production
Natural environment	Water, aloe and eucalyptus trees	Aloe, water

Hilly, slopy, valley	Hilly, slopy, valley, flat	Hilly, slopy, rocky, flat
Irrigation, farming, settlements, grazing, water point, water harvesting, soil and water conservation	Farming, grazing, firewood collection	Farming, grazing, soil and water conservation activities
Erosion, poor sanitation at water point, open well	Erosion, soil degradation, contamination of underground water, depletion of underground water	Soil erosion, soil degradation, contamination of underground water, depletion of underground water
Unprotected spring, deforestation, slopy ground, use of artificial fertilizer, overuse (pressure) on water point	Deforestation, slopy nature of the ground, overgrazing, use of artificial fertilizer	Deforestation, slopy nature of the ground, overgrazing, use of artificial fertilizer
Church, aloe for traditional medicine	Aloe and eucalyptus for traditional medicine	-
Road access, rocks for construction, soil erosion control measures, food production, potential catchments	Road access, rocks for construction, soil erosion control measures, food production, potential catchments	Rocks for construction, road access, soil and water conservation measures, food production, potential catchments
Grazing area, water well, rocks	Aloe, eucalyptus trees	

Next steps

Note down what you saw when walking through the community in the same way as you would systematize information collected by direct observation (see RRS 5, p. 71).

What are the problems specific to your area of intervention? What issues can be pointed out to partner organizations or government agencies?

Determine areas that need to be further explored (either physical areas or issues) and select the tools to use, including interviews or semi-structured interviews.

Community resource	Specific problem	Possible solution
Community water taps	Water spillage around pump. Prevalence of malaria and colds. People have noticed a decrease in water pressure.	Partially due to build-up of debris around water source. Identify community members to regularly clear debris. Raise issue with District Water Commissioner.

RRS 8
Seasonal calendar

What it is

A seasonal calendar helps to explore the changes taking place in a community over the period of one year. It can be used to show weather patterns, such as hurricanes, floods or periods of drought, social and economic conditions (including economic recession), public events such as carnivals, holidays and festivals, and seasonal activities such as harvesting.

A chart is created with the months of the year along the horizontal axis and the events, activities and significant climatic phenomena listed in the vertical axis. Completion of the chart by the community helps the VCA team to see the hazards and risks in terms of their occurance. The analysis can help a community to rethink its living habits according to its vulnerability to hazards. Keep in mind that the timing of some events, including hazards, differs from year to year and that certain festivals and religious observances such as Ramadan fall on different dates each year.

A seasonal calendar can be used to identify periods of stress, hazard, disease, hunger, debt and/or vulnerability. It highlights what people do during these periods, their coping strategies, when they have savings and when they have time for community activities. The calendar can be used to show the division of work between men and women in the community and can act as a tool to identify the suitable time to implement a project.

Use it to...
- Find out what activities take place in different seasons.
- Identify people's workload at different times of the year.
- Compare variations in availability of resources through the year, such as food, water and income.
- Examine the local relationship between climate and natural disasters.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** should have a good understanding of group dynamics and be able to maintain the focus on the chosen topic and manage conflict, should it arise.

The **participants** should understand how to fill in the chart and be able to draw or represent the symbols used for the categories mapped. The tool is more relevant if the participants have lived in the community for some time and are familiar with the changes over time.

Gender

Compare the calendars produced by different groups. See how men's calendars differ from women's. Use this information to inform programming and the planning of events such as meetings.

How to

Step 1

Set the timeline for the calendar.

Decide on the period you would like the calendar to cover. Using a reference period of 15 months is helpful so that individual activities are not limited. Start at what local people consider to be the beginning of the year; it does not have to be January. The starting point may coincide with the harvest season, the rainy or dry season or certain key celebrations.

Step 2

Select the materials to make the calendar.

Seasonal maps can be drawn on the ground using seeds, sticks, coins and other locally available materials. To refer back to the information at a later stage, it is useful to take a photograph of or video-record the map.

Step 3

Determine the categories to be mapped.

Time intervals are created across the top (these can be the months of the year or seasons, such as a dry period and a wet period) and seasonal factors are created down the side (activities, events, security, health, hazards, etc.).

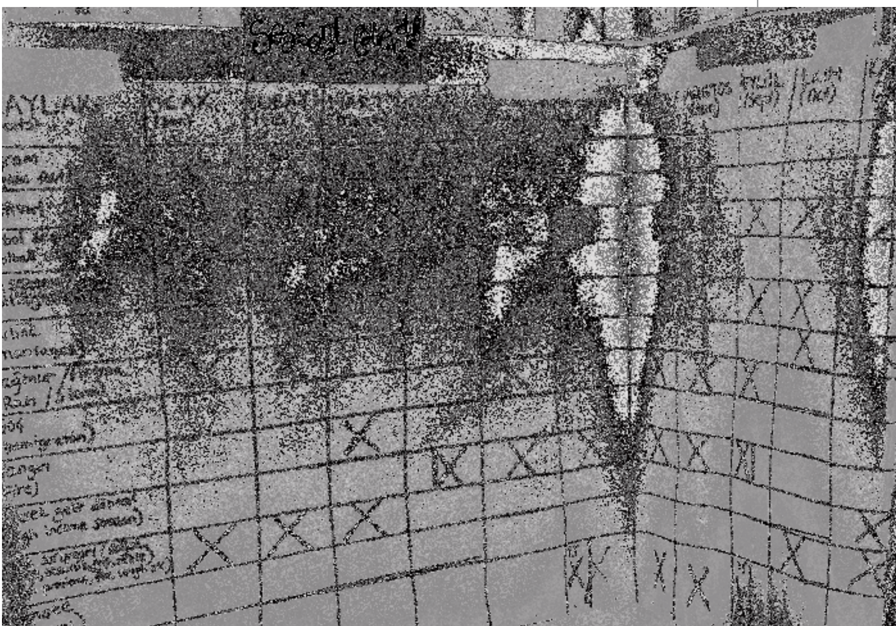
Step 4

Determine values.

Ask participants to fill in the calendar. If it is difficult to capture precise information, start with general information, such as when is the peak of the rainy season and when is the peak of the dry season.

Variation

A seasonal calendar can be scaled down to a **daily activity calendar**. A daily activity calendar is used to document the various activities of an individual over the course of a day and the duration of each activity. This tool can be used, for example, to identify the different tasks performed by men and women and when they are carried out. The information can then be useful for scheduling meetings, activities or the overall project.



Seasonal calendar, VCA, Izmir, Turkey, 2006

Example of a seasonal calendar

Seasonality	**J**	**F**	**M**	**A**	**M**	**J**	**J**	**A**	**S**	**O**	**N**	**D**
Low income				x			x	x	x			
High income	**X**	**X**	**X**								**X**	**X** **X**
Immigration and migration	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X** **X**			...		**X**	**X** **X**
Burglaries				x					**X**			
Crop season						**X**	**X**	**X**				
Drug trafficking		**X**	**X**	**X**					**X**	**X**		**X**
Vehicle accidents				**X**					**X**			**X**
Domestic violence	**X**	x	x	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	x	x	x
Harvest time	**X**	**X**										**X**
Rainfall period						**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**			
Health	**J**	**F**	**M**	**A**	**M**	**J**	**J**	**A**	**S**	**O**	**N**	**D**
Flu, coughs, colds	**X**										**X**	**X**
Stomach illness (vomiting, diarrhoea)	**X**					**X**	**X**	**X**				**X**
Conjunctivitis			**X**	**X**	**X**							
Water-borne disease (fungi, sores)						**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**			
Head lice	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**
Hazards	**J**	**F**	**M**	**A**	**M**	**J**	**J**	**A**	**S**	**O**	**N**	**D**
Hurricane						**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	
Forest fire	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**							
Agricultural fire						**X**	**X**	**X**				
Floods							**X**	**X**	**X**			
Fire												**X**
Temperature (high-low)	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**						x	x	x

X = high x = low

What does the calendar tell us?

During the months when income is high (February, March), head lice and conjunctivities are the main health concern reported. During the low-income and flooding months of July, August and September, water-borne diseases and stomach illnesses become a health concern. Burglaries and vehicle accidents coincide with low-income months.

Next steps

Compare the information with the information collected during the review of secondary sources (see RRS 1, p. 48), ranking (see MRS 2, p. 138) or community meeting (see MRS 5, p. 153).

Cross-check the information in the calendar. For example:

- Do the start and end points of crop seasons correspond to the local rainfall data?
- Do peaks in male labour demand and high-income months coincide with a given period?
- Does prices go down at harvest time?
- How do the effects of seasonal events differ according to gender?

Analyse the seasonal calendar by looking for links between different parts. How do hazards affect the community's economic situation? When is their workload heaviest? What is the relationship between birth rate and income? What is the relationship between the wet and dry seasons and disease? What is the relationship between food shortage and migration and between climate and disasters?

RRS 9

Historical profile/historical visualization

What it is

Historical profile and historical visualization are tools for gathering information about what has happened in the past. The two variations can assist in building a picture of past events that have an effect on a community. They can track changes in the environment and community behaviours and shed light on causal links. Awareness of the patterns can influence the decisions taken by community members in the planning process. The two variations can be used together or separately depending on time, interest and the information you wish to obtain.

Use them to...

- Get an insight into past events, such as hazards, and what changes have occurred over time.
- Gain an understanding of the present situation in the community (causal link between past and present in terms of health issues or hazards and vulnerabilities).
- Gain an understanding of how things may continue to change in the future (trends).
- Make people aware of changes and present perceptions.
- Serve as a basis for discussions on future programmes or projects within the community.

Benefits

The tools are a powerful way of allowing people to voice opinions and share their history.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** should be able to maintain the focus of the participants on the selected topics. It should be someone who can establish trust with the participants and is respectful. Skills in recording systematic information are also important. The facilitator should be able to mediate any discussions or conflicts that may arise.

The tools are more relevant if the **participants** have lived in the community for some time and know the history. They should be able to express themselves clearly, and accurately reflect on past events and changes in the community.

Gender

Consider the division of resources between men and women and how this affects their vulnerability to hazards and risks. Has that changed recently as a result of an epidemic, economic change or a disaster? The historical data identified by women may vary from that provided by men; compare the data from different groups.

How to

Historical profile

This tool promotes a better understanding of the most significant events of the past and how the community has developed over time. It can lead to a shared understanding of the community's **history** and **identity**.

The aim of a historical profile is for the community to identify all the events and activities that have left their mark on the growth and development of the community. Through the profile, members of the community, especially the younger generation, will get to know and understand how the community has evolved. This can be a powerful tool, as people learn, appreciate and write down the efforts made by earlier generations; they will better value what they have and the past achievements of their community members. People will also be stimulated to think ahead: What do past changes tell us about trends in risks? Where may things be getting worse? What needs to be done to manage those risks?

Tip

Life histories are another method of getting individual respondents to give a detailed account of their lives or of a specific issue from a personal perspective.

Historical tracing consists of asking individuals or groups to begin with current experiences and to go back in time. The aim is to find the contributing factors to a certain event.

Step 1

Identify areas of interest.

Clearly define the topics for which you want to collect information. These might include food security, hazards, land distribution or conflicts.

Step 2

Select the participants.

When selecting participants, you will want to find both men and women, and possibly children, who know the community and are open and willing to share their experiences. It is good to have a broad mix of people in the group, including leaders, teachers, young and old.

Step 3

Plan the group discussion.

Plan a group discussion (see Community meeting, MRS 5, p. 153) and invite the people who will be able to provide historical information about the community. Start off by asking people if they can recall major events in the community related to the topics selected in Step 1.

These may include:
- major hazards and their effects;
- changes in land use (crops, forest cover, houses, etc.);
- changes in land tenure;
- changes in food security and nutrition;
- changes in administration and organization;
- major political events.

Step 4

Capture the information.

A note-taker – either a participant, another specified person or the facilitator – should write the events discussed down on a blackboard or large sheet of paper in chronological order. Make sure participants are aware of how you are going to proceed and have agreed that the information will only be used for the purpose of investigation.

Example (from *Make that Change*)

1944	First ten families settle in the community.
1951	Construction of the train road and presence of 20 railroad workers.
1954	Train station workers lived in the village. Main railroad station was donated to the community and became the school.
1957	Fire in the community destroyed two houses. The church was built with the support of the community.
1960	Water system providing potable water to one-third of the population was constructed accounting for about 200 houses in the community. Electricity coverage was extended to half of the population.
1980	Paved road linked to main highway.
1987	Earthquake destroyed many houses and services.
1989	A clinic for 30 beds was inaugurated.

1990	Dengue outbreak killed four people.
1991	Hurricane Alex severely hit the community and flash floods destroyed at least 120 houses while another 50 were damaged.
1992	Community Disaster Group created.
1994	Heavy migration to the capital due to droughts and job losses, which affected the economic situation of many households.
1999	Drainage collapsed along with tonnes of garbage.
2003	A sports centre was constructed.

The example above shows when major events occurred and how they had an impact on the community. Through further discussion with community members, you can find out how the community has changed over time.

Tip

Historical information is more effective when there is participation from a broad spectrum of the community, including the elderly, adults and young people. If the cultural context requires it, you may need to implement this tool on two separate occasions: one with the elderly and adults and the other with young people. In other cases, it may be best to divide up the group by men and women.

Historical visualization

Step 1

Identify the participants.

