

## Vulnerability Capacity Assessment Community: Village A

**Location:** Village A, Country X

**Date:** May 2006

**Sector focus:** Multi-hazard risk reduction

**Spatial focus:** Community Level

*To protect the community, all indicators of reference for this publication have been removed. All information in this guidance note is based on an actual Red Cross Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment 'Learning by Doing' exercise.*

### Abstract

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Village A has fewer than 1,000 inhabitants in the Northern part of Country X. Through the network of Country X Red Cross staff and volunteers, a Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA) was carried out in 2006. The objectives of the VCA were twofold: 1) offer to the national society the opportunity to better understand community needs and 2) jointly identify potential solutions with the communities, based on existing capacities and skills at community level.

This publication highlights the lessons learned through the process of undertaking the VCA in one community. The document explains which participatory tools were used to collect data, and how that data was interpreted. Participatory approaches include mapping, focus group discussions, transect walks and direct observation conducted with children, youth, men and women and elderly community members. The document contains colourful maps as well as tables showing the process of narrowing the initially identified vulnerabilities to key community priorities then setting action items to reduce vulnerability. The method of CIA (change, influence and action) is applied to prioritize activities in the community.

The main natural hazards identified were cyclones, floods and drought, however there is also consideration of health issues, deforestation, and poor infrastructure.

No particular end users are specified in the document; however it would be useful for **branch and volunteers of the Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, community development workers, local government** and **NGOs**. This project will be of interest to those working with rural, isolated communities, although more consideration of the interaction and influence of the government and political system would benefit similar projects in the future.

### Technical description

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**Hazard/risk type:** Drought, food insecurity, house fires, HIV/AIDS

**Type of assessment:** Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA) and action planning

## CRA process

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**Methods used:** Direct observation, spatial map, vulnerability-risk map, capacities and resource map, transect walk, historical chart, seasonal calendar, historical profile, focus group with women, youth, children and elders, triangulation. These provide input on hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities to then develop actions for transformation.

**Was livelihood analysis used?** No. A thorough analysis was not used, however aspects of livelihood were considered during the transect walk. This took into consideration agricultural practices, livestock, water reservoirs, education and community mobilization.

**Was external specialist knowledge introduced?** Specialist external knowledge was introduced by IFRC representatives from Geneva and the Regional delegation who facilitated the VCA training and assessment for the core staff and the national society volunteers.

## Vulnerability analysis

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An assessment of vulnerability was carried out, however there was little analysis. There is no analysis of the root causes of poverty or the vulnerabilities identified. Additionally, the role of the government and its impact on the local community was not taken into consideration.

## Capacity analysis

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**Resources available:** *Human Resources:* knowledge and practice of water harvesting and storage techniques. The publication mentions that in the village, social interaction and level of organization is high however it does not detail new or existing committees or organizational structures as a result of this project. *Infrastructure:* Elementary school with capacity for 300 students, smokeless stoves. *Agricultural Resources:* food security through uninterrupted access to grain products. Tree farming, and raising domesticated animals (cattle, donkeys, goats, sheep, and chickens). *Economic Resources:* Access to a weekly market to sell and purchase local products.

**Limitations to capacity:** Poor sanitation infrastructure, accumulation of garbage, significant amounts of dust, lack of access to water (the community well is 7km from the village), lack of family latrines, poor roads, nearest health care facility is 2 hours walk, no secondary school,

## Action planning and implementation

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**What actions were actually planned?** There were nearly 70 activities planned for 18 identified areas of vulnerability through this project. These activities covered issues ranging from health issues such as access to potable water, health facilities, female circumcision, road accidents and malaria, to infrastructure issues such as vulnerability of housing foundations during flooding, waste and sanitation management, education facilities and road quality. Through the process of CIA (change, influence and action), 5 key categories were identified by committees of community leaders, women and young adults and prioritised in terms of short, medium, and long-term actions for transformation.

