

What is VCA? An introduction to vulnerability and capacity assessment

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".

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

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Abstract

This publication is the 1st manual in a series of 4 publications which 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 a hazard and recover from it when it strikes. Undertaking a VCA process includes prioritizing local issues, and designing and developing programming to address these issues. This publication is an introductory booklet to the framework of a VCA and looks at lessons learned from various National Societies as well as how VCA programmes can be better integrated with other projects to be mutually reinforcing.

Intended end users

Intended end users are **Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and International Federation delegation staff, donors and risk researchers**. 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 booklet is intended to be used by National Societies **around the world**.

Type of Material

This publication is a **guideline** introducing the conceptual framework for VCA. This is complemented by the publication '*How to do a vulnerability and capacity assessment: A step-by-step guide*' which is a practical and chronological guide intended to introduce the 12 step conceptual framework, methods and tools to conduct a VCA. The '*VCA Toolbox and tools reference sheet*' is designed to provide the step-by-step process and participatory investigative tools for gathering information and conducting community-based research to do participatory action planning for risk and vulnerability reduction. The fourth publication in this series is '*VCA Training Guide*'- which details a learning-by-doing method 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 Toolkit website.

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.
- ◆ Community and local authority agreement on actions needed to prevent or reduce the effects of risks.
- ◆ 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 the assessment is at the **locality** and **community-level**.

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 the conceptual framework for 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. **Institutional analysis**, which leads to a re-generation of National Societies, their branches and volunteers and recognition that **livelihood analysis**, which determines well-being and concerns income-generation, and is a critical aspect of strengthening people's resilience to various types of risk, both form an integral part of the analytical method.

Tools

There are no tools provided in this manual of the 4 VCA publications. There is an accompanying manual called *VCA Toolbox and Tools Reference Sheets* available under step-by-step manuals from the ProVention website: <http://proventionconsortium.org/?pageid=43>.

Notes on methods

- ♦ Looks to reduce risk for disasters using VCA as a major method while reducing vulnerability and increasing capacity in a genuinely participatory manner.
- ♦ The VCA introduces people's vulnerability in relation to five components: livelihoods, wellbeing, self-protection, social protection and governance.
- ♦ Incorporates considerations to the Hyogo Framework from the Kobe, Japan World Conference on Disaster Reduction and the Millennium Development Goals.

Case studies / practical examples

Case studies from the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies of Yemen, Nepal, , Solomon Islands, Caribbean, and Rwanda are provided. These profile the outcomes of VCA in the different National Societies and provide examples of the success and usefulness of the VCA process to design and implement disaster risk reduction interventions that are relevant and owned by the community. Topics include road safety, hazards, community-base disaster preparedness, health and infrastructure projects.

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