Identify the oldest and youngest people in the community who are willing to participate. One way to do this is according to their ages and time living in the community. Select a starting year.

Step 2

Define the themes.

Decide on the themes you would like to address and ensure that all the participants agree to them. These might include: diseases, access to food, access to work, post disasters, violence, crime, trees, housing, people, livelihood, among others. This will help in gaining a better understanding of the current situation in the community (causal link between hazards and vulnerabilities) and create awareness of how the situation has changed over time.

Step 3

Select the symbols.

Pick symbols to represent the people, houses, trees, money, companies, etc. that are featured on the chart. Each symbol can represent one, ten, a hundred or a thousand of that item.

Step 4

Discussion.

Promote an open discussion, with the participation of all the group members. This step should be brought to a halt once the group has collected the relevant information on the period from the selected starting date up to the present.

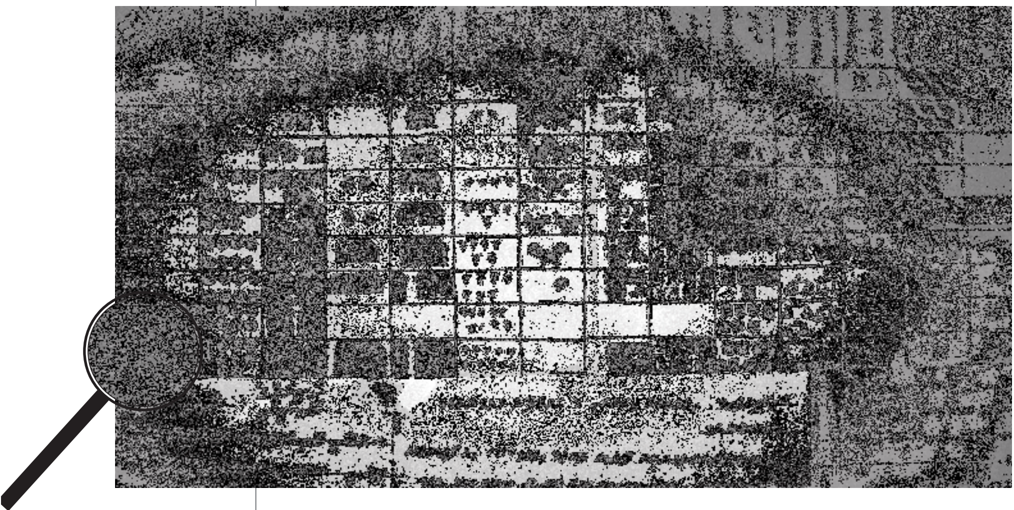
Step 5

Analyse the information gathered and draw conclusions accordingly. The result will provide an insight into the development of the community over time and into past hazards and changes in their nature, intensity and behaviour.

Step 6

The next step is to develop a future projection using the outcomes of steps 1 to 5. For this part of the process, start with the last decade of information gathered. The participants' task is to predict the future of the community over the next 10 and 20 years on the basis of that information. This step is not a wish list of what the participants would like to see happen in their community; rather it is a reflection of what the future holds if the same patterns of behaviour and trends persist.

Example from a VCA in the Maldives, 2006



Constraints and pitfalls

Ensure that there are enough people present who have a clear understanding of what has happened in the past.

Next steps

The information collected through these two tools can be triangulated with other information so as to ensure validity. The data are also very important in the creation of a detailed baseline study.

In some cases, a review of secondary sources (see RRS 1, p. 48) may provide additional information about external influences on hazards facing the community, such as deforestation in upper watersheds that increases the risk of flash floods, or climate change that increases the risk of drought. Such information could be used to interpret the historical profile and seasonal calendar or to stimulate a more in-depth discussion with the community (for instance in community meetings, focus group discussions or interviews).

RRS 10

Household/neighbourhood vulnerability assessment

What it is

This tool is a graphic means of assessing the main vulnerabilities faced by individual households and neighbourhoods. It enables you to gather a lot of information about the main vulnerabilities faced by people in the community, both individually and collectively. Once people have a clear idea of what their main vulnerabilities are, actions and priorities can be developed to reduce the potential effects of a threat.

Use it to...

- Assess the household/neighbourhood's level of vulnerability in relation to likely hazards and risks.

Skills needed

Those carrying out the assessment should be able to build trust with the people answering the questionnaires and to treat them respectfully. They should have good skills in recording and systematizing the information collected.

Gender

Be aware of any issues that might have gender implications. How are decisions made at the household level? How are they different for men and for women, for young people and for old people? How do men and women use resources differently?

How to

Household vulnerability assessment

- Get participants to identify the main threats they face, placing these along the horizontal axis of the chart (see example p. 107).
- Then name every area of the house, both indoors and outdoors, along the vertical axis of the chart. Specify the material or the condition of the selected element using a ranking order from 1 to 5 according to the level of risk, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest.

Example (from *Make that Change*)

Household Mother **Type of work** School teacher

Family members 5 **Adult** 3 **Children** 2 **Male** 2 **Female** 3

House	Hurricane/ winds	Fire	Earthquake	Eruption	Floods	Landslides	Mudslides	Forest fire
Roof	Zinc 3	Zinc 2	Zinc 3	Zinc 1	Zinc 1	Zinc 1	Zinc 1	Zinc 1
Ceiling	Wood 2	Wood 5	Wood 1	Wood 1	Wood 1	Wood 1	Wood 1	Wood 3
Walls	Mix 3	Mix 3	Mix 1	Mix 1	Mix 3	Mix 3	Mix 3	Mix 3
Floors	Wood 1	Wood 4	Wood 1	Wood 1	Wood 3	Wood 3	Wood 2	Wood 3
Windows	Wood 5	Wood 5	Wood 2	Wood 1	Wood 1	Wood 3	Wood 3	Wood 4
House base	Concrete 1	Concrete 1	Concrete 2	Concrete 1	Concrete 1	Concrete 1	Concrete 1	Concrete 1
Exits	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Drainage	Iron 5	Iron 1	Iron 1	Iron 1	Iron 5	Iron 5	Iron 5	Iron 1
Trees around	5	5	1	1	1	2	3	4
Evacuation route/road	5	1	3	1	3	2	2	1
Electricity cables	3	5	1	1	3	1	1	2
Water access	2	4	1	1	1	1	1	1
Telephone access	4	3	5	1	1	1	1	1
Electricity service	4	5	4	1	2	1	1	3
Total Vulnerability	**45**	**46**	**28**	**15**	**28**	**27**	**27**	**30**
Rank– Vulnerability	**64.28% High**	**65.71% High**	**40% Medium**	**21.42% Low**	**40% Medium**	**38.57% Medium**	**38.57% Medium**	**42.85% Medium**

Ranking system: Score vulnerability from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. Fill in each area of the column with the appropriate score. The number of different areas of vulnerability analysed x5 will equal 100%. Add the actual results of each column and work out the real vulnerability as a percentage. If it is between 50 and 100% the vulnerability is **high**; if it is between 30 and 49% it is **medium**; and if it is between 0 and 29% it is **low**.

Neighbourhood vulnerability assessment

To assess neighbourhood vulnerability, consolidate all the information gathered from the individual household vulnerability assessments into one chart as shown in the example below. This can be done at a later date by the VCA team or collectively by the participants. If you choose the second option, you will need a large chart and to keep control over the activity.

Household 77% male | 23% female | 82% formal employee | 18% part-time employee

Neighbourhood Forest **Adults** 980 **Children** 520 **Males** 784 **Females** 716

Risk	Hurricane/ winds	Fire	Earthquake	Eruption	Floods	Landslides	Mudslides	Forest fire
Houses 402	25 vulnerability	10 vulnerability	32 vulnerability	80 vulnerability	35 vulnerability	8 vulnerability	22 vulnerability	3 vulnerability
Streets/roads 14	4 vulnerability	-	3 vulnerability	1 vulnerability	5 vulnerability	1 vulnerability	2 vulnerability	-
Mountain 3	-	-	-	1 vulnerability	-	1 vulnerability	1 vulnerability	3 vulnerability
Cliffs 1	-	-	High vulnerability	-	-	High vulnerability	High vulnerability	-
Evacuation routes 5	2 vulnerability	1 vulnerability	2 vulnerability	1 vulnerability	2 vulnerability	2 vulnerability	2 vulnerability	1 vulnerability
Evacuation meeting points 3	1 Pitt Rd	-	2 R Kate Rd Kane St	1 R Kate Rd	1 R Cliff St	1 R Kate Rd	1 R Pitt Rd	1 R Dade Rd
Drainage 50	15 vulnerability	-	15 vulnerability	15 vulnerability	15 vulnerability	5 vulnerability	21 vulnerability	-
Trees 1000 +	120 vulnerability	120 vulnerability	-	280 vulnerability	-	18 vulnerability	35 vulnerability	120 vulnerability
Electricity cables	High vulnerability	High vulnerability	High vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Low vulnerability
Contingency plans	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Telephone access	High vulnerability	Low vulnerability	High vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Low vulnerability
Information protocols	High vulnerability	High vulnerability	High vulnerability	High vulnerability	Low vulnerability	Medium vulnerability	Medium vulnerability	High vulnerability
Frequency of events within the past 10 years	3	28	1	-	7	1	3	1
Magnitude of the events	High	High	Low	High	Low	Medium	Medium	Low

Next steps

As mentioned above, you may choose to have a member of the VCA team compile the neighbourhood vulnerability information in order to save time. You should, however, ensure that the information is shared back with the community as it can be a very powerful way of showing a community what its risks and vulnerabilities are.

The information can be used to verify conclusions made based on information collected through other means, for example through triangulation.

RRS 11

Livelihoods and coping strategies analysis

What it is

Livelihoods are at the core of people's daily existence. Livelihoods can be defined as the way that people use the resources they have available to support their lives. For most people, this means earning a cash income and, if they have the land necessary, growing food for subsistence. The resources involved are often called assets or capital (as in the sustainable livelihoods framework promoted by DFID and some NGOs). A livelihood provides a person's basic needs and anything else that can be afforded in addition.

The amount of income (and/or subsistence) gained from a livelihood will determine the baseline status of each person – especially how well fed they are and their general health (mental as well as physical). This is the first line of "capacity" when facing a hazard: people with poor baseline nutrition and health will be more vulnerable to many hazards.

Livelihood will also affect how much income is available for the members of a household to protect themselves adequately from specific hazards. Can they afford to build a house that is safe from the hazards that might affect them, such as earthquakes or hurricanes? Can they rent or buy land to build their house in a place that is safe from floods? Of course, having the money does not guarantee that it will be spent on protection against hazards. It is also important to understand what priority people give to reducing their vulnerability. Some capacity-building work may need to be carried out in developing greater risk-awareness and in increasing households' willingness to provide themselves with adequate protection.

In most cases, livelihoods need to be understood (and analysed by using VCA) through the household. It is usually in the household that decisions are made (sometimes without much choice) about how to use the resources that are available to the various members of that family unit. Each household has a "bundle" of assets (resources) that enable different members to earn an income (wages) and/or to farm (subsistence). Some of those resources or assets may be tangible (e.g. land for farming, livestock, a sewing machine, carpentry tools, cash for investment). Others may be intangible, such as skills, education or "social capital" (connections that help to secure income or welfare).

Different members of the household or family will engage in various activities that bring in income and/or food. The household converts the assets or resources it controls into the various income-generating and subsistence activities (sometimes called the livelihood portfolio). In many countries, children may be a part of this process. Sometimes, when a household has few resources, one member may have to migrate to earn wages in a city or abroad. In other cases, people may be forced to engage in environmentally damaging activities (highly relevant for some hazards) or will be forced to survive through activities that are illegal. Women and children are sometimes forced into sex work when all else fails.

The tools used to investigate livelihoods therefore need to assess:

- What assets or resources are available to a sample of households. Together with the other VCA tools, this will help give a picture of the capacities of the community to withstand the risks they face.
- The damage and disruption to those assets and resources when a hazard occurs. If possible, this should take account of different patterns of damage depending on the intensity and duration of the hazard (e.g. hurricanes or earthquakes of different strengths; the time and depth of floods).
- How the livelihoods and their assets can be protected and strengthened from the impact of hazards – what strategies are already available or can be improved.
- The capacities of the members of the community to construct safe houses or to live in safe locations, with the given levels of income available from those livelihoods.

Livelihoods assessment will help to design community-based activities that can protect and strengthen livelihoods, making the communities more resilient and capable of withstanding the impact of particular, known hazards.

It is also through livelihoods analysis conducted in the context of a VCA that the Red Cross Red Crescent can design interventions in other programme areas (e.g. health, water and sanitation, food security). Through such integration, the relevance of other programmes can be seen in relation to vulnerability reduction.

People's livelihoods are influenced by their perceptions of risk from known hazards. For instance, people who regularly experience floods or face recurrent drought will almost certainly have livelihood strategies that take into account these hazards.

Note

The **person carrying out the analysis** needs to have the trust of the respondent, as the information being asked for is highly sensitive and personal. The person should have skills in mediating conflict and be able to draw out information from respondents without making them feel exposed.

Livelihoods analysis

This tool uses a combination of interviews and diagrams (usually at the household level) to represent the various ways that income (and/or subsistence food sources) is generated to enable people to live. It collects information on the bundle of assets or resources available to the household for its livelihood activities. It assesses how these are used to form the livelihoods that they depend on. These can then be linked up with the hazard analysis in the household/neighbourhood vulnerability assessment (see RRS 10, p. 105) and information gathered through other tools. This will enable you to see how livelihoods can be disrupted in disasters and the various types of hardship created (depending on what aspect of the livelihoods and their associated income has been disrupted).

