

Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment training guide Classroom training and learning-by-doing

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Organisation

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, with 185 member National Societies. IFRC's work is guided by seven fundamental principles; humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality. The mission statement for the global strategy of IFRC during the first decade of the 21st century is "To improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity".

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Abstract

This publication is the 4th manual in a series of 4 that updates the 1999 IFRC publication on vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) incorporating lessons learned and promoting integration of assessment with other sectors. A VCA is a participatory investigation method designed to assess the risks that people face in their locality, their different levels of vulnerability to those risks, and the capacities they possess to cope with them. Undertaking a VCA process includes prioritizing local issues, and designing and developing programming to address these issues.

The purpose of this training guide is offer instructions for training Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers in implementing a VCA, through classroom training and more directly, through 'learning-by-doing' (LbD). It also provides those coordinating the VCA process with the tools necessary to train volunteers who will implement the actual VCA, but who have little or no experience in community-based participatory information-gathering. The guide explains how to use the research tools presented in the 3rd VCA publication '*VCA Toolbox and Tools Reference Sheets*' and how to ensure a successful community process.

Intended end users

Intended end users are **Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies** and **International Federation delegation VCA team leaders and facilitators**. The publication advises that National Societies seek support for a VCA process from somebody either within their own National Society or their region who has received formal training in carrying out VCA and training others in its use. The publication can also be useful for **community, disaster risk management, and humanitarian fieldworkers** working with **community based or non-governmental organizations**. Furthermore, **universities and civil-society organizations** interested to know more about VCA may also find the publication useful.

Geographical focus

This training guide can be used in **communities throughout the world** with the purpose of assessing vulnerability and capacity and undertaking action planning and implementation to reduce risk.

Type of Material

This publication is a **training guide** to train staff and volunteers on the research and information gathering tools and community method to carry out a VCA.

A VCA is expected to provide:

- ◆ Baseline assessment information that can become the entry point to an emergency needs assessment following disaster.
- ◆ Community understanding of its own environment in relation to known risks and hazards.
- ◆ Community realization of its own capacities to cope with the risks and hazards.
- ◆ Agreement between community and local authority on actions needed to prevent or reduce the effects of risks.
- ◆ Developing relevant projects in prevention, preparedness and risk reduction.

Language

This manual is available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

Scale of assessment

The focus of a VCA is at the **locality, neighbourhood** and **community-level** in an urban, peri-urban or rural setting. This training guide provides guidance to design an assessment in any of these settings.

Type of assessment

The assessment is based on a **Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)**. This is a 12 step participatory investigation method, broken down into 3 broad processes, designed to assess the risks that people face in their locality, their different levels of vulnerability to those risks, and the capacities they possess to cope with a hazard and recover from it when it strikes. The IFRC set of publications on VCA is unique in that they aim to go beyond the collection of baseline data and the steps with the community to identify hazards using primarily participatory rural appraisal

(PRA) tools. VCA aims to incorporate factors to consider such as: capacities, environment, behaviours, attitudes, beliefs & values, and identity. The combination of these principles and the steps of the VCA result in a powerful transformative process which lead to participants gaining new understanding of how they can do things differently.

Analytical methods

This publication provides training material for facilitators to train staff and volunteers to implement a **Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment**. A VCA disaster risk assessment method concerns the structured and meaningful collection, analysis and systematization of information on a given community's vulnerability to hazards. The training guide uses a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) general assessment method and promotes dynamic teaching based on adult education principles and teaching methods.

Tools

A series of information gathering tools are suggested through a sample training course. The majority of the sample training course is devoted to understanding and practising the use of some – but not all – of the VCA tools found in the 3rd VCA publication: '*VCA Toolbox and Tools Reference Sheets*'. The sample training course presents and evaluates the following participatory and technical tools according to: how the tool is used; practising using the tool; assessing issues associated with the tool such as validity and bias; with whom the tool will be used; who will facilitate the process; and preparation of the tool as it will be used during the VCA fieldwork day.

Participatory tools include:

- **Focus Group Discussions**
- **Risk Mapping**
- **Seasonal Chart**
- **Transect Walk**
- **Direct Observation**

Technical tools include:

- **Secondary Sources/ Data**
- Questionnaires
- **Semi Structured Interviews**
- **Key informant Interview**

Notes on methods

- ♦ The training guide presents both classroom training and a “learning by doing” approach
- ♦ The training guide provides helpful considerations for working with communities, and discusses the elements of dividers and connectors;
- ♦ The outline of a training plan and workshop schedule are included;
- ♦ The guide presents check lists and guiding questions to consider all elements in the overall training and planning process;

Case studies / practical examples

Throughout the guide book there are tips and examples of purpose statements, objectives, a complete sample training course which includes an agenda, lesson plans, basic VCA definitions, guiding questions for the information gathering tools, the planning of a 'Trial VCA Day', and follow up debriefing.

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