

Belize Red Cross Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Workshop

Location:	Belize City, Belize; field trip West Bay
Date:	9-14 January 2005
Sector focus:	Disaster risk management
Spatial focus:	National level training of trainers

Bibliographical reference

Xavier Castellanos, Nicole Williams, Maria Angelita, and Hubert Pierre, *Belize Red Cross Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Workshop*. Belize Red Cross, 2005.

Abstract

This was a national level training of trainers and facilitators with participants drawn from the branches of the Belize Red Cross and civil society.

Also representatives from several Caribbean Red Cross societies and national and local government officials took part in this training exercise. Over six days participants worked in four sub-groups and in plenary. They not only learned a variety of methods for VCA (see below), but also tapped their own in country experience to develop an overview of hazards, vulnerability and capacity in Belize as a whole. This also provided an opportunity for stakeholders for different parts of Belize to network with each other.

Technical description

Hazard/risk type: Drought, hurricane, structural fire, HIV, flood, earthquake

Type of assessment: Hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessment; causal analysis of risk as function of vulnerability, capacity, and hazard; situational analysis of potential for mitigative action (“turning vulnerabilities into capacities”); action planning.

CRA process

CRA process was imbedded into an intensive training course that covered varieties of data collection of use in planning risk reduction. Participants tapped their own experience by practicing the use of CRA methods on one another and then in real life during the field trip.

Methods used: Historical profile; seasonal calendar; institutional and social analysis (e.g. what institutions are relevant to dealing with particular hazards in a given community and which of these are closest to the community, e.g. accessible?); assessment of organizational capacities, community mapping; direct observation; participant observation; key informant interviewing; structured questionnaire survey; analysis and decision making for “turning vulnerabilities into capacities”.

Was livelihood analysis used? No.

Was external specialist knowledge introduced? GIS was mentioned and the trainers brought specialist knowledge of survey methods. Also government specialist agencies participated (planning and housing, social development, disaster management agency).

Vulnerability analysis

Tools introduced in training and used in the field trip functioned at the community wide scale, and there was not inquiry concerning household or intra-household vulnerability (e.g. differentiation by income, gender, health status, age, etc.).

Capacity analysis

Resources available: Financial resources: Belize Red Cross; Human resources: specialist trainers from the IFRC and also technical staff from several other Caribbean Red Cross Societies and from the national Belize Red Cross.

Limitations to capacity: N.A.

Action planning and implementation

What actions were actually planned? At the end of the field trip portion of the training course, actual pre-planning was developed in relation to the flooding hazard in West Side. Three approaches were investigated systematically by discussion for each intervention. The three approaches (sets of interventions) were:

- ♦ Temporary relocation of the residents and the building of sea walls
- ♦ Public education and city council activity to clean and maintain storm drains
- ♦ Building a canal to drain water into the sea.

These approaches were not mutually exclusive, and all involved the necessity of considerable participation by the affected communities.

What actions were actually carried out? As this exercise was carried out only in January 2005, it is too early to tell. The communities concerned recently visited Belize Red Cross and requested that the process would be continued. Belize Red Cross is currently developing a concrete action plan while the IFRC has started negotiating with the Caribbean Development Bank to finance risk reduction activities in these communities and is also discussing funding for additional VCAs.

Have these actions turned out to be sustainable? N/A

Were there any unanticipated additional benefits of the actions? Networking among the Belize Red Cross branch volunteers and contact with St. Lucia Red Cross. Improved links with local and national government organizations and other Caribbean Red Cross national societies. Following the training, a team of trainees went to Grenada to support the RC in implementing VCAs in communities affected by Hurricane Ivan.

Were there any unanticipated negative consequences of the actions? None.

Limitations on action/sustainability of actions: Financial limitations are probably the greatest limitation in addition to the fact that many of the organizations, including the Belize Red Cross, depend on volunteers who themselves have severe limitations on their time.

Indicators

It is too early to say if the training in January 2005 has had direct risk reduction consequence.

Contextual notes

Existence/role of prior or contemporaneous conflict? No.

Role of displacement/relocation. Historically there has been in migration from Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Role of prior disaster & prior recovery attempts? A cholera outbreak the previous year, 2004, that took 10 lives (3 adults and 7 children) in a community of 3,500 people, is bound to have raised awareness of the need to mitigate hazard.

Significant historical, geographic, economic, political, or cultural issues that influenced this instance of CRA and its consequences? As former British Honduras, Belize was the site of politico-military tension with surrounding countries. Its coastal location and many waterways leave it prone to storm and flooding; while small settlements in the hinterland are not well connected to the major towns. Typical of vulnerability in Belize was the impact of hurricane Keith in late 2000, when many rivers flooded, wells were contaminated, insect disease vectors multiplied, and small settlements were cut off.¹

Strategic notes

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at the national level? This was a training exercise aimed at Belize Red Cross staff and their partners. However, at the opening ceremony representatives from the Prime Minister's office were present as well as key government officials. All of them recognized the importance of this type of training and the approach taken. As a result, there may be some further impact on policy and practice at government level.

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at local level? In the jurisdictions where the Belize Red Cross staff and volunteers are located, there is now better connection with other organizations and skills for systematic VCA have been developed.

How has this practice of CRA influenced the level of organization and solidarity in the locality where it was carried out? Since the only contact with local organizations and ordinary people came during the brief field trip portion of this training exercise, long lasting impacts are highly unlikely.

Less divided along class, gender, age, ethnic lines? N/A

More divided along these lines? N/A

Are the people living in this area more able to speak out on issues that concern them N/A

Have new civil society organizations been created directly or indirectly because of this practice of CRA? No, but linkages among organizations were strengthened.

Lessons learned

- ♦ CRA training can also be used to strengthen organizational links among partner organizations.
- ♦ CRA training can simultaneously function as the catalyst for actual disaster reduction planning, as through the field trip component in this case.

Keywords

Hurricane, drought, flood, earthquake, HIV/AIDS, fire, training of trainers, networking

Resource person(s)

Xavier Castellanos, former Regional IFRC Delegate for the Caribbean, Panama City, Panama, currently at IFRC headquarters, Geneva, email: Xavier.castellanos@ifrc.org.

¹ IFRC, "Belize: Hurricane Keith Appeal No. 29/2000 Situation Report No. 3," *ReliefWeb* www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/OCHA-64BHYD?OpenDocument .