

PROVENTION CONSORTIUM

Community Risk Assessment
and Action Planning project

SRI LANKA – Talalla Central Grama Niladari, Devinuwara DS, Matara District



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Matara Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Report

CRA Toolkit
CASE STUDY

This case study is part of a broader ProVention Consortium initiative aimed at collecting and analyzing community risk assessment cases. For more information on this project, see www.proventionconsortium.org.

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Click-on reference to the **ReliefWeb country file for Sri Lanka:**
<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/dbc.nsf/doc104?OpenForm&rc=3&cc=lka>

Note:

A Guidance Note has been developed for this case study. It contains an abstract, analyzes the main findings of the study, provides contextual and strategic notes and highlights the main lessons learned from the case. The guidance note has been developed by Dr. Ben Wisner in close collaboration with the author(s) of the case study and the organization(s) involved.

Matara Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Report

Talalla Central GNs, Devinuwara DS, Matara District

22 – 30 September 2006



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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

i. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE VCA

This report presents the findings of the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) undertaken by the IFRC/SLRCS in September 2006, with input from the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), in the community of Talalla Central in Devinuwara DS of Matara District, Sri Lanka. VCA is the primary method that the IFRC uses to contribute to a greater understanding of the nature and level of risks that vulnerable people face; where these risks come from; who will be the worst affected; and what initiatives can be undertaken to address their vulnerability. The VCA process is about collecting, analyzing and systematizing information in a structured and meaningful way, which can then be used to diagnose the risks a community faces, the capacities they have, and what activities can be taken to reduce people's vulnerability and increase their capacities.

The following report was written by SEI for the purposes of the IFRC/SLRCS. The report is structured in four main parts:

1. Background to the VCA, outlining the approach to livelihoods and VCA within the RC/RC Movement, the context of the relationship with SEI, and the sites and methodology for the VCA;
2. Outline of the process employed within the VCA in this community;
3. Main findings of the VCA in terms of priority concerns, vulnerable groups, strengths and capacities, threats, and potential areas of intervention for the IFRC;
4. Conclusions on the strengths and weaknesses of the VCA process and recommendations.

ii. SUMMARY OF THE APPROACH AND METHODS

The fieldwork for the VCA included a combination of different participatory exercises and tools. A large community meeting was held to begin the work on day one and to report on the findings at the end of the VCA. Most of the time the VCA facilitators worked in 2 smaller teams and sometimes as one team to hold focus group discussions, interviews and key informant interviews. Each team met in the evening to discuss the day's results and plan for the next day. The main tools used included: social mapping, well being ranking, matrix ranking, seasonal calendars, venn diagrams, mobility mapping, initial market assessment, semi-structured interviews, observations, and flash cards. The focus of discussions was primarily on the main concerns and priorities confronting the community as a whole, what capacities exist to address these problems and vulnerable groups and individuals within the community.

iii. KEY FINDINGS

Main issues recognized in VCA

1. Lack of permanent employment and opportunities particularly for young people who do not want to follow the traditional industries such as fishing and coir.
2. Lack of resources (including money, raw material, etc..) to start new self employment or to develop existing businesses.

3. Lack of opportunities for vocational trainings for those outside the formal education system.
4. Poor career guidance for those who received vocational training.
5. Inadequate housing (overcrowding due to large extended families).
6. No markets for products (timber, fish, coir, tailoring).
7. Damaged and polluted coir pits.
8. Threats from monkeys, wild pigs in relation to home gardening and health.
9. Non-availability of a fisheries hall to store tools, etc.
10. Non-availability of signal light at the Talalla harbour.
11. Poor resources in schools.
12. Lack of water, electricity and sanitation facilities.