In this exercise, it is important to include people who have migrated away from the community but are still connected to the household, e.g. through sending cash back home (remittances). Although the person sending them is not living in the household, these remittances may represent a vital component of the livelihood strategy of that household. (Migrants can also play a crucial role in recovery, as they will most likely send additional funds back home after a disaster.)

When the investigation has been done at the household level, it is essential to be aware of how gender and age may affect access to income and food. They may also have a significant impact on who gets what *after* a disaster.

Use it to...

- Understand how people obtain their basic needs and any additional income. It will also indicate the **strength and resilience** of people's livelihoods with respect to hazards.

How to

Collecting information on the assets of a household can be carried out at various levels of detail, depending on the time available and the intended size of the sample. It should be based on the existing knowledge gained from other tools, such as hazard maps, seasonal calendar, resource maps and household/neighbourhood vulnerability assessment.

- Review the information gained from other tools, especially the hazard map, seasonal calendar and resource map. These will help to determine the criteria by which to select households from different socio-economic groups. The result will form a **structured** sample, chosen at random but from specific known groups that will be representative of the whole location.
- Decide how many and which particular households you will interview.
- The interview process involves getting to know household members, composition, age, gender breakdown, followed by questions on livelihoods and coping strategies according to the instructions described in the semi-structured interview (see RRS 3, p. 60).
- Block diagrams or pie charts can be used to support the discussion on livelihoods – these can show the different types of assets (resources) available to different members of the household and the various activities that each is engaged in to achieve an income.
- Discussion can include how the household copes in times of stress (especially in response to the impact of known hazards such as droughts, floods or storms). This will be included in the analysis of coping strategies (see p. 117).
- The discussion could also look at changes over time. What are the changes in coping strategies and livelihoods, and what are the causes and effects of these changes?

The goal is to discover the composition of the assets "bundle" (resources, earning capabilities, income-generating activities) available to the household and the strategies it has adopted to make best use of them. These are then cross-checked against the way that various hazards can affect the assets, thus showing where people's vulnerabilities lie and ways to increase their capacities by strengthening and protecting their livelihoods.

Step 1

Identify livelihood activities.

List the various livelihood activities that involve each member of the household. It will be easier to do this first, and then identify the assets that are used in the process.

Some people may have more than one activity, and some of the activities may be seasonal. Make note of these different activities and the months when they take place. Some activities may be directly affected by hazards (see Step 3, p. 116), for example, if someone is reliant on earning wages from carrying out the harvest of other farmers, a drought or flood may make his or her livelihood unsustainable.

Note

Many people are likely to be quite reluctant to discuss all their assets and resources. It is even possible that senior males may want to prevent females in the household from knowing all their assets. They may also be reluctant to reveal wealth (financial capital) or the value of jewellery. This is why it may be better to use this tool after some of the others that relate to risk problems, so that people are more willing to trust the process and to understand its relevance to risk reduction.

It may also make it more difficult to obtain information if others are present, e.g. government officials.

In the case of some livelihood activities, household members may feel ashamed to give information (e.g. related to sex work or illegal activities). It is essential to approach this with sensitivity and to earn the trust of the respondents in order to get good information.

Data collection sheet for Step 1

Information can be collected through discussions and interviews with household members. Note that different people may have varying opinions about their work and activities: it is useful to try to cross-check the information in more than one visit (but avoid creating mistrust between household members!).

Do not forget to ask about people who may not be living at home, for example who have migrated, but still have a connection with the household.

Basic household data			
Person (name if willing)	**Gender and age**	**Main livelihood activity (seasonality?)**	**Secondary and other livelihood activities (seasonality?)**
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Step 2

Identify household assets and resources.

List all the assets and resources available to the household. The assets can be divided into the following groups:

Natural Land, water supply, forest resources, fishing resources, wild plants, etc.

Physical Tools, equipment, roads that are useful (e.g. getting to market), transport, electricity, sewage, water taps or wells.

Financial Savings (including jewellery, if relevant), access to credit, debts.

Human Education, training, qualifications, skills, etc.

Social Participation in community groups, connections with kin in other villages or towns, linkages with a religious institution, membership of a political party.

Data collection sheet for Step 2

Assets of household xxxx Below each heading, describe the assets (resources, capabilities) that provide food, income and well-being				
Natural	**Physical**	**Financial**	**Human**	**Social**

Step 3

Identify the hazards that threaten the assets.

From the assets and resources that have been identified as crucial to the household's livelihoods, indicate (through participatory discussion with the household members) how the known hazards can affect them.

Data collection sheet for Step 3

Hazard	Natural	Physical	Financial	Human	Social
e.g., Flood slow onset					
Flash flood					
Drought					
Hurricane					
Etc.					

You should attempt to do this in some detail and include things that may seem rather insignificant. For instance, in Viet Nam a VCA discovered that floods threaten people's *human capital* when they lose their education certificates making it difficult to access some jobs where they need to prove qualifications. A simple remedy was suggested: to supply cheap plastic waterproof folders.

Note also that some hazards are immediately obvious, such as a flash flood or a hurricane. Others, particularly slow onset disasters such as drought and trends that affect livelihoods (for instance, climate change), may be less obvious but can be highly relevant and should also be included in the analysis.

Take the information from this exercise into the second part of the process – coping strategies analysis.

Next steps

The information collected has to be systematized. It can then be presented for use in conjunction with other tools to make conclusions and recommendations. The data obtained from this tool can be instrumental in the project identification and planning process.

Coping strategies analysis

When people are affected by a known hazard, they will fall back on a range of **coping strategies** (sometimes called **coping mechanisms**) to manage and reduce the impact of the hazard. In many parts of the world, these coping strategies are mainly aimed at conserving and protecting the assets (resources) that are essential to their livelihoods. The first steps in coping with a hazard e.g. in a slow onset hazard such as drought, often include a reduction in spending on school fees (especially firstly for girls), medical fees and debt repayments. There may be a reduction in food consumption, e.g. to two instead of three meals a day. Then, when forced to do so, people will start selling assets (e.g. jewellery, livestock, land).

Coping strategies analysis is a way of assessing the impact of known hazards on people's livelihoods. Through semi-structured interviews (carried out in conjunction with the livelihoods analysis above), you will find out what people do in order to cope with the impact of the hazards they have encountered in the past.

How to

Step 1

Identify the coping strategies.

From the livelihoods analysis already carried out, identify those assets and resources that are likely to be reduced or sacrificed in order to ensure survival when a known hazard occurs. So, for example, where a community has identified floods as a hazard that affects them every few years, what patterns of behaviour do people follow in order to survive and recover?

List the different things that people do to:
- cut food consumption;
- safeguard assets and resources;
- sacrifice assets when it is essential for survival, e.g. Which assets or resources are lost first? In what order are they sacrificed? This will help to assess the likely impact of hazards of varying duration or intensity, e.g. a longer-lasting flood may cause worse losses of livestock than a shorter one.

Assess whether the impact of different coping strategies has a worse effect on some household members than on others. For instance, are elderly people likely to have reduced food intake compared with younger members of the household? Do women endure greater losses than men?

Next steps

Identify the measures that could be taken to prevent or reduce the loss of assets and resources as a result of a hazard impact. Which of these measures can be employed by the household on its own? Which measures require outside help or the organization of the community to share risks and support others (e.g. through community stockpiling of emergency food supplies, emergency cash loans from a community savings club, etc.)?

RRS 12

Institutional and social network analysis

What it is

This tool uses a diagram to show key organizations, groups and individuals in a community, the nature of the relationships between them and the perceptions that people have of their importance.

Use it to...

- Understand the perceptions that local people have of the role and significance of various organizations within the community.
- Stimulate discussion which may lead to the identification of the role each organization can play in time of disaster.

Benefits

Reveals the community's relationships with organizations, including the Red Cross Red Crescent.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** should be very familiar with the tool. He or she should have skills in analysing the relationship between institutions in the community.

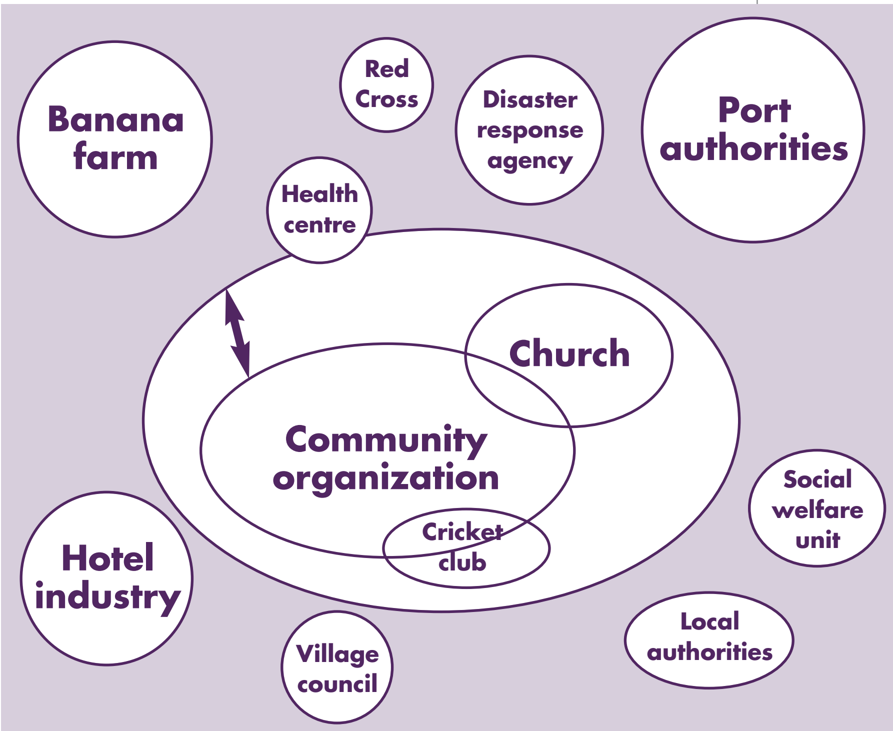
Gender

Divide the group into men and women to show how groups of individuals relate to one another and the motives for these relationships. A comparison of the different diagrams drawn by men and women will show differences in the way men and women perceive the patterns of relationships within the community. Take the similarities and differences into account when planning community-based activities.

How to

- Become familiar with the names of the organizations in advance.
- Ask the participants to develop a set of criteria for determining the importance of an organization and to rank each one according to these criteria (see Ranking, MRS 2, p. 138).
- Ask the participants to what extent the organizations are linked to each other and note the kind of relationship between the organizations.
- Draw a circle to represent each organization or group. The size of the circle indicates the organization's/group's importance relative to others. The distance between the circles reflects the strength of the relationship between the organizations/groups.
- Continue with a focus group discussion (see RRS 4, p. 66) on the history of the organizations identified and the activities they have undertaken in the community. This will provide information on how well the organizations function and how well they coordinate with one another. This will also help identify which organizations, groups and individuals play an important role in times of disaster and in community-level decision-making mechanisms.

Example



In the example above, note that the size of the circle represents the importance given to the institution in the community. For example, the port authorities and the banana farm play important roles. However, they have little relationship with community organizations, as is shown by their distance from the centre. Conversely, while the cricket club and church are perceived to have smaller roles, community members see their relationship with them to be much stronger and significant.

Tip

Ask participants to approve where the facilitator has placed the different elements in the diagram to ensure it accurately represents the reality as they perceive it.

Constraints and pitfalls

The validity of the information collected relies on the honesty of participants. Possible distortion can be avoided by cross-checking the information with that collected through other tools.

Next steps

The information obtained from the diagram can help the VCA team and the community to better understand relationships in the community. They can then use this information to build strategies to improve relationships with important institutions that can support risk-reduction initiatives.

RRS 13

Assessing the capacity of people's organizations

What it is

This is a tool for organizational analysis. It can help a community to identify the people's organizations that are important to it. People's organizations include religious institutions, schools, financial committees, hospitals, coordinating bodies and local government. This tool is closely linked to capacity mapping (see RRS 6, p. 75).

Use it to...

- Identify the various types of support available to people, which can gradually help build up local capacities.
- Determine the kind of organizational support a people's organization needs in order to address problems and risks and progressively build up its management capacity.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** should have good skills in systematizing and categorizing information in a very short period of time. He or she should understand the nature of partnerships and know something about the institution in question. A review of secondary sources (see p. 50) is a good way to start.

How to

Step 1

Conduct a semi-structured interview.

Use guiding questions such as:

- What is the history of the people's organization?
- When was it formed?
- For what purpose was it formed?
- How many members are there? Active? Passive?
- Is this number increasing or decreasing?
- What is the attendance during meetings?
- How are decisions made?
- Does the group have a community development plan?
- Are the committees functioning?
- What has the group contributed to the community so far?

Step 2

Conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

A SWOT analysis will enable you to assess an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (see *Harmonized Community Tool Box*, FedNet, for instruction in how to carry out a SWOT analysis).

You can then identify measures to address the weaknesses and threats, while capitalizing on the strengths and opportunities.

Next steps

The results of this assessment tool are important in the identification of capacities and should be included when looking at the major conclusions of the whole VCA process. You can also use this information during the planning of projects.

