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International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies

Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment: Toolbox

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
(IFRC)

Organisation

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

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Abstract

This toolbox provides a conceptual framework as well as practical guidelines for conducting a vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA). It begins with the history and theory behind the concept of VCA and moves into providing the techniques/tools for VCA. It also provides a logical sequence for conducting a VCA: identifying potential threats, identifying vulnerabilities and assessing capacities and resources.

This Toolbox is currently being reviewed.

Intended end users

End users would be institutions looking to undertake risk reduction through development or relief projects. This may include **international agency staff**, **NGO's** or **disaster risk management field practitioners.**

Type of Material

The VCA toolbox is a **guideline**, as well as a toolkit, which thoroughly conceptualises both vulnerabilities and capacities within a community. It includes:

- Frameworks and tools in which to understand vulnerability, hazards and capacity
- Describes in detail key concepts – needs assessments, risk = hazard + vulnerability
- Provides historical transition towards bridging relief and development
- Useful sources of information when conducting assessments – answers the 'why', 'when' and 'how'.

Provides a variety of tools and methods for conducting the VCA and provides detailed examples of how to use each.

Provides suggested readings at the end of each section.

Language

The toolbox is in English.

Scale of assessment

The scale of the VCA is focused at **community**-level.

Type of assessment

The Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) is the primary assessment methodology presented in the toolbox. It is understood as comprised of assessing: hazard, vulnerability and capacities of communities. The toolbox provides an overview of how to undertake such assessments and where to collect data for different assessment stages including data from GIS, Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools, and different key people and institutions. It also provides an entire chapter on assessment techniques (mainly drawn from RRA/PRA) and gives overview of technique/tool and an example detailing how to use it.

Analytical methods

Disaster Risk Assessment Methods that are described in the VCA toolbox are:
- **Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)**

General Assessment Methods include:
- **Livelihood analysis**
- **Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)**
- **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)**

Tools

The methods and tools mentioned in this document are by no means exhaustive. They include a mix of technical tools, for assessing hazards, and participatory tools for assessing vulnerability and capacity.

Participatory Tools that are described include:
- **Risk mapping**
- **Transect walk**
- **Venn diagrams**
- Economic relationships
- **Timeline**
- **Seasonal calendar**
- Matrix ranking/scoring
- Pie charts
- Flow/network diagrams
- Bar graphs/ranking
- Bean circles
- **Direct observation**
- **Wealth ranking**
- Estimates and quantifications
- Stories/portraits/case studies

Technical Assessment tools include:
- **Semi-structured interviews**
- **Surveys**

The document also makes explicit mention of the incorporation of **GIS** and draws heavily from RRA/PRA methodologies.

Notes on methods

- This document would be most useful for people who wish to get an understanding of how to conceptualise hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities within a community.

- Although the toolkit provides all of the necessary for conducting a comprehensive VCA, the information is presented in such a way that makes it challenging, as it is not provided in a step-by-step, start-to-finish sequence.

- Whilst the toolbox contains general PRA tools which are valid, it lacks a section on how to analyze data gathered and translate recommendations into action projects. This is something that will be addressed in the updated version being prepared.

- Contains detailed explanation of both the history of VCA, as well as different components.

- Lists many methods and tools for undertaking VCA (largely taken from RRA and PRA) and provides excellent case studies/examples to illustrate general themes and tools.

- Due to the fact that the document is more of an overview of risk assessment, an explanation of *all* the methods and tools mentioned for assessing risk are not included – this includes all the tools mentioned in the section 'Analytical methods and tools' which appear in this document.

Case studies / practical examples

The ProVention CRA Toolkit contains several examples of Red Cross/Red Crescent VCA's: see Solomon Islands, Belize, Sierra Leone, Jamaica and Zambia case studies.

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