

Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment in Maqoala, Malebanye, Ha Sankatana and Ha Mapotsane

Location:	Maqoala, Malebanye, Ha Sakatana and Ha- Mapotsane communities, Lesotho
Date:	June, 2006
Sector focus:	Multi-hazard risk reduction, food insecurity, HIV/AIDS
Spatial focus:	Rural mountain and lowland community

Organization

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".

Website: www.ifrc.org; IFRC's Disaster Preparedness webpage: www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/dp

Bibliographical details

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Vulnerability Capacity Assessment Communities: Maqoala, Malebanye, Ha Sakatana and Ha- Mapotsane*, IFRC, Geneva, Switzerland (2006).

Language availability

This publication is available in English.

Abstract

In February 2006, the Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) conducted a "learning by doing" vulnerability capacity assessment (VCA) exercises in four communities in the Senqu River Valley of Lesotho. A "learning by doing" involves a representative from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) facilitating a training exercise with delegates, staff and volunteers on the participatory investigation tools 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.

Vulnerability Capacity Assessment Communities: Maqoala, Malebanye, Ha Sakatana and Ha-Mapotsane is structured into three parts to analyze the data from participatory tools used in Maqoala and Malenbanye. These tools include: direct observation, spatial mapping, vulnerability and risk mapping, capacity and resource mapping, seasonal chart, community organization chart, livelihoods chart, transect walk, historical chart, historical visualisation, historical profile and conducting focus group interviews. The practical application of the tools is not discussed in the document, but rather the findings of the capacities and vulnerabilities in each community are summarised. There are ambitious lists of activities to address the identified issues in the communities.

The major hazards identified by the LVAC stem from changes in the weather patterns which are evidenced by heavy rains, drought, early frost and heavy snowfall. The weather pattern changes affect the crops, and food security, which is compounded in the population already vulnerable by poverty and the impacts of HIV/ AIDS including child-headed households. This CRA has not specifically changed the policy and practice of the Lesotho government, however the overall disaster risk reduction programme (DRR) that LRCS has been conducting since 2005 has put the DRR concept on the agenda.

Intended users

As a “learning by doing” report, no particular end users are specified, however it would be useful for **branch and volunteers of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RC/RC), community development workers, local government and NGOs**. This project will be of interest to those working with isolated, mountainous and lowland communities.

Background and context of country, location and project

The Kingdom of Lesotho gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1966. In 1998, violent protests and a military mutiny followed the elections, and South Africa and Botswana military forces intervened in what was a bloody intervention. There has been political unrest since 1990 when the king was exiled, followed by military mutiny. In 2002, peaceful parliamentary elections were held and the country’s constitution is being implemented.

The economy depends on livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats and pigs as well as their by-products like wool and mohair. Crops include maize, sorghum, beans and vegetables. There is a gap between the wealthy citizens who have regular skilled activities and opportunities for employment, and the ‘poor’ and ‘very poor’ who are limited in access to casual labour opportunities such as weeding, house smearing, home brewing and washing. The people of Lesotho have depended on the remittances from migrant labourers working in the mines in South Africa and other surrounding countries. In 1998, men were retrenched from the mines in South Africa and returned home, women began to work outside of the community and the first cases of HIV and AIDS were identified in the community. According to the report although HIV/AIDS remains a taboo subject in the communities, the Senqu River Valley population now stands at 122,680 compared to 346,000 in previous years.

Technical description

Hazard/risk type: drought, heavy rains, hailstorms, frost, heavy snow, HIV/AIDS, and food security.

Type of assessment: Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)

CRA process

Community members identified the main vulnerabilities in Lesotho as food security due to changes in weather patterns (prolonged dry season, heavy rains, early frost or hailstorm, or heavy snow).

Although it remains a taboo subject, the LVAC noted the impact and consequences of people living with HIV/AIDS was a main hazard.

The framework of 'Living through time which is essentially chaotic and dynamic' was used to collect information and provide feedback to the community. Aspects that were considered include the environment, behaviour, capabilities, attitudes, beliefs & values, identity, and individual, group or entities mission and goals. A livelihoods analysis was also used, defined as the human, economic, physical, natural and environmental aspects of community members.

Resources available: *Infrastructure capacity:* school, church, local court and health centre. *Economic resources:* The villagers have livestock, fields for farming and grazing land. Women work in clothing industries and men work in the fields and with livestock.

Limitations to capacity: The youth are not interested in the industries that the adults are employed in; there is high job insecurity; and low investment into diversifying the livelihoods.

Methods used: This report details the "Learning by Doing" activity of a group of participants derived from Red Cross Societies in the region, UN, government and NGOs as well as community members. Based on the assessed capacities and vulnerabilities of the communities, soft plans of actions were developed to transform change at the community level.

Tools

Tools included: direct observation, spatial mapping, vulnerability and risk mapping, capacity and resource mapping, seasonal chart, community organization chart, livelihoods chart, transect walk, historical chart, historical visualisation, historical profile and conducting focus group interviews.

Lessons learned

- ◆ Increasing the community's awareness about hazards and vulnerabilities such as changes in weather patterns and HIV/AIDS, and using the past as a reference point
- ◆ Volunteers from the local Red Cross were key in encouraging the local population to take part in the VCA process
- ◆ Community organizations recognised the importance of working together to share ideas on how to run their clubs and to improve their projects

Key words

Crop conditions, weather extremes (heavy rains or snow, hail storms, dry season, early frost), HIV/AIDS, snakes, livestock.

Resource people

Lauren Rugambwa, Federation Delegate Lesotho, laurean.rugambwa@ifrc.org

Didimalang Futho, Acting Disaster Management Coordinator, Lesotho Red Cross Society, didifutho@yahoo.co.uk

Masilo Kapano, Disaster Management Coordinator, Lesotho Red Cross Society, mphana@redcross.org.ls

Author of Explanatory Note

The ProVention Consortium contracted Stephanie Bouris to author this explanatory note.

Contact: cra@ifrc.org