Example from a VCA in the Maldives, 2006

Questions asked	Scout	Meedhoo Ekuveri Club	IDP Committee	Jamiyyathul Salah
How old is your organization?	Initially formed 20 years ago; however, after a gap of no activity, re-started in 2003	Formed in 1978, 27 years	2005	Formed 19 Sept 1979
What are the main activities of the organization?	To take part in all school activities	To work in the development of the island, in raising the standard of education and all community works	To give assistance and aid to IDPs, to take note of their needs and problems and to bring them to the attention of the government, pass information on to them that is honest/truthful	To work in the development of the island in sports, community work
How does the organization raise funds?	To go on camps and get different badges	By planting and growing coconut trees and renting out buildings (rooms, houses, plots of land, etc.)	No specific programme is being conducted to raise funds	Before we got funds by doing netting for reef fish, however, now from coconut groves. Have tried unsuccessfully to obtain funds from other organizations
What are the future plans for your organization?	Working for the second badge, taking the oath	To have an island development plan, to extend the office building, to run different courses to raise the educational standard, to run sports programmes	Assist the government and organizations (such as Red Cross) in assisting and giving information. Awareness programmes – improve inter-community communication	To finish new building of the Jamuiyya. To continue holding the annual sports competition and religious programmes

Questions asked	Scout	Meedhoo Ekuveri Club	IDP Committee	Jamiyyathul Salah
What sort of difficulties do you face/have?	No appropriate scout teacher or trainer	Not enough funds	IDP members not turning up for meetings, with reasons given as lack of time, working earning, members don't get a salary	Not enough funds, no place or building hinders some activities
How much success does your organization have?	Runner up at the scout jamboree	Electrical wiring course, making of stage, two-week computer course, one-month Quran recital class	Brought IDPs closer, disseminating information, working as a bridge between the government and the community	1st in atoll competition and participated in zone competition, built 2 mosques, preparation for world environment day (like finishing the stage, work on the jetty, install rainwater tanks)
Who are the organizers?	One overall leader (Abdul Razzaq) and every group has a group leader	President (Ibrahim Hassan), 2 vice presidents	President, vice president and secretary	Two founding members, 1 president, 3 vice presidents
Do you have relations/coordination with other organizations?	No relations	Care Society	-	No
What are the requirements for joining the organization?	Those students who have good conduct and good in studies	To oblige to the fundamental rules and regulations of the club and to be 18 yrs+	Anyone who is sympathetic and has good intentions	To be 18 yrs+, finish school and good conduct

RRS 14
Venn diagram

What it is

A Venn diagram is a drawing in which circular areas represent groups of items sharing common properties. Venn diagrams can be used to collect social data by using circles to show the links or relationships between different parts of a community or institution. A Venn diagram in the context of a VCA is used to examine similarities and differences between institutions, partners, people and issues in a community and to identify problems and possible solutions. Venn diagrams are especially relevant for institutional analysis as they can help to identify specific organizations that could be involved in implementing a community action plan or specific risk reduction projects.

In a Venn diagram, each circle represents a different actor or influence in a situation. The size of each circle indicates its importance relative to the other circles and its position indicates its relationship to the other circles. It is a good way of identifying and clarifying the relationships between different interest groups, institutions and decision-making bodies. There is no set method for drawing a Venn diagram. The important thing is the participatory nature of the process.

If carrying out monitoring and evaluation, the diagrams can be revisited at a later stage to see where changes have occurred and why.

Use it to...

- Clarify the different interest groups, institutions and decision-making patterns.
- Show the claims people have on others during a period of hardship and how institutions, both internal and external, operate to provide resources during an emergency.

Skills needed

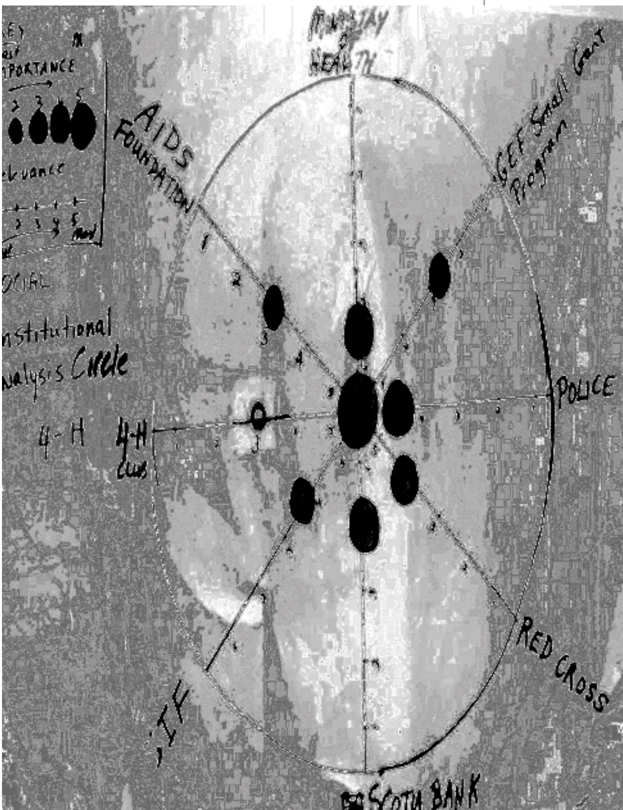
The **facilitator** needs to have a high degree of experience in facilitation to use this tool. He or she should fully understand the objectives of the tool and what the diagrams are trying to say about issues in the community. It requires a good understanding of the cultural context.

Participants should have some preparation for the activity, as it can be quite abstract. This tool mainly relies on visual analysis of institution's interactions and relationships so does not require a high degree of reading or writing skills.

Gender

Divide the group into men and women and get them to do their own versions of the diagram to show how groups of individuals relate to one another and institutions and the motives for this relationship.

A comparison of the diagrams drawn by men and by women will show different patterns of relationships and exchange. Take these similarities and differences into account when planning community-based activities.



Social and institutional network analysis – Regional VCA, Caribbean

How to

Step 1

Identify the principal players.

Have participants reflect on which are the main organizations in the community. Which ones are from outside (e.g. international NGOs)? Which are local services (e.g. religious, educational, health, sports, cultural)? Are there political groups? What committees exist such as a parent-teacher association or community farming committee?

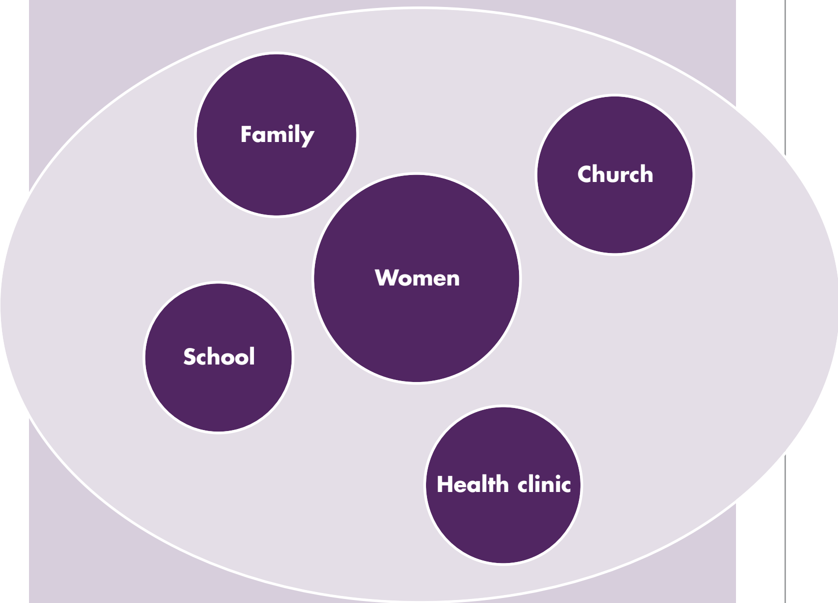
Another approach is to start with the main issue in the centre and have the participants identify the causes of the problem. The *Participatory Community Development Guide* gives this example of a reflection on the causes of high rates of unemployment:

Step 2

Ranking institutions.

Get the participants to cut or draw circles of different sizes to represent the items that they want to compare. This may be relationships between institutions (identified in Step 1), decision-making patterns, or issues. It can be done either using paper or drawn on the ground. If drawn on the ground, it is a good idea to take a photograph of the end result so that it can be used for later reference.

What relationships exist between women and community organizations?

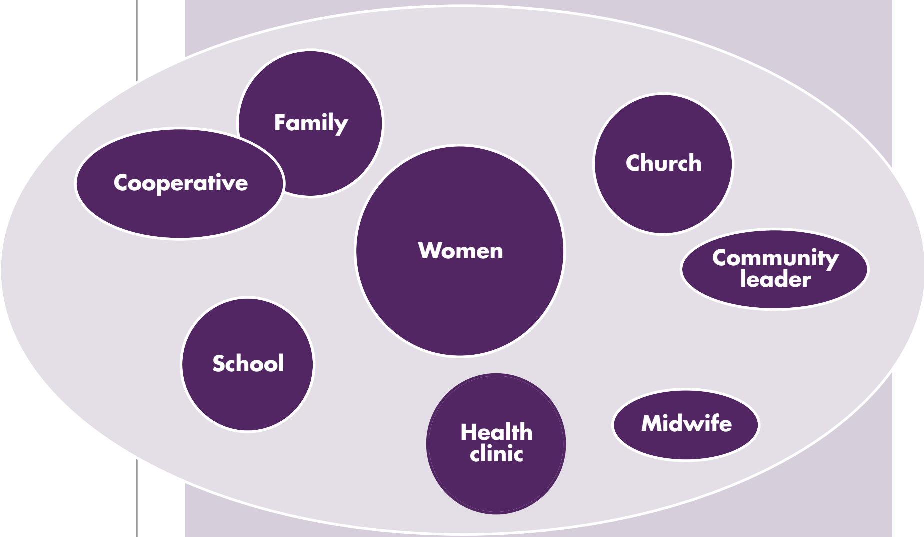


Example based on "Stumbling Toward Gender Aware PRA Training in Indonesia", by Judith Dent, PLA Notes (1996)

Step 3

Determine relationships.

Ask participants to place the circles according to what they have in common with other circles.



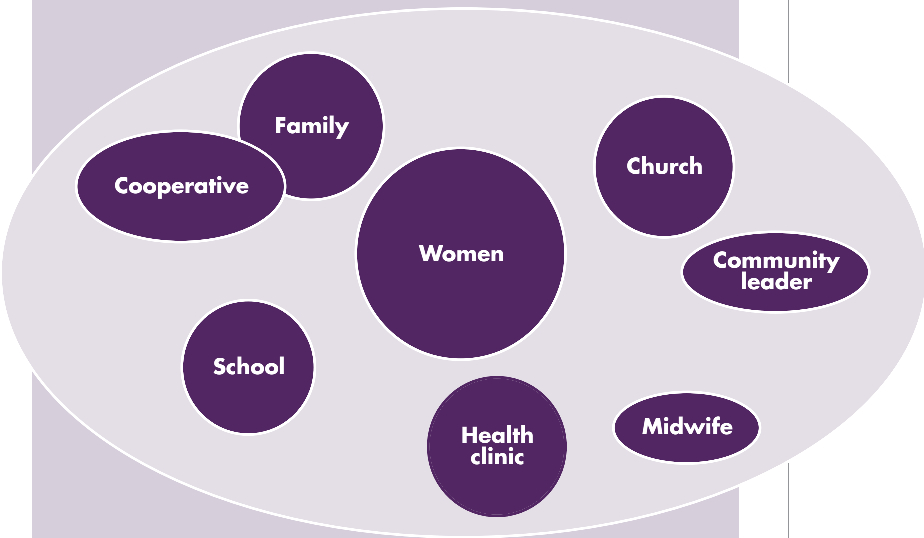
Step 4

Compare.

What is unique to each circle? Where is there overlap, and what does this mean?

In the example below, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Most important to women are their families, the church, the health clinic and school.
- Furthest from them and where benefits are least felt are the community leader, midwife and cooperative.



Constraints and pitfalls

This method relies upon relative homogeneity of the participants' perceptions. Conflicts may arise if carried out in a community with strong divisions along economic lines, caste, religion, etc. In this case, it is advisable to carry out the Venn diagram exercise in smaller, more homogeneous groups.

Next steps

If dealing with issues facing the community, continue the activity by brainstorming possible solutions (see MRS 1, p. 133) and have participants rank the issues by order of priority (see MRS 2, p. 138).

Cross-check the information collected by using other tools. For example, if the issue in question addressed the different relationships between men, women and children, a daily activity calendar can be used to go into more detail about the different tasks accomplished by community members and when they carry them out.

If the Venn diagram highlighted services offered in a community, it is useful to cross-check this through a community map (see p. 83) that identifies the services which exist in the community.

Methods Reference Sheets

This section includes some methods for using the results of the information-gathering tools.

MRS 1

Brainstorming

What it is

Brainstorming involves gathering as many ideas as possible in a very short period of time. It is an effective way of getting participants to think up and contribute ideas using as much spontaneity and creativity as possible. It applies to all stages of a project, including assessments to identify problems and possible solutions, planning and evaluation.

Brainstorming is often best carried out in small groups (a maximum of five people) so that everyone has a chance to contribute their ideas and views. Many people will be more willing to speak in a small group than in a large one. If you are working with a large group, you will need to divide it up into smaller groups. They can do their own brainstorming session, summarizing the results on flipcharts or large sheets of paper, which can then be shared with the larger group.