**What actions were actually carried out?** Since the assessment, many of the projects have been implemented. Among these, 30 community members have been trained in basic First Aid and road safety. Five family latrines were constructed to serve as demonstration sites. Thirty women were trained in home management, and a dam has been constructed to serve Village A.

**Have these actions turned out to be sustainable?** Due to instability in the region of Country X, activities were suspended following the report. It is therefore not possible to measure the short-term

impact, however when the situation stabilizes, the national society will better be able to evaluate the sustainability of activities undertaken.

**Were there any unanticipated additional benefits of the actions?** Capacity of staff and volunteers improved with regards to how to prepare a plan of action. Based on the augmented and newly developed skills of the volunteers and staff of the national society, future VCAs will be able to be carried out in other communities. There was also good documentation of the VCA process which will benefit future actions.

**Were there any unanticipated negative consequences of the actions?** Due to the nature of the instability in Country X, the document was not shared with all stakeholders. In light of this, it is not known the extent of unanticipated negative consequences.

**Limitations on action/sustainability of actions:** Lack of funds to implement activities, undertaking a VCA in 2006 when activities had already been projected and planned in 2005, and instability in Country X limited the possibility to implement or make sustainable the actions undertaken as a result of the VCA.

## Indicators

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There were no indicators specifically mentioned, however one could look at the loss of lives, livestock and economic impact on subsequent floods, cyclones and drought in the village before and after risk reduction projects are implemented.

## Contextual notes

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**Existence/role of prior or contemporaneous conflict?** In recent history, Country X has endured conflict with its neighbouring country.

**Role of displacement/relocation.** Unknown.

**Role of prior disaster & prior recovery attempts?** In addition to ongoing conflict along the border, the worst ever drought in recent history occurred in 2002. This had significant impact on crop production, access to potable water, health and nutrition however no further details are provided in this document.

**Significant historical, geographic, economic, political, or cultural issues that influenced this instance of CRA and its consequences?** Village A is near the country's capital but has poor road infrastructure. The history of conflict with the neighbouring country has had serious impact on economy, access to resources and basic needs. The highest rate of deforestation occurred during the war when trees were used to build trenches. This village is located in a hilly, dusty and rocky area where 95% of the 205 families are subsistence agrarian farmers.

## Strategic notes

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**How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at the national and local level?** The government of Country X currently restricts humanitarian work, so there is little potential for influence between CRA and policy practice or change at the national or local level.

**How has this practice of CRA influenced the level of organization and solidarity in the locality where it was carried out?**

- ◆ The community members were able to identify their problems and prioritize their needs in their respective area.
- ◆ The community was influenced that they could benefit from the planned activities.
- ◆ The community was committed to participate in the designed of the activities.

### **Less divided along class, gender, age, ethnic lines?**

- ◆ Ethnic lines were not affected as the community was from one ethnic group.

**Are the people living in this area more able to speak out on issues that concern them?** Not evaluated.

**Have new civil society organizations been created directly or indirectly because of this practice of CRA?** The publication mentions that in the village, social interaction and level of organization is high however does not detail new or existing committees or organizational structures as a result of this project.

### **Lessons learned**

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- ◆ The participatory process is essential for identifying vulnerabilities and prioritizing actions for transformation in the community
- ◆ Consultation with diverse participants including men, women, children, youth and the elderly provides a more complete picture of the capacities and vulnerabilities which exist in the community
- ◆ A key strength of the community is their ability to organize and have social interaction to implement activities that benefit everyone

### **Keywords**

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Drought, food insecurity, house fires, HIV/AIDS, participation, social network, health access.

### **Resource person(s)**

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For more information on the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment 'Learning by Doing' process, please contact Xavier Castellanos, Deputy Head of Americas Zonal Office, IFRC Zonal Office Panama, [xavier.castellanos@ifrc.org](mailto:xavier.castellanos@ifrc.org)