

## VCA Toolbox and tools reference sheet

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

### Organisation

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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 21<sup>st</sup> century is "To improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilising the power of humanity".

Website: [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org); IFRC's Disaster Preparedness webpage: [www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/dp](http://www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/dp)

### Bibliographical details

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The document is available from the CRA toolkit at:

[http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/CRA/VCA-toolbox-en\\_meth.pdf](http://www.proventionconsortium.org/themes/default/pdfs/CRA/VCA-toolbox-en_meth.pdf)

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### Abstract

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This publication is the 3<sup>rd</sup> manual in a series of 4 on vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) that expands upon the 1996 VCA Toolkit publication. 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 a hazard and recover from it when it strikes. The VCA Toolbox is designed to provide the step-by-step process for gathering information and conducting community-based research to do participatory action planning for risk and vulnerability reduction. It contains a variety of participatory investigative tools to assist National Society staff and volunteers to undertake a complete VCA.

The tools are presented as three types reference sheets: **Process Reference Sheets** provide instruction on how to use specific processes when working with data. These are followed by a series of **Research Reference Sheets**, which guide the user through the implementation of the different investigative tools. Lastly, a number of **Methods Reference Sheets** outline the different strategies and techniques for working with communities during meetings and workshops.

## Intended end users

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This toolkit could be useful to anyone who works with communities in disaster-risk vulnerable areas. Its intended end users are **staff** and **volunteers** with **Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies** who work with branch and community members to increase their resilience and reduce disaster risk. The publication warns that National Societies should 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. This publication would also be useful for **community development, disaster risk, humanitarian and international agency fieldworkers** working with **community based organizations**

## Geographical focus

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This toolkit 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 from natural hazards. The toolbox contains tools that may be used in a variety of localities, however, it may require local adaptation to make them appropriate in the immediate context.

## Type of Material

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This publication is a **step-by step** manual for vulnerability and capacity assessment and action planning. It provides a practical and chronological guide intended to introduce the 12 step conceptual framework, methods and tools to conduct a VCA. It also contains case studies and examples illustrating the assessment and action planning process, as well as providing checklists and 6 process resources and 19 qualitative and quantitative information reference tool sheets.

The four VCA publications are the product of ten years of lessons learned and an extensive review of the 1996 publication '*Vulnerability Capacity Assessment Toolkit*' as well as the 1999 '*Vulnerability Capacity Assessment Guide*'. This third publication is supported by '*What is VCA? An introduction to vulnerability and capacity assessment*'; an initial booklet and presentation of supporting lessons learned to the VCA framework. The fourth publication in this series is a training manual that details a learning-by-doing method on how to carry out a VCA by doing one. It also includes a section on how to train people in the use of the various tools for a VCA. These documents are available through the ProVention Community Risk Assessment and Action Planning Toolkit at: <http://proventionconsortium.org/?pageid=43>.

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

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

## Scale of assessment

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The focus of the assessment is at the **locality, neighbourhood** and **community-level**.

## Type of assessment

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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

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*Disaster Risk Assessment Methods mentioned are:*

- **Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (VCA)**

*General Assessment methods include:*

- **Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)**
- **Livelihoods and Coping Strategies Analysis**
- **Institutional and Social Network Analysis**
- Assessing the Capacity of People's Organizations

## Tools

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The purpose of this toolbox is to provide detailed explanations on how to undertake the actual research of a VCA by choosing and learning how to use the right tool and what to do with the information.

*The participatory tools include:*

- **Mapping (Hazard & Risk, Spatial and Capacity Resource)**
- **Focus Group Discussion**
- **Transect Walk**
- **Seasonal Calendar**
- **Historical Profile**
- **Problem Tree**
- **Venn Diagram**
- Historical Visualisation
- Community Meetings
- Brainstorming
- Ranking
- Wall Methodology (participatory analysis of data)
- Livelihoods and coping strategies analysis
- Institutional and social networking analysis
- Assessing the capacity of peoples' organizations

*Technical tools include:*

- **GIS Mapping**

- **Secondary Sources/ Data**
- **Semi Structured Interviews**
- **Direct Observation**
- Community Baseline Data

## **Notes on methods**

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- The manual gives step-by-step instructions for the entire process of community involvement by providing all of the necessary tools/exercises and detailed explanation of how and why to use these.
- Community-based approach with community involved in most steps in the process.
- Contains explanation and perspective on the PRA and its characteristics in terms of a broad view of disaster risk and its community-based approach
- Good step-by-step description of how to use the tool, tips, gender considerations, and references
- It would be difficult, and is not advised by the publication, for the community to undertake this process without the support of a trained and experienced Red Cross or Red Crescent facilitator

## **Case studies / practical examples**

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There are practical examples included throughout the toolkit such as the case study on involving communities contributed by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

## **Resource people**

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## **Author of guidance note**

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

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