You can divide up the larger group in different ways to encourage different outcomes. For instance, you could have women and men in separate groups. Or each small group could represent a different part of the community. Of course, you can restructure the smaller groups in different ways at different times, so as to get a range of outputs. People may speak more freely in some groupings than in others.

Brainstorming is not a useful tool if your objective is to get specific information about a specific topic.

Use it to...

- Generate original and innovative ideas from participants.
- Enable participants to share a variety of perspectives on problems and possible solutions.
- Promote open communication and interaction.

Gender

Schedule the session so that all participants can attend. This may be at different times of the day for men and for women. Find ways to draw out the more reticent participants. Is it appropriate to hold separate sessions for men and for women? Is there a woman who could facilitate or co-facilitate the meeting?

Skills needed

The **facilitator** must be very dynamic in order to keep the discussion going without breaks.

If there is a note-taker, **participants** must be able to read the points brought up. Alternatively, the facilitator can summarize the notes when giving feedback to the group.

Brainstorming = **Free ideas**

Focus ideas later

Note

Brainstorming should not be used if the facilitator is not going to be supportive and open to all ideas. The idea is to generate quantity not quality. Ideas that may at first seem superficial can be further explored at a later stage using different tools.

Key message

It is very important to adhere to the principle of neutrality and not judge people's responses.

Benefits

The ideas are spontaneous and are therefore more likely to reflect the true thoughts and feelings of the participants.

Examples of brainstorming techniques

- **Go around**: Go around the circle and each person shares his or her idea one after the other for the note-taker to write down.
- **Group storm**: Divide the participants into smaller groups and have them work on a specific topic. Then get them to present their main ideas back to the larger group. This can be effective for the initial analysis to get the participants to start sorting out the good ideas.
- **Popcorn**: Everyone calls out their ideas as they pop into their heads, and the ideas are recorded by one person.
- **Silent storm**: Distribute pieces of paper and get the participants to write down their thoughts and ideas in silence. Then have them present them out loud.
- **Sticky circle**: Each person is given three to five circles of paper with tape on the back or Post-it notes on which to write down their ideas. Similar ideas can then be grouped together into a number of different categories.

How to

Step 1

Determine the issue to be brainstormed.

Define why you are having the brainstorming and what you hope to get out of it. Be specific in identifying the problem statement or the issue that you are examining, so that participants know exactly what is required of them.

If this is the first activity being carried out with the community, it is best to start with a neutral topic with which the participants are familiar to encourage their participation and make them feel comfortable.

Keep the topic limited and focused.

Step 2

Capture the information.

Identify someone to take notes, either on a blackboard or flipchart. It is recommended that the note-taker be someone other than the facilitator. This will enable participants and the facilitator to stay focused on the topic. The notes will also allow participants to see the other ideas contributed by the other participants.

If technology permits and the participants consent, a video camera or recording device can be a useful way of capturing the information. Be aware, though, that there can be a lot of information for participants to process when the recording is played back. One way of addressing this is to involve the participants in making a film and editing the playback to identify the key issues.

Step 3

Group ideas.

With smaller groups of up to 10 people, allow about 20 minutes of discussion, for larger groups allow up to 1 hour. After this, group similar ideas, have participants explain why they came up with these ideas and decide together which ideas to cross off or pursue further.

Step 4

Share the information.

Let participants know what will be done with the list of ideas afterwards and what are the intended next steps.

Constraints and pitfalls

Brainstorming can be challenging for the note-taker, who has to keep up with the ideas and not interpret them in his or her own words. The aim is to capture ideas in their raw form without interpretation or judgement.

Next steps

Group similar ideas together. For example, if the brainstorming was on income-generating activities, work with the participants to identify which ones will require money to get started and which ones can be started spontaneously. The next step will be to break down the project further into smaller steps and design a plan for the project.

It is very important to check the points raised and how they were grouped with the participants to validate them.

Determine if further analysis or probing is required. Another assessment tool, such as a semi-structured interview or focus group discussion, may be used to investigate further a particular area or issue brought up during the brainstorming.

MRS 2
Ranking

Ranking information – a method that can be used with several tools

What it is
Ranking means placing something in order. In ranking, a group of similar items (e.g. natural hazards) is evaluated according to set criteria (e.g. occurs every year, occurs every month, occurs seasonally, occurs once in a lifetime) and assigned a value (example: between step 1 and 5).

Use it to...
- Quickly identify problem areas and preferences as individuals see them and compare them with the assessments of others.
- Guide people to rank problems in terms of:
  - What can be *changed* about the situation?
  - What can be *influenced* about the situation?
  - What must be *accepted* about the situation?
- Have the community themselves decide what is a priority to be addressed.
- Assign a value to a wide range of variables.

Benefits
This tool can be useful to assess people's expectations, beliefs, judgements, attitudes, preferences and opinions.

It is a helpful follow-up tool to take participants one step further in their critical thinking, as well in the analysis of any situation.

Skills needed
The **facilitator** should have previous training and/or experience to use this tool. He or she should be able to mediate group

discussions, especially if conflicts arise. They should have skills in managing large amounts of information and maintaining focus on the topic.

Gender

Consider organizing two separate groups for men and women to rank their needs and concerns in order of importance. Comparing the outcomes can help in planning projects that are better tailored to the priority needs of the beneficiaries.

How to

Step 1

Identify what is to be ranked

Generate a list of what is to be compared. This can be effectively collected by means of a brainstorming session (see MRS 1, p. 133), through a focus group discussion (see RRS 4, p. 66) or by first interviewing key informants.

Step 2

Identify the criteria for how the list will be ranked.

Example: What are the main natural hazards that threaten your house?

- Wind
- Fire
- Earthquake
- Eruption
- Floods

Step 3

Identify the priority.

Ask the participants to rank or score each item against each criterion, using seeds or a readily available local material. This can be done on a scale of 1–5 or 1–10 or by allocating a fixed number of seeds or stones for each criterion, which can then be distributed between all of the items being ranked. Determine whether 1 or 5 indicates a positive assessment.

Parts of the house	Wind	Fire	Earthquake	Volcanic eruption	Floods
Roof – zinc	3	2	3	1	1
Ceiling	2	5	1	1	1
Windows – wood	5	5	2	1	1
Doors	2	2	2	2	2
Drainage	5	1	1	1	5
Walls	3	3	1	1	3
Floor	1	4	1	1	3
House base	1	1	2	1	1
Trees around the house	5	5	1	1	1
Road	5	1	3	1	3

Step 4

Probe for details.

Ask the question "Which do you prefer?" or "Which is the bigger problem?" until all the possible combinations have been gone through. The results are entered into a table.

Step 5

Analyse the results.

When the participants have finished ranking the information, ask them to interpret the results. Have them identify which criteria are dominant, which are less important, and which item would be given overall priority.

Example: The question is "What is the best …?"

	Chicken	Cow	Goat	Pig
To raise	2	1	5	3
To eat	1	5	3	5
To sell	2	5	2	5

The participants identified four main meat sources and determined that the criteria were what was best to eat, to raise or to sell.

- Goats were the preferred animals to raise, then pigs, then chickens and cows.
- Cows and pigs were the preferred animals to eat, with goats at 3 and chickens at 1.
- Cows and pigs were the preferred animals to sell; goats and chickens were of equal preference.

What does this tell us?

The community raises four types of animals: chickens, goats, pigs and cows. They are raised for three reasons: to raise, to eat or to sell. The community prefers to raise goats, but not to eat or sell them. It prefers to eat or sell cows and pigs. Chickens are not considered good to raise, eat or sell.

Tip

Define the criteria positively e.g. "prevents water pollution" instead of "pollutes water".

Example

Institutional ranking involves producing a diagram identifying the roles and importance of different organizations (both local and external) and the community's perceptions of these organizations. This type of ranking also identifies individuals, groups and organizations that have a role within the context of the issue being examined (e.g. health or disasters) and that can provide assistance to the community in that context.

Steps for this tool

1. In plenary, participants identify 6 to 8 key organizations that have an important role in the community.
2. Each participant then votes according to the importance of the organization, ranking each one from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most relevant and important, and 1 the least.
3. Points are then added for each individual organization, first in the relevance column, then for importance. Then an average value for each column is determined.

The idea of this exercise is to reflect on how some organizations can be very important to the community but could focus more on the needs and development of the community and therefore become more relevant. Similarly, organizations which are perceived to be relevant can increase their level of relevance and therefore their importance to the community.

Note

By **relevance** is meant the degree of participation that these organizations have and offer as benefit to the community; **importance** refers to the importance of the organization relative to others.

Next steps

Use responses from interviews on how the community views a problem to inform planning for intervention. Some of the issues prioritized may be more relevant to local government or non-governmental agencies and should be referred to the appropriate body.

MRS 3
The wall method

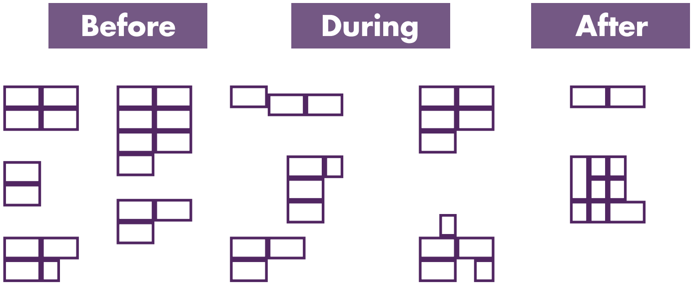
What it is

One of the most simplest ways for communities to analyse VCA-generated data is to use the wall method, first described in the Palestine Red Crescent Society VCA (Abu Awad and Betts-Symonds, eds., 2000). As the name suggests, the method requires the use of the walls of a good-sized room so that large amounts of data can be displayed at one time and then sorted into categories by the volunteers who collected it. The wall-mounted data can then be organized into clusters, whereby a number of similar data bits are grouped together on the wall. In fig. 2 (see p.144) there is an example of small squares in clusters and each small cluster would represent similar ideas. This way people can make sense of lots of information. Once all the data have been assigned to a cluster, it should be possible to spot the main emerging themes.

A group using the wall method to analyse the data they have collected and beginning the clustering of ideas

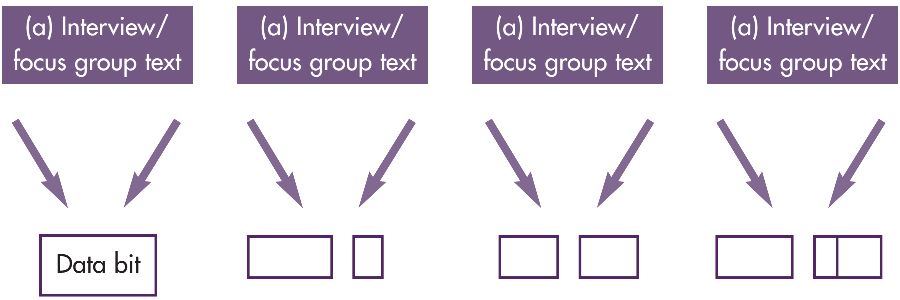
Let us take a working example. Questions are posed to different people either in the form of an interview or a focus group. One of those questions might be: “What could communities do to protect themselves before, during and after a disaster?” The essence of each person’s response is then arranged on the wall, with similar ideas (data bits) placed in clusters (see fig. 2, p. 144).

Figure 2 Clustering ideas on the wall to analyse data



What is said in an interview or a focus group will usually be in the form of sentences expressing one or several ideas. What you need to do first is to reduce or "funnel" this information to capture the main ideas expressed as single words or phrases, so that they can be more easily sorted and similar points grouped. It is important at some stage to check the main points back with the original source to ensure validity (see fig. 3, below).

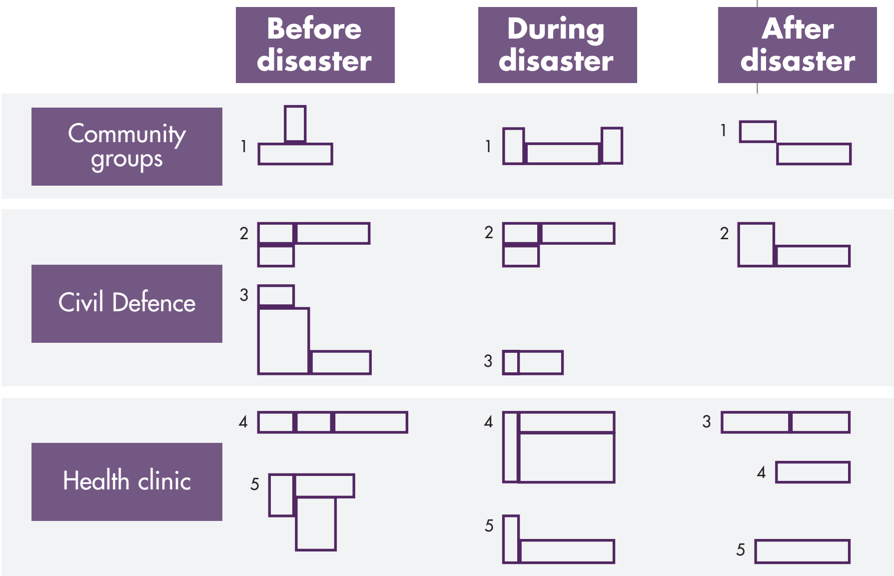
Figure 3 Grouping information from a focus group into four main themes



"Funnelling" is a useful metaphor for data reduction (Betts-Symonds 2007).