Community proposed solutions

1. Introduction of new job opportunities
2. Introduction of vocational trainings and conduct career guidance activities
3. Assist the community through providing seed capital for business start up and development
4. Linking people up to or introducing low interest credit and loan schemes
5. Introduction of industrial/trade center in the village
6. Introduction of new buyers and markets for their production
7. Provision of an equipment hall for fishermen and proper signal light system
8. Rehabilitation of the coir pits
9. An appropriate method to manage the threat posed by monkeys and wild pigs in collaboration with relevant authorities

Capacities and strengths within the community

1. Labour
2. Knowledge, skills and experience
3. Existing CBOs and their activities.
4. Natural assets (Ocean, Lagoon etc)
5. Unity within the community
6. Existing welfare organizations, NGOs, INGOs within the GND
7. Excellent coordination / accordance between the Temple, the Chief Priest, GN, Other NGOs, CBOs, DS, authorities

iv. POTENTIAL AREAS OF ASSISTANCE

Based on the findings captured in this report and consideration of the IFRC/SLRCS's own capacities, the following are potential areas of assistance as identified by the community:

1. Support for the development of income generation activities (job opportunities, markets for their production) and micro-finance.
2. Develop a program for youth entrepreneurial development.
3. Another immediate action which could open the way for further work with the community is assistance in establishing a community hall either by looking for land to be donated or sold, or rehabilitating the existing building
4. Working with the community to explore secure, sustainable and diversified economies to address the fragility and vulnerability of the village's economic base.
5. Working with local government to address the need for a community hall, harbour signal lights, and a bus stop for the village, which would obviously improve transport and access.
6. Reconstruct and rehabilitate the damaged lagoons and coir pits enabling people to return to producing raw materials for their coir productions.

7. Advocate to the local authorities on the threats that the community faces from wild pigs and monkeys.
8. Take necessary measures for the community to establish home gardening.

1. BACKGROUND

Pilot Livelihoods Programme – Matara Plan of action – Preparation and Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)

1.1 Introduction

To set the foundation for the pilot livelihoods program in Matara, a vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) was undertaken in Talalla Central GN, Devinuwara Division. This GN includes the Federation donor driven relocation-housing site of Kanaka Watta for 18 households. The VCA exercise brought together a multi-disciplinary team of Federation and SLRCS staff and volunteers plus an SEI Staff member for two weeks. Importantly, the VCA also comprised members of the community in order to increase participation, accuracy of the information, to foster local ownership of the process and to enable the team to better understand the resources and needs of the community.

1.2 Approach and Objectives of the VCA

The approach to livelihoods taken by the Federation is based on the sustainable livelihoods framework. The VCA therefore examined the nature and level of risks/threats that vulnerable people face, who is likely to be worst affected by these risks/threats and what capacities and assets can be developed within the community to reduce and address their vulnerability. The VCA is a holistic methodology to collect, analyze and systematize information covering communities risks and capacities so that activities can be developed that result in a reduction in Vulnerability and development of capacities.

The specific objectives of the VCA were to:

- i) understand the vulnerability context of people in a holistic way
- ii) learn about the diversity of different income and social groups within village society.
- iii) understand the livelihood strategies of different groups
- iv) identify problems and solutions for different social groups
- v) provide the basis for participatory planning for livelihood support
- vi) record and document information as a base-line against which to measure project intervention and change

1.3 VCA Team Composition

1. Miss *Emma Delo*, Livelihoods Delegate, IFRC (Team leader)
2. Mr. *Hasan Hamou* – WATSAN Delegate, IFRC
3. Mr. *Rangika Wickramage*, Disaster Management Coordinator, Matara Branch, SLRCS
4. Mr M.S.M. *Kamil*, Disaster Management Coordinator, Kandy Branch, SLRCS
5. Miss *Kusum Udayamali*, Community Development Officer, IFRC
6. Mr *Ulthayakumar Kanagarajah*, Community Development Officer, IFRC
7. Mr *Kaushal Attanayaka*, Community Development Officer, IFRC
8. *Ms Neyome Rozable*, Field Officer, Stockholm Environmental Institute
9. *Ms. Praeetha*, RC Youth Volunteer, Matara Branch SLRCS (also a Community member of the Talalla Central)

1.4 Outline of the VCA Process

A meeting was organized as a first step to the VCA and the team met with the representatives of the community that consisted of CBO leaders to inform the community of our intention / objective.

