

Fieldwork “Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Workshop”

Location:	The communities of Nuestra Señora del Carmen zona 12 y Anexo Forestal zona 13, Guatemala
Date:	2005
Sector focus:	Multi- hazard analysis, community based Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
Spatial focus:	Community level

Bibliographical reference

Vulnerability and capacity Assessment report from ProVention project: Guatemala Red Cross (RC), Nuestra Señora del Carmen and Anexo Forestal case studies, included in the compilation of case studies (CD-ROM) *Análisis de vulnerabilidades y capacidades en proyectos de educación comunitaria* (VCA in community education projects), Centre of Reference for Community Based Disaster Preparedness Education, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Similar case studies from Guatemala city developed by the RC can be found in the same compilation: Anexo 4 de Febrero Zona 7 y Puerta del Jardín, Zona 18

<http://www.cruzroja.org/desastres/redcamp/crrec/tcomuni.htm>

Abstract

This case study systematises the fieldwork process developed by Guatemala RC to analyse the level of community risk in some areas of Guatemala City. It identifies people’s perceptions about potential hazards, existing vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms. A multi-disciplinary team was organised to implement the CRA. The team used several vulnerability and capacity assessment tools incorporated in the International Federation VCA toolbox, but putting a special emphasis on the household survey.

The analysis of data collected through VCA tools is used to identify existing vulnerabilities. The information is then incorporated in a framework where hazards, vulnerabilities, capacities are linked in order to find out the existing risk to each hazard. A final community workshop allows the NS to identify actions for transformation.

The case study starts with an introduction to the historical and socio-economical context; it continues with the results of the analysis and ends with the local plan proposed as a consequence of the VCA process.

Technical description

Hazard/risk type: Hurricanes, landslides, earthquakes, floods, fires, insects (interestingly perceived by the community as a hazard for being a factor of transmission of diseases like dengue and malaria), environmental contamination

Type of assessment: Multi-hazard analyses. Community based vulnerability and capacity assessment focus on field visit and the use of participatory tools

CRA process

The criteria used by the Guatemala RC and Municipality staff to select the communities were:

- Existence of previous disaster experiences
- Placed within the city perimeter
- With a *Comité Único de Barrio (CUB)* Neighbour Committee.
- Previous working experience with some organisations
- Population's interest and commitment to participate in the project.

Methods used: A MoU was signed with the municipality of Guatemala in order to implement the VCA in selected communities. 17 social volunteers from different organisations, the Disaster Reduction National Coordination Agency (CONRED), the Municipality of Guatemala, San Carlos University of Guatemala and Guatemala RC Guatemala city branch, participated in the organisation of community workshops.

Household surveys were organised in each community In order to know the number of families, the type of houses and the existing basic services (water, electricity, draining system, etc.). Additionally, the following tools were selected among the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent's VCA toolbox: direct observation, secondary data, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, historical profile, historical calendar, seasonal calendar, institutional and social analysis, Venn diagrams, mapping (spatial, hazards, vulnerability and resource maps) and actions for transformation frame (transform vulnerabilities into capacities)

Was livelihood analysis used? Not specifically, but through the secondary sources and the household analysis the VCA team was able to provide a general idea of people's livelihood within the context analysis. In the case of Anexo Forestal, the household survey provided information about people's livelihood: most of the population work in neighboring industries, in La Aurora airport or selling vegetables.

Was external specialist knowledge introduced? Not from external specialist. But the multi-agency collaboration in the VCA process allowed Guatemala RC to use the human and institutional capacities of its stakeholders. Material provided by Municipality's Social Development Direction was crucial to the analysis.

Vulnerability analysis

The analysis revealed that some elements increased community vulnerabilities in relation to specific hazards as landslides and earthquakes. Among them the difficult topography; the fact that most of the people live close to the ravine, the high deforestation degree due to construction of houses and lack of reforestation; the bad condition of embankments (most of them broken and with inappropriate structures), etc. The electric wires are very close to homes, and there is only one access to the community, which increases the risk of fires and makes more difficult the evacuation and access to emergency teams.

In the other hand, the vulnerability related to environmental contamination is identified by the bad management of solid garbage by some families, the lack of maintenance of cesspits, the existence of sewage rivers and gas emanation. In addition houses are very close to sewage, there is a lack of

adequate sanitation systems and lack of awareness about garbage management which increase the risk of water related diseases. It is interesting to note that the proliferation of insects for the same reasons is perceived by community as a hazard due to high rate of dengue cases.

Capacity analysis

Resources available: The VCA assessment is part of the first phase of an IFRC, Central American Red Cross National Societies, OAS and ProVention project. In Nuestra Señora del Carmen, there is a participatory and well organised community. There are close relationships and communication with the municipality of Guatemala. There are alternative shelters and the access to the community is in a good condition. It is important to underline the existing strong relations between neighbours and the community management capacities. In Anexo Forestal; the existence of health volunteers in the community is an important resource. Thanks to the intervention of the Health Centre of Area 11, through its dissemination campaigns, dengue or malaria epidemics have been avoided so far. The community has a neighbour subcommittee which works with the committee of another neighbourhood and municipality. This subcommittee is well organised and immediately try to solve community problems.

Limitations to capacity: Particularly in the community Anexo Forestal, there is not any public or private institution present, which reduces the level of services and support they receive.

Action planning and implementation

Activities are identified through a transformation matrix that shows how vulnerabilities can turn into capacities. Those activities constitute the basis of a local development plan where each action is attached to the organisation responsible to develop it. In most of the activities the RC has advocating role while the activities proposed to RC for the next phase are related to community based disaster preparedness.