From the example (see fig. 4, below) the information that has been organized on the wall, you can see that there are five clusters of data bits for “before disaster”, five for “during disaster” and five for “after disaster”.

Figure 4 **Clustering data bits from three sources into three time periods**



For the purposes of this example, let us take the clusters relating to “before disaster”.

The data provide specific ideas about what communities can do to protect themselves before a disaster occurs. It is important to balance enthusiastic ideas coming from the community with what is realistic. At the same time, it is essential that you record all comments and listen to all ideas from community members, not just the ones you choose or think are good. You can then engage in a collective analysis process with the community in order to come up with the best ideas.

For example, one cluster of ideas might concern "replacing homes that are more earthquake resistant". You can immediately see that there are two issues with this suggestion: first, it does not answer the real question about what communities can do to protect themselves; second, while it is a good idea in an earthquake zone, it is unlikely that it could ever become a National Society project. At most, the National Society could advocate the issue with the government to promote better compliance with building codes. Again, determining what is realistic and realizable and what is not must be done collectively with the community. This will be part of the project identification and planning process that comes out of the VCA.

In order to continue with the example, let us suppose that all participants in the community groups are in agreement with the following four suggestions:

1. Make communities better aware of what to do in homes and schools to protect themselves when an earthquake tremor is felt.
2. Train school teachers in first aid.
3. Make the inside of the house safer by fixing furniture and other large objects to walls and floors.
4. Make a village evacuation plan.

Also, the Civil Defence and health clinic staff each identify two main issues, for example:

Civil Defence

- Learn about safer places in the home during earthquake.
- Fire prevention in the home.

Health clinic

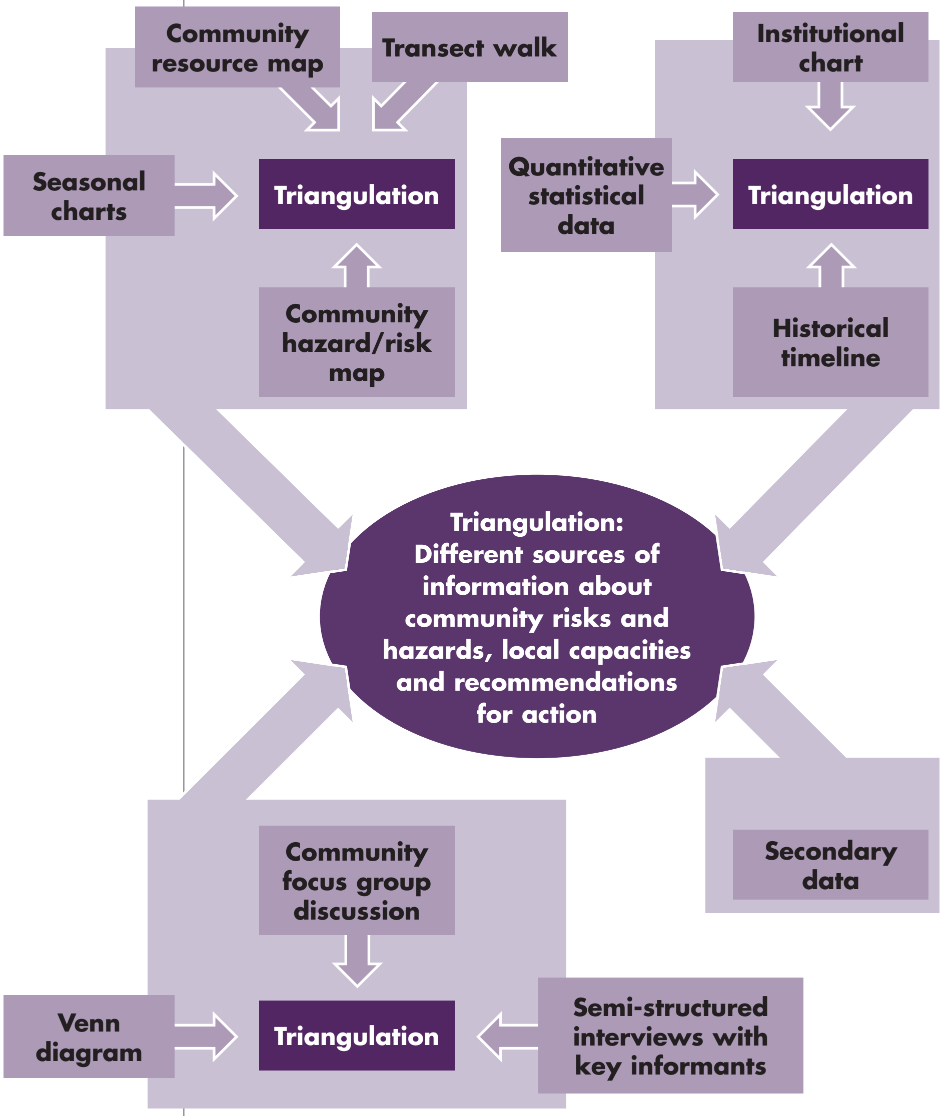
- Learn about basic first aid.
- Prevent disease through the provision of potable water and adequate sanitation.

Now let us assume that you have also asked Community groups, Civil Defence and health clinic staff what communities can do to protect themselves during and after disaster. The data collected from these three sources can be arranged on the wall (see fig. 4, p. 145). Since the three themes of the question are identified as before, during and after, you can allocate three separate places on the walls in the horizontal axis. The three sources, Community groups, Civil Defence and health clinic, are arranged in the vertical axis. What you have are data bits which are similar to each other clustered together from three different sources about three specific themes as time periods (before, during and after disaster).

At this stage in our example, you have data sorted from the local Community group members, the Civil Defence and health clinics. If you take all three sources of information about "what communities can do to protect themselves before disaster", you can look for similarities from which to draw some conclusions. You have thus brought several data sources together and have been able to make sense of the data. Considering data from a number of different sources is called **triangulation**. With triangulation, you need at least three sources of data, which when analysed together support each other's conclusions. Figure 5 (see p. 148) shows groups of triangulated information which can be used on their own or as a further triangulation of multiple sources.

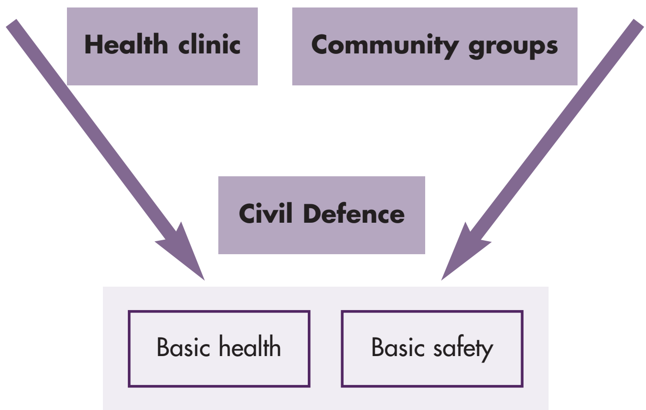
Triangulation of data sources, VCA, Venezuela, 2004

Figure 5 **Triangulation of sources of information**



In a sense, you need to ask yourself: What is the data saying about the question asked? By comparing the three sources of data on the same themes, it is possible to begin to reduce the ideas into some key points relating to community preparedness. The term "reducing data" means taking data from their raw form to a more specific level. The diagram below shows how data from three different sources, each with numerous clustered categories, can be reduced or funnelled into two main themes: those concerning basic health and those concerning basic safety.

Figure 6 Reducing or "funnelling" information



Engaging members of Community groups, Civil Defence and health clinic in identifying small projects that reflect the ideas of all three groups fosters their ownership or "buy-in" of potential projects that might later be proposed.

It is important to double-check the conclusions drawn from this process with the original source of information. This is because when qualitative data is sorted and reduced to themes, the original meaning can be lost or the ideas distorted owing to the analyst's bias.

The simplest way of checking validity is to return to the original source of the data. This can be done by discussing the analysis with the community groups and the expert sources consulted to see if they agree with the sense made of the reduced data. Moreover, information analysed by one person alone is less valid than when it is analysed by a group of people. This is why qualitative community information is best analysed by a focus group which, in this case, can be the VCA team together with selected community members.

Lastly, information gathered from the community needs to be validated with official or secondary sources. This is because some information collected from communities may be based upon belief rather than fact. For example, a community group may prioritize certain hazards and risks according to their beliefs rather than what is scientifically known. Also, a lack of expert knowledge may result in communities identifying solutions that are not necessarily appropriate.

MRS 4
Problem tree

What it is
The problem tree is a flow diagram which shows the relations between different aspects of a particular issue or problem. It can help to build a picture of the major problems facing a community. From there, community members can look for the root causes that need to be addressed in order to reduce vulnerability. This tool can help to give structure when analysing information obtained from other tools.

Use it to...

- Direct participants towards analysis of the situation and to build up a picture of the major problems the community faces.
- Look for the root causes that need to be addressed to reduce vulnerability.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** needs to be able to accurately capture and synthesize the information provided up to this point. He or she should have good skills in prioritizing and ranking information based on the feedback from participants.

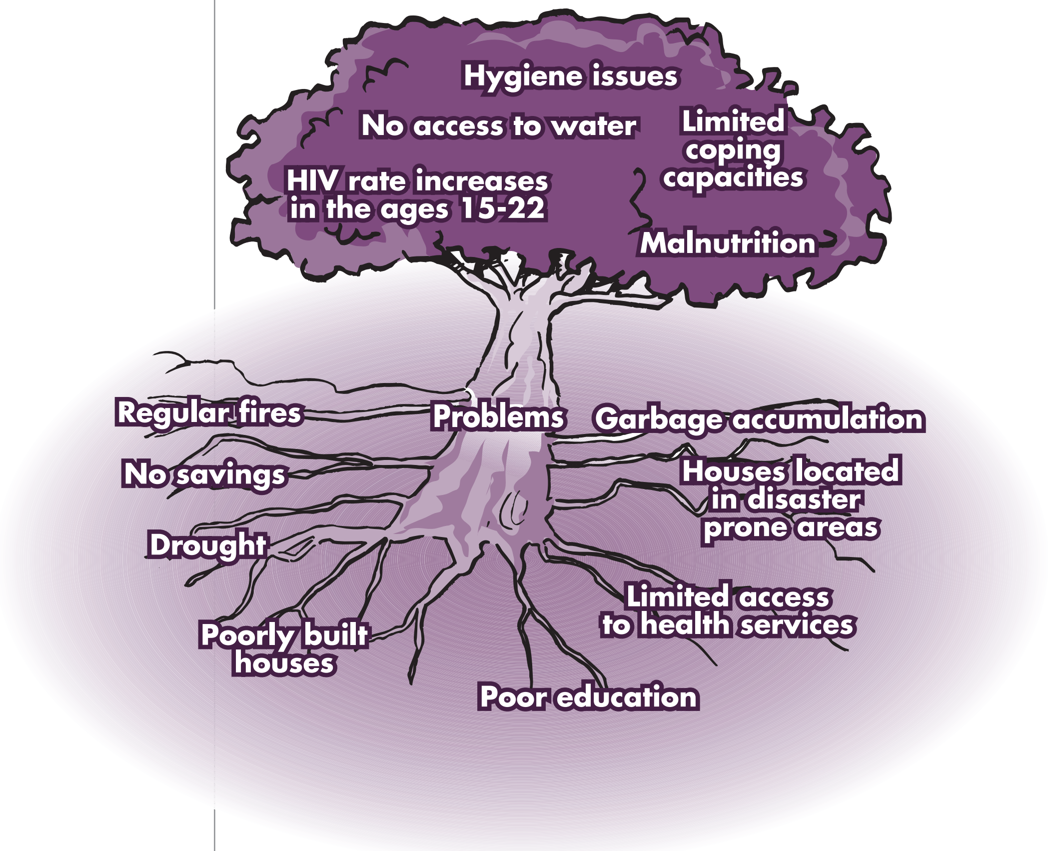
Gender

Men and women have different needs, and the analysis of the information gathered by the different tools should be used to inform the planning of a project. When planning, consider whether the objectives and activities of a programme/project answer the needs of both men and women. Are women and men involved in the identification of problems? What obstacles to the participation of women in a project exist?

How to

- From the information gathered through the use of other tools and interviews, various concerns and problems will have already been identified.
- Give participants small pieces of paper and ask them to write down one major problem on each piece of paper and then stick these on the wall (people can draw problems if they do not know how to read and write).
- Ask two or three volunteers to group the problems according to similarity or inter-relationship.
- Now the drawing of the "problem tree" can start: the trunk represents the problems, the roots are the causes and the leaves are the effects.

Example (from *Make that Change*)



Next steps

Once the problem tree has been created, you can check to see whether other sources of information have identified (and thus verify) the same problems and root causes.

MRS 5
Community meeting

What it is

A community meeting provides the opportunity to gather people together to share information and focus on a specific purpose. A community meeting is an entry point for consulting people and inviting their involvement. It can be a gathering of an entire community or a representative few involved in a specific issue, such as health care workers, youth, government officials, women or vulnerable people. The important thing in a community meeting is that people are comfortable in such a setting and feel able to share their perspectives on common problems and contribute ideas for possible solutions.

A community meeting is different from brainstorming in that it focuses more on a specific topic, but not to the same extent as a focus group discussion, which often involves experts on the topic.