Based on the details absorbed from the community / CBO members the team examined the following areas during the baseline data collection stage and through the VCA

- a. Financial institutions to understand the financial support existing in the community.
- b. Trade markets to identify the consumption patterns, frequently purchased items, impulse purchases, strength of the market, community's contribution and so on.
- c. CBOs to identify the support provided by the CBOs to the community, peoples involvement with the same, on going projects, future plans.
- d. GN office demographics and statistics on the community.
- e. Large community meeting was held to inform people of the purpose and objective of the VCA
- f. Social mapping and well being analysis
- g. Focus group discussions and interviews
- h. Final community meeting to inform our findings

It is notable that in line with a livelihoods approach household surveys were not conducted. Rather a communal approach was used and the same household level data collected through the social mapping exercise. This led to the development of a Management Information System or database that will be used throughout the project.

1.5 Tools Applied

The following tools were used during the VCA to provide an in-depth understanding of the communities' problems (symptoms) and where they come from (underlying root causes), to focus on specific local conditions (specific threats and risks, most vulnerable groups, sources of vulnerability, local perceptions of risks, local resources and capacities), to systematically look at what is available to alleviate the problem (resources, skills and capacities) and decide at what level the IFRC/SLRCS should be involved. Moreover, the VCA can assess to what extent the IFRC/SLRCS' livelihood programmes are appropriate to communities' needs in their current form and where change needs to take place in order to achieve more integration in the programs, build on communities' capacity and reduce vulnerability.

The following information was to be collected using the relevant corresponding tools.

Information required	Tools used
Understanding of the community and its assets and resources as well as individual household level data	Social Mapping
Livelihood patterns and trends including income, expenditure, debt and savings	Seasonal Calendar
An understanding of who the community identifies as those households who are most vulnerable within the community and a set of criteria upon which the community makes such decisions	Well-being Analysis
An identification of the most influential authorities	Venn Diagrams
Identification of the real issues / problems and solutions to these that the community thinks to be appropriate	Matrix Ranking
Identifying the distance and time consumed for the community to access the resources, main places used, e.g. schools, hospital, markets, GN offices, post offices, etc...	Mobility Maps
Identifying the S trengths, W eaknesses, O pportunities, T hreats within the community	SWOT analysis
Gather detailed information (especially individual interviews	Semi-structured

etc...)	interviews
To obtain more details and to apply a change in tools and t create excitement	Flash cards
Often used as a way to verify other information sources	Direct Observation

1.6 VCA principles and features

VCA is an investigation into the risks that people face in their locality, their different levels of vulnerability to those risks, and the capacities they possess to cope and recover from shocks (whether environmental, social or economic). In initiating the process a number of fundamental questions were asked in order to determine the appropriate approach and methodology to be taken:

- Why? Why is it being proposed?
- What? What does it involve, what is it for?
- Who? Who is involved in doing it, and who is it for?
- How? How will it be done, with what resources?
- When? What is the timescale and start?
- Where? Where will the VCA be carried out?

The guiding principles for the VCA are as follows:

- always link vulnerability and capacity together
- Prioritize high-risk groups
- Integration of sectors
- Integration in the planning process
- Consider interaction between threats
- Integration between pre-disaster VCA with post-disaster damage and needs assessment
- Adopt a livelihoods perspective
- De-professionalize the assessment process
- Aim for accuracy but live with uncertainty
- Focus on the local
- Consider VCA as process and tool
- Be creative and flexible
- Be transparent
- Look at tangibles and intangibles
- Consider symptoms and causes

1.7 Location and Selection of the Sites for VCA

IFRC/SLRCS has undertaken a series of activities as part of their Livelihoods Programme in various parts of the county and the VCA for Talalla Central GN includes a housing site that comprises of 18 houses, for which the IFRC/SLRCS decided to facilitate livelihood support. This is in line with a consolidated approach for IFRC Livelihoods focusing on those relocated families and the host communities into which they are moving.