What actions were actually planned?

Different actions were planed in each community according to the results of the VCA process. In El Carmen; the community plan recommends to coordinate with the municipality the maintenance of existing protection walls and the construction of new structures. To advocate with the electric company to improve the wire network was also proposed. More concrete actions were requested to the Guatemala RC like risk awareness campaigns and community education in community health and hygiene.

Similarly in Anexo Forestal the same community requested the implementation of risk reduction measures, like community and household training in disaster preparedness and risk awareness raising campaigns, particularly among the population living in the river banks. In order to improve the sanitation and garbage management, the assessment recommended the Municipality to improve the sanitation system and to the RC to develop, together with community committee, a community health campaign and to create a garbage management strategy to be implemented by all actors.

What actions were actually carried out?

Even though not particular action has been carried out the VCA participatory approach and the MoU signed with the Municipality of Guatemala provide a good prospect to the implementation of identified activities by the municipality, other stakeholders and the RC itself through the second phase of the project.

Have these action turned to be sustainable?

This will depend on the second phase of the project when Guatemala RC will start implementing proposed local projects.

Were there any unanticipated additional benefits of the action?

The VCA process has created a new collaborative environment. The Guatemala RC has received the request of local and national organisations to be involved in the process. The value of sharing information has been recognised by the National Society which can encourage more coordinated and collaborative actions in the future.

Were there any unanticipated negative consequences of the actions?

N.A.

Limitations on action/sustainability of actions:

Budget restrictions and delays, which would mean the lost of momentum created by the participatory approach, can be a limitation to the implementation of proposed actions. The strong migration pressure is an element to be considered in order to avoid the creation of new risks, particularly by the construction of new houses in risk areas.

Indicators

- The VCA process has been the result of the collaboration of key organisations (the Disaster Reduction National Coordination Agency (CONRED), the Municipality of Guatemala, San Carlos University of Guatemala and Guatemala RC Guatemala city branch) and the community.
- The information collected and analysed has raised the risk awareness in the community. This has been reflected in the local plans where the community has requested risk reduction and disaster preparedness measures.
- Each community where the VCA process has been implemented has local plans agreed by all actors, particularly the community.

The implementation of the second phase (micro-projects according to local plans), the participation of other organisations in the local plan and community involvement in the process will show the positive or negative effects of the CRA process.

Contextual notes

Existence/role of prior or contemporaneous conflicts?

Guatemala has faced 36 years of conflict (1960-1996) whose consequences, several hundred thousands people killed and millions displaced, are deeply rooted in the memory of its inhabitants, particularly among indigenous population and women. The peace process and democracy has faced long periods of instability, challenged by political and economic crises, which has also increased social and criminal violence.

Role of displacement/relocation.

Guatemala city has grown due to the migration phenomena. 45% of inhabitants are migrants looking for better opportunities and lives, which unfortunately the city cannot provide to all of them.

In Guatemala the settlement creation starts after a disaster. In Guatemala particularly 2 types of disasters are considered: the first one as a consequence of natural hazards, specially the 1976 earthquake, and the second one, of man made origin (war). Both affected wide areas of national territory and motivated different level of response to support the human settlement created by the displacement of population that those disasters generated.

Role of prior disaster & prior recovery attempts?

Anexo Forestal community suffered the consequences of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. In 1999 massive landslides affected the community. In 2003 and 2004, smaller landslides were reported.

The community of Nuestra Señora del Carmen has been affected by landslides in 3 occasions in 1982, 1998 y 2005. Some families had to be evacuated and the community perceived the event as very relevant.

Due to this experience in rainy season and when there are hurricane alerts, the municipality evacuates people living in risk areas and the RC provides them support. Nevertheless, mitigation measures put in place are not enough as the VCA report underlines.

Significant historical, geographic, economic, political, or cultural issues that influenced this instance of CRA and its consequences?

The growth of population in Guatemala requires an increased level of public services that goes beyond the municipal coping capacities. This quick growth produces the spontaneous occupation of peripheral and high-risk areas, environmental and urban degradation, the exhaustion of natural resources, and the increase demand of urban land.

One of the unresolved problems in these settlements is potable water.

Strategic notes

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at national level?

N.A.

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at local level?

The case study represents the first phase of a project that will have as second phase the implementation of proposed actions at local level. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, the VCA participatory approach and the MoU signed with the Municipality of Guatemala provide a good prospect to the implementation of identified activities by the municipality, other stakeholders and the RC itself through the second phase of the project. As recognised by the stakeholders, the VCA process has created the necessity to systematise the assessment and local planning process.

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

The role of community committees has been revitalised through the VCA process, new local organisations have started to approach the RC to get involved in the process.

Are the people living in this area more able to speak out on issues that concern them? Yes, through the participatory VCA process they were able to reflect their problems and priorities.

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

The participatory approach allowed the intervention of all people living in the communities in an impartial manner. A positive discrimination approach was followed to encourage participation of women.

More divided along these lines?

N.A.

Have new civil society organizations been created directly or indirectly because of this practice of CRA?

No, the aim was to strengthen the existing ones.

Lessons learned

The NS programmes and project are usually developed according to the empiric experience, but the VCA process has shown the NS the necessity to set up a planning protocol and a systematised process that will include VCA as a the starting point.

It is important for the organisations to know community priorities, in order to find an integrated and participatory manner to develop common processes. Anexo Forestal does not have any organisation within the community which make them difficult to receive necessary services.

Keywords

Hurricane, fire, dengue, malaria, landslides, floods, contamination, migration, illegal settlements, high-risk areas.

Resource person(s)

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