A community meeting

Smaller meetings allow participants to share their views more freely and then have them represented in a larger community setting, where they may not otherwise have the opportunity to express themselves. You do not have to set up an entirely separate meeting; it is possible to include Red Cross Red Crescent matters in an already scheduled meeting, such as a parent-teacher meeting.

Use it to...

- Encourage participation through small group discussions to be fed back into larger groups.
- Get ideas from individuals, especially on planning, setting goals and objectives.
- Create space to discuss ideas focused on a particular topic.
- Introduce the Red Cross Red Crescent and its activities.
- Sensitize the community to a specific topic such as disaster preparedness.
- Identify issues facing the community and discuss solutions.
- Review progress, evaluate programme results and look at recommendations.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** manages the group discussion in which there will be a potentially wide range of opinions and interests. He or she needs to be independent, attentive and a good manager of time and people and to encourage everyone's participation.

Participants contribute their thoughts and ideas, while respecting the thoughts and ideas of others.

Note

It is important in a community meeting not to raise expectations that new goods or services will be provided or that the Red Cross Red Crescent will "fix" all the problems identified. Members of the community should be given the opportunity to discuss their concerns, after which there may be an opportunity to make their expectations more realistic by giving a presentation on the Red Cross Red Crescent, its history, mandate, objectives and activities.

Benefits

Community meetings are an effective way to get a lot of people together in a short time. They allow people to exchange knowledge, ideas and opinions in an open environment.

If an open invitation is given, those who are highly motivated will attend and actively participate.

A targeted community meeting can be an effective way of bringing together people such as women or vulnerable groups who may not otherwise have an opportunity to speak in a large gathering.

Community meetings can help to motivate a group around a common vision, raise awareness of important issues, encourage cooperation and solve problems.

Constraints and pitfalls

It is important to give everyone present an opportunity to contribute to the discussion, but do not force anyone to speak.

If not properly guided, discussions can become prolonged or move away from the objective.

The community or group may put the facilitator in a position of "expert" and expect him or her to carry the whole meeting. Develop methods that foster participation.

Example
Participant: What are the solutions to all the problems we discussed today?
Facilitator: What do you think are some possible solutions?

Gender

Make sure the location is accessible to everyone. Schedule the meeting so that all the intended participants can attend. This may be at different times of day for men and for women. Find ways to draw out the more reticent participants. Consider whether it would be appropriate to hold meetings for men and women separately. Is there a woman who could facilitate or co-facilitate the meeting?

How to

A successful meeting results from careful planning; the following steps are broken down into "before", "during" and "after" a community meeting.

Before

Step 1

Establish a clear purpose.

Define your objective and clearly identify the message you want to get across. Some questions you might ask yourself include:

- Why is it that you want to have a meeting?
- What do you expect to get from this meeting?
- What do you think the community expects to get from this meeting?

Reasons you might want to hold a community meeting include:

- To discuss how the community responds to a disaster such as a hurricane.
- To find out what the community's perspective is on a health issue such as tuberculosis.
- To identify risks and hazards that affect the community, such as flooding or drought.
- To raise awareness of the work of the Red Cross Red Crescent.

Step 2

Review previous meetings.

Review any records of previous meetings related to the chosen topic. What were the decisions made and what were the actions to be taken?

Step 3

Determine the time and the venue.

Arrange a convenient time and place for the meeting. Depending on the purpose, consider the size and composition of the group. Remember that people have different time constraints; women may not be available to attend at the same time as men.

Step 4

Notify participants.

Inform the community or the group of the purpose of the meeting using posters, home visits, public announcements, radio, telephone and/or word of mouth.

Step 5

Choose the presentation style.

Think about the presentation style. Will you sit in a circle and mainly discuss? Will you use overheads/blackboard/flipchart/handouts? Be careful not to assume that people can read.

During

Step 1

Guide the discussion.

State the group's objective or ask a question related to the purpose of the meeting.

Encourage participation from all present, while discouraging negative comments, long contributions by one or two participants or interruptions.

Step 2

Summarize the key points.

At the end of the meeting, summarize the key points either orally, in writing or using pictures to ensure the purpose of the meeting has been met or clarified. Agree on which individual(s) are responsible for taking any actions decided upon in a specified time frame.

Step 3

Agree on a date and time for a follow-up meeting.

The follow-up meeting arranged this time helps to ensure that allocated tasks are completed and reported.

After

Step 1

Write up your notes.

Write a record of the meeting summarizing the key points, decisions made and actions to be taken.

Step 2

Give feedback.

Give the participants feedback on what similar issues were raised during the meeting and probe for more information.

Tip

Ensure the meeting does not depend on technology (e.g. PowerPoint presentation or handouts); keep the information simple and accessible to everyone.

Find out if there are (cultural) norms on how to establish communication with leaders, what is appropriate dress and how the meeting would fit into the daily routine.

Prepare materials in advance to distribute, such as photocopies and handouts, Red Cross Red Crescent publications; check audio-visual aids and electrical outlets or generator power.

Foster a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere. Arrange snacks/drinks when appropriate.

Make the introduction brief, and tailor it specifically to those attending.

Begin and end at the stated times.

Start with items/topics/issues on which it is easy to get agreement or acceptance of differences of opinion.

Allow conflicting views to emerge, being careful to accept differences of opinion, reasoning and knowledge. Do not judge others but ensure people are respectful.

End on a positive note, by summarizing the key points raised.

Next steps

- Follow up with specific individuals to probe further on discussion points they may have brought up related to the topic. For example, a farmer may have commented that his field gets flooded after heavy rain. Consult him to get more ideas on what he thinks is the cause and what options he may have to overcome this risk, and bring this back to the group for further discussion.
- Look at what similar issues were brought up in relation to the topic. What was different?
- What was the main learning from the meeting?
- Use this meeting as a way to inform the project planning process.

MRS 6
Working together

What it is

Red Cross Red Crescent Societies are not the only voluntary organizations that carry out humanitarian work in the community. There are many similar voluntary organizations that conduct humanitarian work under similar circumstances although the focus of the work they carry out may differ. The overall commitment, however, is to the same vulnerable populations in the community.

All organizations working in a community need to share information and pull together the scarce resources in order to better serve vulnerable populations and avoid wastage through duplication. Establishing partnerships with other agencies can increase the benefits to the community. In a successful partnership, two or more organizations will work together on a clearly defined problem to find a common solution.

The International Federation's New Operating Model (IFRC 2006) encourages National Societies to form Operational Alliances. In the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, you can count on all kinds of internal support at local and national levels. Often, Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers working in the community are well aware of the services provided by other organizations. The aim of this reference sheet is to provide a more systematic approach to establishing working relationships with these organizations. You need to be alert and find out what is happening at your level of operation. You can get help, advice, allies, support and ideas from:

- the Red Cross/Red Crescent branch (staff and volunteers);
- your local committee;
- other local community-based organizations;
- the district, province/division/region;
- your National Society headquarters (staff and volunteers);
- the International Federation and ICRC delegations;
- other humanitarian organizations offering similar services.

Use it to...

- Establish networks.
- Share training.
- Promote advocacy.
- Share resources (including tools and indicators).
- Monitor and evaluate.

Benefits

- Improved and better coordinated services at the community level.
- Avoidance of duplication.
- Sharing ideas, training activities, information and resources.
- Dissemination of the Red Cross Red Crescent philosophy and activities.

Some National Societies are involved in Cooperation Agreement Strategy (CAS) processes, whereby National Societies work to achieve more effective cooperation and coordination with their partners. The branch would be involved in that process in relation to international and national partners. It also has similarities with good cooperation practice at community level, so helpful guidance can also be found in the *Guidelines for Improving Cooperation – CAS*, available from the Federation Secretariat.

Constraints and pitfalls

When looking to work in collaboration with an organization at the community level, keep in mind the Fundamental Principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence and ensure that the nature of the partnership does not jeopardize these principles at the community level.

Gender

Does the organization you plan to work with have policies that cover gender, race and other cross-cutting issues? Does it have a code of conduct? What gender-based assessment, planning, programming and evaluation activities does the organization have? Are men and women equally involved?

How to

Step 1

Identify potential partners.

Make a list of other humanitarian/voluntary organizations that operate within your community. This can be operationalized later by creating a database of local organizations. Ensure one person is responsible for keeping the information up to date.

The list of potential partners might include:

Government representatives	Civil society and community-based organizations
■ Local government	■ (I)NGOs
■ Social welfare	■ Youth NGOs (Scouts, Girl Guides)
■ District officials	■ Alliance of YMCAs
■ Health care providers	■ Religious groups
■ Educational offices	■ Schools
■ Police	■ Women's groups
■ State emergency response unit (e.g. FEMA)	
■ Meteorological office	

United Nations and other international organizations and their local representatives	Others
■ UNAIDS ■ UNESCO ■ UNICEF ■ UNHCR ■ WHO ■ WFP ■ World Bank and regional development banks	■ Universities ■ Research institutes, etc

Step 2

Identify the organizations' main activities.

Establish what these other organizations are doing and compare it with your branch activities.

Questions that you might ask an organization include:

- What is the organization's mission and role?
- What is the organization's history? When and why was it formed?
- What projects does the organization undertake?
- How many members are there? Are they active or passive? Is this number increasing or decreasing?
- What sectors does the organization cover (e.g. health, education, vocational training, tracing, disaster preparedness or response, agriculture, environmental work, etc.)?
- What is the organizational structure? (An organigram is a useful tool to see everyone's role and reporting lines in an organization.)
- What is the attendance during meetings?
- How are decisions made?

- How does the organization involve community members in the assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects?
- What kind of assessments has the organization carried out?
- Does the organization distribute material to the community? If yes, what?
- What training programmes does the organization run for its staff? For the community?
- What other organizations does this organization partner with?
- What promotional material does the organization have (e.g. brochures, posters, flyers)?
- What opportunities exist to work or train together?

Step 3

Avoid duplication and dissemination of conflicting information.

Discuss how you would avoid the duplication of effort and the dissemination of conflicting information/messages to the community.

Stakeholder analysis is a tool that can help in analyzing organization's support and facilitate the message conveyed to the communities. To look closely to an organisation's capacity, a SWOT analysis is a powerful technique for determining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of a particular organization or project.

By using this SWOT framework, you can now start drafting an organizational strategy that will help the organization to distinguish itself from others.

Step 4

Draw up an action plan for collaboration on joint projects in your community.

Name of organization	Contact person	Area of cooperation	Timeline
Salvation Army	Mrs X	Could support with their volunteers to disseminate the project as they already work in the community.	Will share information with volunteers at next meeting April 15.
Health clinic	Dr Y	Will provide assistance to any injured person and could also teach first aid.	Is available to do a first-aid course in November.
Police	Constable M	For the specific project no relevance.	Maintain contact and share information on project progress.
Supermarket	Mr J	Can help with the dissemination of the project and for the collection of funds.	Can set up a money collection fund in June.
Ministry of Health	Director	Could facilitate collaboration with other agencies.	Will organize and conduct interagency meeting.
Ministry of Transport	Mr Q	Has offered trucks and transportation for larger projects.	Contact him at least three weeks ahead of time.
UNICEF	Ms C	Provides drugs, vaccine supplies, bed nets and IEC material.	Contact one month in advance of planned activity.
Women's groups	Mrs C	Use their building for the planning meetings.	Is willing to share building Tuesday nights.

The following exercise offers the opportunity to assess the National Society's perception of various oragnizations in relation to their importance in solving a particular problem or in contributing to the potential solution. At the same time, it enables to analyse how close these organizations are to the National Society and to the communities in being able to address their needs.

Organization	How important is the organization in solving the problem?						How close is the organization to community needs?					
Health clinic	4	5	5	4	5	**23**	2	2	1	2	3	**10**
Police	5	5	5	5	3	**23**	1	1	1	2	1	**6**
Supermarket	1	1	1	2	2	**7**	5	5	5	4	5	**24**
Ministry of Health	5	1	1	2	2	**11**	5	5	5	3	5	**23**
Youth organization	3	3	3	2	4	**15**	5	4	5	4	4	**22**
Women's groups	5	5	5	5	4	**24**	1	1	1	1	1	**5**
Etc.												

Step 5

Establish the basis for the partnership.

Sometimes there is a benefit in formalizing a partnership. This is especially true if finances are involved. This can be done through a memorandum of understanding or memorandum of agreement on specific activities to be jointly undertaken.

Next steps

Once you know what other actors exist in your community, you can refer community issues to them when carrying out other programme activities, such as an assessment. During a community mapping exercise, for example, participants might identify drinking water as a problem. Knowing which NGO is responsible for water supply means that you can refer this information to the appropriate people. When planning an activity or intervention, ask yourself if there is an opportunity to collaborate with a partner organization to save on human and financial resources. At the time that you are interested in evaluating the participation of girls in HIV/AIDS programming, another NGO may be interested in examining how the same target group is benefiting from the educational programmes it provides.

Annex:

Better Programming Initiative

Step 1: Context analysis

Programme planning filters[2]

1. Ethnicity

- What are the existing tribes, clans, ethnic groups within the project area?
- What is the size/population of each?
- How do they interact?
- What is the characteristic of each tribal group?
- What are the social affiliations among the various ethnic groupings?
- How do they affect relationships?
- What are the existing tensions/conflicts within tribal groupings?
- What are the causes of conflict/tension?
- What are the gap-bridging factors?
- How were they identified?
- What assistance/intervention is the National Society providing in these areas?
- Who are the specific programme beneficiaries?
- How does National Society assistance affect intra-tribal relationships?
- What can be done to correct/improve on National Society assistance so that it can ease tension/conflict?