Baseline information on the GN is provided in Annex 1.

2. VCA PROCESS

2.1 Activities of the Team and Methods Employed

A meeting was conducted with the Matara branch of the SLRCS. Meetings with the CBO leaders and representatives of the community followed this to inform the village of our purpose and objective concerning the livelihoods. It was also to build community unity between new-settlers and host community as well as providing support to strengthen and diversify the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households in the community.

The VCA team visited the markets, financial institutions, other NGOs, CBOs, INGOs to identify their involvement in the community in order to recognize peoples needs and their lifestyle, purchasing patterns, their involvement with other organizations, interests and capabilities of getting involved in community activities, and to identify ongoing areas of assistance and planned future assistance, so as to avoid duplication.

The community meeting was conducted to inform the community at large about our intention and purpose and to seek their collaboration. This was followed by two days in which social mapping and well being analysis was conducted. From the information collected, a database of Talalla Central was established for future reference. In addition, a number of focus group discussions and interviews were conducted. A second community meeting at the completion of the VCA to inform and cross check the VCA findings with the whole community.

Activities

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3 and 4	Day 5 to 7	Day 8	Day 9
Team Training	Team planning	Social mapping	Focus group discussions, key informant interviews	Team feedback and analysis	Community meeting to feedback and action plan
Village familiarisation	Opening community meeting	Well being analysis			Wrap up meeting with the team
T e a m d e b r i e f i n g					

The schedule, as presented above, shows the activities undertaken by the team

- Opening community meeting - attended by 217 people.
- 14 focus groups – meeting with 237 participants / household representatives (comprising of women, men, youth (males and youth females)
- 15 key informant interviews
- No household interviews as we were able to capture most required information during social mapping and well being analysis. Also in order to avoid building individual expectations amongst the community.
- Final community meeting to report back.

At the end of each day the VCA team came together to reflect on what had been learnt during the day, specifically who had been met, what issues had been raised, what capacities identified and weaknesses noted, effectiveness of the tools used and how this confirmed or raised further questions to the earlier information from the VCA.

This discussion informed the work for the next day. At the end of the VCA, after the final community meeting the VCA team met for the final time as a group to discuss what had been learnt from the process, what they thought had gone well and what they would do differently if they had to do it again.

2.2 Social mapping and well being analysis

For days 2 and 3 the community members were divided into 2 groups based on those living either side of the main Matara-Hambantota Road, a 'coastal' and 'an inland' group. Social mapping was undertaken to identify key community characteristics.

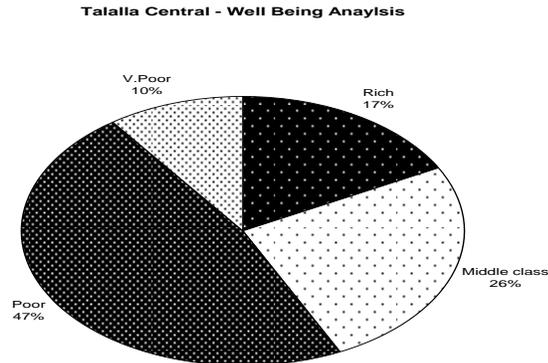
The community was facilitated through the well-being analysis tool to firstly identify what a good quality of life means to them. Households were considered by the community group on a case by case basis and put into one of 4 categories: very poor, poor, middle, well-off. The VCA team worked with the community to identify the reasons the community had for placing households into a particular category and so developed an initial set of community identified criteria for vulnerability in Talalla Central. The results are given in the table below and will be further developed in the initial stages of the project. The ranking of the households in the community also provide an effective part of the baseline data from which project impact can be determined at later stages.