2. Language

- What are the local languages within the proposed project area?
- Do people speak the same language because they "belong" together (they are the same tribe) or because they have to (they cannot avoid it)?
- How does the language link or divide them?

[2] Adapted from Collaborative for Development Action's Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) Check-list, originally created at the LCP Workshop in Monrovia, Liberia, 1996.

- Using the local language, how can National Society assistance/activities enhance local capacities for peace?

3. Political beliefs

- What are the political forces/groups within the project area?
- With which political arrangement do people affiliate?
- Do they accept/reject each other?
- How do they relate?
- What are the factors of tensions and connectors?
- Who benefits from National Society assistance?
- Is it one political group or across the political spectrum?
- How do National Society activities impact/affect the relationship among the political forces on the ground?

4. Religion

- What are the main religious affiliations in the project area (Christianity, Islam, animism, others)?
- What is the size/percentage of the population who are followers of each religion?
- Are the different religious groups linked to distinct economic activities or classes?
- How do people from the various religious groups relate?
- Does one faith accept or reject the other?
- How does the National Society assistance reinforce the division or unity (e.g. via schools)?

5. Socio-economic status

- What are the normal economic activities of the people living in the project area (e.g. farmers, teachers, fishermen or small traders)?
- What is the size of the population of each group?
- Do people carry out a specific profession because they are of the same tribe or same religion?
- How do they relate to each other?
- Which group has the most influence/power?
- What is the power-sharing or decision-making mechanism?
- Which socio-economic groups benefit from National Society assistance?
- How does National Society assistance affect the relationship between different socio-economic groups?

- Are all socio-economic groups represented in the National Society membership (governance, management, staff, volunteers)?

6. Age

- What are the different age groups within the project area?
- Are people divided along these lines?
- Which age group has the most influence or power?
- What is the power-sharing mechanism?
- Which age group produces wealth, has control of the wealth or uses the wealth?
- What are the factors of tension/conflict and connectors amongst the age groups?
- What age groups benefit from National Society's assistance?
- How do others who do not benefit view National Society's assistance?
- How does National Society assistance affect the relationship among groups?

7. Gender

- What is the proportion of women in the population in the project area?
- What role do women play in the local economy and decision-making process?
- Who produces wealth, men or women?
- Who controls the wealth?
- How does vulnerability affect men and women?
- Do women have equal opportunities to men?
- Do women have a say in matters that affect their lives?
- Do men and women have shared responsibilities or do the women do most of the work?
- How do men relate to women?
- Who benefits from National Society assistance? Men? Women? How?
- How is National Society assistance helping to empower women?
- How is National Society assistance contributing to an equitable attitude between men and women?
- If it is not, how can National Society assistance be improved to impact positively on such attitudes?

Better Programming Initiative: Identifying tensions/dividers and connectors/LCPs

- What are the tensions/dividers and connectors/local capacities for peace (LCPs) at work in the situation?
- What things divide people in this area?
- What are the sources of intergroup tension?
- What things connect people in this area?
- What are the LCPs in this area?

Tensions/dividers	Connectors/LCPs

Some key questions to identify dividers	Some key questions to identify connectors
What are the differences between groups which cause friction? ■ Ethnicity ■ Differing lifestyle/occupation ■ Religion ■ Political affiliation ■ Different class/status	■ What systems or institutions are of shared interest across lines of conflict? ■ What shared values or interests exist between the groups? ■ What attitudes or activities reduce violence or promote reconciliation? ■ How did the community resolve disputes in the past?

Inside/outside the community	
What actions are individuals or groups taking which lead to tension or violence? What attitudes exist which worsen relations between the groups or lead to violence?	

Categorizing tensions and connectors

Group tensions/dividers and connectors/LCPs identified earlier under the five categories:

Categories	Tensions/dividers	Connectors/LCPs
Systems and institutions		
Attitudes and actions		
Shared values and interests		
Common experiences		
Symbols and occasions		

Step 2: Mapping your aid programme

Mandate

Fundraising

HQ organization

Why?
Why this aid programme? What are the stated and unstated objectives?

Where?
In what region? What are the characteristics of the region?

Who?
Who are the beneficiaries? What are the criteria to choose beneficiaries and who chooses them? How many beneficiaries does the programme aim to assist?

What?
What are the programme's resources and/or non-material contributions (e.g. training)?

When?
When will the programme start and end? At what season? Time of proposed programme in relation to emergency events, harvest, etc.

By whom?
Who are the staff (local and expatriate)? How are they selected?

With whom?
Who are partners? How were they chosen?

How?
Give a detailed description of all that is involved in getting the aid to beneficiaries. What are the steps used?

Step 3: How does aid have an impact on the context?

Aid always becomes part of the context. Intervention will always have an impact (positive or negative) on the dividers and connectors. The question is not if, but how:

- Will this action aggravate a division or lessen one?
- Will this action reinforce a connector or weaken one?

Resource transfers

Material resources may be what are fought over and what is fought with.

- **Theft**: Aid resources may be stolen or taxed by actors who use them to support the conflict.
- **Distribution**: Aid is given to some people and not others. The selection of beneficiaries may mirror the divisions in the context and inadvertently increase the tensions between groups.
- **Market effects**: Aid's resources influence wages, prices and profits. These can reinforce conflict or economic interdependence.
- **Substitution effects**: Aid takes the place of resources that should be used to meet civilian needs, allowing these to go to the war effort.
- **Legitimization effects**: Aid can legitimize some people and activities and delegitimize others. These impacts may reinforce conflict.

Implicit ethical messages

- Are we reinforcing the belief that arms = power through our use of private security firms?
- Do we promote disrespect, mistrust and competition through turf wars with other agencies or through attitudes to local people, staff or authorities?

- Does personal use of Movement assets (vehicles, etc.) convey impunity, i.e. if you control resources you can do what you like?
- Through the programme's standards and actions, do we communicate a different value for different lives – for example that expatriate lives are worth more than local lives?
- Do we give the impression of powerlessness or non-responsibility when we say "It's the donors" "It's Geneva" "I can't do anything about it"?
- Does our reporting and fundraising use negative, sensational publicity, reinforcing demonization and undermining dignity?

Analysing aid's negative impacts	Analysing aid's positive impacts
The ways aid can worsen conflict include:	The ways aid can lessen conflict include:

Understanding aid's impact on conflict through resource transfers

Identify your aid programme's impacts on tensions/dividers and connectors/LCPs in each of the five resource transfer categories. Under each type of resource transfer, briefly describe the applicable situation (e.g., "Prices have risen for staples", "Five vehicles were stolen and used by armed groups"). Then for each of the five types of resource transfer, identify the real or potential impact of the aid programme on dividers and connectors.

Resource transfers	Tensions/dividers	Connectors/LCPs
Theft		
Markets		
Distribution		
Substitution		
Legitimization		

Understanding aid's impact on conflict through implicit ethical messages

There are seven categories of implicit ethical messages (IEMs) involved in the giving of aid. Consider your aid programme. Identify the impact of its IEMs on tensions/dividers and connectors/LCPs. Under each type of IEM, briefly describe the applicable situation. Then for each one, identify the real or potential impact of the aid programme on dividers and connectors.

Implicit ethical messages	Tensions/dividers	Connectors/LCPs
Arms and power		
Disrespect, mistrust, competition		
Impunity		
Different values for different lives		
Powerlessness		
Belligerence, tension, suspicion		
Publicity/funding		

Step 4: Find alternative options

Generating programming options: tensions

How can you design the aid programme in such a way as to reduce the tensions/dividers?

Programming options	Impact on dividers (as identified earlier) "+" or "-" impact	Likely impacts on tensions/dividers
1		
2		
...		

Generating programming options: connectors

How can you design the aid programme in such a way as to increase the connectors/LCPs?

Programming options	Impact on connectors (as identified earlier) "+" or "-" impact	Likely impacts on connectors/LCPs
1		
2		
...		

Step 5: Repeat the analysis

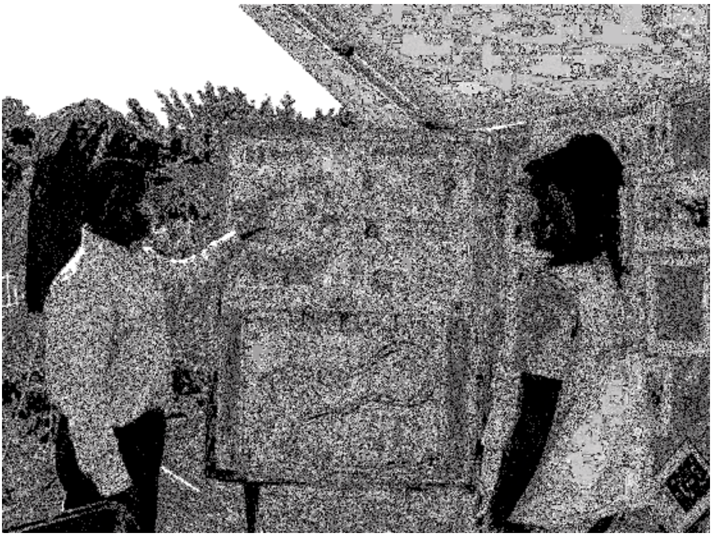
The analytical process can be validated, resumed and simplified through the following chart:

	Aid's impact "+" or "-"	Options	Probable impact
Dividers			
Connectors			

Use other BPI resources

Three other key resources support the use of this BPI training manual:

- Anderson, Mary B., (1999) *Do no harm: How aid can support peace – or war.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Anderson, Mary B. (ed.), (2000) *Options for aid in conflict: Lessons from field experience.* Cambridge MA: Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. (http://www.cdainc.com)
- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, (2003) *Aid: Supporting or undermining recovery? Lessons from the BPI,* International Federation, Geneva.
- International Federation, (2005) *BPI Trainers Manual.*
- Model for Creating Sensitive Change (IFRC 2006, 2007).



Community VCA, Jamaica, 2003

References

Abu Awad and Betts-Symonds, Graham (eds.) (2000), Palestine Red Crescent Society VCA

Anderson, Mary B. (ed.) (2000) *Options for aid in conflict lessons from field experience,* Cambridge MA: Collaborative for Development Action, Inc., (http://cdainc.com/dnh/publications.php)

Betts-Symonds, Graham (2004), VCA Toolbox – *Collecting & Analysing Your VCA Data,* International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva

Betts-Symonds Graham 2007 "*From Information to Transformation: Chaos Theory and Reflection Practice for Teaching and Learning for the Management of Change*", Doctoral Thesis, University of Surey, UK

Catholic Relief Services (1999), *Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal Manual*, K. Freudenberger

Dent, Judith (1996), "Stumbling Toward Gender Aware PRA Training in Indonesia", *PLA Notes* (1996), Issue 25, pp. 19–22, IIED London, available at: http://www.iied.org/sarl/pla_notes/pla_backissues/documents/plan_02505_ 000.PDF

Development Association for Self-reliance, Communication and Health Participatory Rural Appraisal on Health

Dilts Robert (1991), Changing Belief Systems with NLP, Meta Publications, California

FAO (1990), The community's toolbox: *The idea, methods and tools for participatory assessment, monitoring and evaluation in community forestry*, D'Arcy Davis Case, available at http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/x5307e/x5307e00.htm

Gelfand, Jan, Reports on VCA training of trainers in Trinidad and Tobago (2003), Tanzania (2003) and Guatemala (2004)

Gelfand, Jan (1994), "*Participating in Social Change*" M.Sc. thesis, University of Alberta

Golafshani, Nahid (2003), "Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research", *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597-607, retrieved 9 October 2005 from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Guidelines for Improving Cooperation – CAS

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Participatory Community Development Guide

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2005), Harmonized Community Tool Box, Geneva, Stephanie Bouris

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2005), Serie "Es mejor prevenir" training material, Panama Regional Delegation - Xavier Castellanos and Jose Bonilla

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Aid: Supporting or undermining recovery? Lessons from the BPI.* Geneva: International Federation, 2003 Sean Deely

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2005), BPI Trainers Manual, Iñigo Barrena, Juan Saenz, Douglas Reymer, Sean Deely

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2003), Make that Change: Community Based Disaster Management, Trinidad and Tobago Sub-regional Office, Xavier Castellanos principal author

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (1999), Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment: An International Federation Guide and Toolbox

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (1999), Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Toolbox

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2006), The Federation of the Future, working together for a better tomorrow

Indian Red Cross Society (2004), Training of Trainers, Curriculum for Community Based Disaster Management

International Institute for Environment and Development Participatory Learning and Action

InterWorks (2001), Disaster Management Community Baseline Data, Jim Good and Charles Dufresne, www.interworksmadison.com

Ross, John (1999) Ways of Approaching Research: Quantitative Designs, http://www.fortunecity.com/greenfield/grizzly/432/rra2.htm

Taylor-Powell, Ellen, and Steele, Sara (1996), Collecting Evaluation Data: Direct Observation, Cooperative Extension-Program Development and Evaluation, Publications G3658-5, University of Wisconsin

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

PROTECTING **HUMAN** DIGNITY

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies promotes the humanitarian activities of National Societies among vulnerable people.

By coordinating international disaster relief and encouraging development support it seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

The International Federation, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

84700/3 07/2007 E 1,000