Community Identified Well Being Criteria

Very Poor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lives alone ▪ No place to live ▪ Disabled family member ▪ Large family size ▪ Bedridden / Paralyzed people in the family ▪ Lives on other people's land (temporary shelter)
Poor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unemployed ▪ Dependant ▪ Widow ▪ Sick / ill Person (bedridden) ▪ Tsunami widow ▪ Multiple families in one house
Middle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salary of approx. Rs.20,000/- per month ▪ Pensioner (Rs.7,000/- a month) ▪ Owns assets such as a house, land, business, shop ▪ One member family employed to support his living. ▪ Government Servant
Well Off
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government or private sector worker (School principals, harbor worker, bank worker) ▪ Owns assets such as property, businesses, lands etc. ▪ One member of the family works abroad ▪ Owns Hotels

Every household that was included in the social map was given a number and then a well being ranking was done. This exercise revealed that over half of the local population (57%) is considered poor or very poor in Talalla Central.

Well being ranking



Another important outcome of this exercise is the identification of the criteria the participants consider important in determining well-being.

An evaluation of CBOs, their function and the facilities available in the community was undertaken.

3. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE VCA

3.1. Priority Concerns of the community

During the VCA the following concerns/problems were identified and prioritized:

- Lack of permanent jobs, particularly for local youth
- Lack of capital to start self employment and to develop existing jobs
- Lack of access to vocational training and career guidance for those not going through formal education
- Inadequate housing due to a high number of extended families living together
- Lack of markets for small scale production
- Damaged lagoon bank and impacts on coir pits (those that were cleared are polluted again as the root cause of the problem, the damaged lagoon wall was not addressed)
- Threats from wild monkeys and pigs
- No fisheries hall to keep equipment safe and no proper signal system in the harbor in Talalla to safeguard fishermen's return to the harbor at night
- Poor facilities in schools – lack of classrooms, lack of sports, lab, library and other equipment
- Electricity and sanitation for people living in the World Vision Gamagewatte housing site.
- Need for income generation opportunities due to lack of permanent jobs.
- In the Kanaka Watta housing site there are problems associated with lack of street lights, poor waste management (also in Gamagewatte housing site), and water logging.
- Rehabilitation of the temple hall, which functions as a community building

Other issues that were also mentioned as key issues:

- Lack of electricity and water facilities for people living in the Gamagewatte housing site.
- Requirement of a cemetery with crematorium
- Need for housing, including house reconstruction and repair, including kitchen reconstruction [addressed by a beneficiary from the Kanaka Watta housing site (generally a separate building), and the construction of new houses
- Fear of losing the cultural values and traditions that exist already in Talalla Central due to influx of new-settlers, when combined with the new settlers not yet knowing their neighbours can increase tensions within the new community.
- Bus stop

3.2. Vulnerable Groups

The following groups were identified as particularly vulnerable through the neighborhood group discussions and key informant interviews:

- Disabled (Children and Elders)
- Households with a high number of dependents with little or insecure sources of income
- Poor, non-tsunami affected households and those who have received no assistance
- Elderly people who are weak and fatigued not in a position to work
- Crowded households
- People involved in coir production – not being able to continue with their production due damaged plots or lost assets

3.3. Strengths and capacities within the community

- Labour, skills and knowledge, especially for coir production, masonry, fishing
- Presence of 19 community organizations and leaders
- Willingness to cooperate and participate in community activities
- Willingness to work and cooperate with the Red Cross
- A willingness by the community to address wider community issues more than individual problems

3.4. Weaknesses within the community

- Social and cultural divisions between the existing and the newly shifted households
- Lack of education for certain groups in the community.
- Lack of job opportunities in the district, particularly for youth
- Weak / aged not able to work

3.5. Threats to the community

- Lack of long term security in employment
- Wild pigs and monkeys are a threat that prevents people from cultivating home gardens
- Dependency on external assistance
- Market risks, such as unstable markets for coir, tailoring, sweets,

3.6 Potential Areas for IFRC/SLRCS intervention

Based on the above findings and consideration of the IFRC/SLRCS's own capacities, the following are potential areas the IFRC/SLRCS could support in the short- to medium-term:

- Assist with the rehabilitation of the community hall through the provision of raw materials and organizing skills training (labour can be provided from the community)
- Inform and advocate with relevant Local (Government) authorities with regard to the following issues the community is facing.
 - Rehabilitating / reconstructing the damaged lagoon and the coir pits
 - Ways to protect the community from the threat of monkeys and wild pigs
 - Install street lights for Kanaka Watta housing site
 - A fisheries hall to unload their equipment, catches, etc... and a harbour signal
- Start with building community cohesion and unity and facilitate the community to come together for a common purpose that will benefit everyone. This social integration is critical in a community that has recently had a number of new settlers and is the first step in building back safe and harmonious communities.
- Support for the development of income generation activities for the most vulnerable households and livelihoods with a particular focus on supporting youth with the necessary skills and technical knowledge to start feasible small businesses.
- Development of a program of youth activities and skills development
- Facilitate better access to financial services such as savings and micro-credit for the most vulnerable in the community.
- Support for income generating activities and economic security by working with existing cooperatives and CBOs. The approach needs to be one of building their capacity both technically and financially to be able to manage their own affairs in the future.
- Working with the community to explore secure, sustainable and diversified economies to address the fragility and vulnerability of the village's economic base.
- Investigate and support action in the case of the issues relating to spot flooding in Kanaka Watta.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Reflections on the VCA Process and Missing information

What could have been done better?

In terms of comparisons with the previous VCA conducted in Galle (Ahangama East and Goviapana), it can be seen that this VCA was similar in terms of:

- The methods and overall process
- Process of applying the tools

It was different in several key ways:

- Not as many people were involved (as facilitators) which eased the process

- Experienced, already trained team members (which spared time in training etc.)
- Volunteers from the community (which eased the process of rechecking and verifying data collected)
- More gender balances, i.e. met men / youth etc.... Previously youth would not get involved in community assessments, yet the team involved in the VCA in Talalla Central made particular efforts to ensure the voice of some youth males and females was captured.

People met during the VCA:

- It was recognized that the timings of meetings and interviews was crucial in order to get a good cross section of the community.
- The meetings and discussions were as usual dominated by women
- We were able to meet quite high number of young people (teenagers) compared to previous VCA. (It was mentioned to us that the youth are reluctant to attend such meetings yet, as the Red Cross has a good image of itself amongst the community large number of youth attended the meetings and discussions conducted.)
- Separate discussions for youth (men and women) were conducted.
- The team was unable to meet with the children and students to identify their issues.

General lessons learnt:

- Often the discussion and decisions made during exercises in interviews and neighborhood meetings were not well captured there tended to be a focus on the outputs of the discussions and exercises and not on the discussions themselves.
- There was too much focus on the problems that people experienced and not enough on positive experiences and solutions. This was probably the result of the questions asked by the facilitators. However this could also be that the community is conditioned to role out a list of problems and needs, having been 'over assessed' since the tsunami. Engaging the community in forward looking, planning and reflecting on their own capacity proved to be a challenge.

4.2 Recommendations

Considering the results of the VCA, the following recommendations were identified. The recommendations are primarily for the IFRC/SLRCS to consider in the light of the future engagement with the Talalla Central:

1. The outputs and initial findings of the process need to be quickly converted to some action on the ground to show that the Red Cross is serious about working with these communities and that it took on board the views of the communities as to what was important.
2. Further check and validate the one or two most important short-term priorities in each community and those that the Red Cross can deliver straight away with no delays or logistical complications/approvals, etc.

3. Regular visits to the community to keep track of progress and there is also a need to continue to ensure that all social groups, especially those that are less accessible such as male youths, continue to participate in the project.
4. Plan long-term and substantial interventions jointly with the community and continue with the process set up during the VCA.
5. Focus on projects/schemes that have a wide spanning benefit and effect to the community at large as well as capacity building of cooperatives and CBOs whose efforts could trickle down to the individuals and household level rather than singling out and targeting individuals (enough of that done already).
6. Jointly plan project phases and agree on handover and exit strategy and procedures.
7. Disseminate the experience with the VCA widely throughout the RC/RC movement and with other stakeholders in the district and wider.