The Netherlands Red Cross

VIETNAM RED CROSS

VULNERABILITY AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (VCA)

Manual for Viet Nam Red Cross Practitioners

Part I

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBDRM	Community Based Disaster Risk Management
CCFSC	Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department
HQ	Headquarters
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PC	People Committee
PWD	People With Disabilities
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NLRC	Netherlands Red Cross
VCA	Vulnerability Capacity Assessment
VNRC	Viet Nam Red Cross

MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE VIETNAM RED CROSS SOCIETY

Vietnam is among the most disaster prone countries in the world. Natural disasters of various types such as typhoons, floods, flash floods, inundation, landslides, drought, salinity intrusion etc. have a higher frequency and intensity and have been causing severe impact to people's lives and the development of the community and the country. Vietnam is also one of the most successful countries in the poverty reduction and hunger eradication. Poverty and hunger rate are decreasing rapidly every year as a result of the country's Doi Moi achievements. However, poverty reduction is not yet sustainable, a group of people that are just above the poverty line are still vulnerable and can easily fall back into poverty again.

A storm or a spell of cold weather can take away their - with much effort gained - property, like their house, means of livelihood, livestock and may put them back to poverty again. Avian flu, swine flu, foot-and-mouth disease also resulted in a number of farmer households to become penniless. Many extreme weather events and sudden disasters make the boundary between escaping from poverty and re-entering to poverty faint. Besides that it is becoming difficult to anticipate to these events. What can people do to protect themselves from natural disaster? How can we support them actively and efficiently when disasters occur?

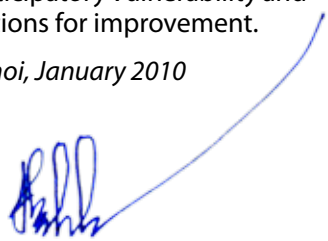
Above issues are partially addressed by a method called VCA. Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) is a participatory method designed to assess the risks that people face in their locality, their different levels of vulnerability to those risks, and the capacities they possess to cope with a hazard and recover from it when it strikes. Undertaking a VCA process allows people to prioritize what they need to do, need to have and what support they will need. As a result, the VCA process will help local people to be more aware and more active in preparing and coping with disasters. At the same time it will help local actors such as government, mass organizations, Red Cross and other to support the community timely and effectively during and after a disaster.

This community-based Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) manual explains in great detail the VCA method which is applied by Vietnam Red Cross staff to facilitate the evaluation of people's vulnerability and enhance their capacities as well as in advising local authorities to build an active and efficient disaster preparedness plan that will result in the smallest possible negative impact.

We would like to express our gratitude to The Netherlands Red Cross, especially The Netherlands Red Cross in Vietnam for their partnership and strong technical support. We would like to reveal sincere thanks to the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) through its Disaster Preparedness Programme (DIPECHO) for South East Asia for their commitment and support to this manual.

And now we have honor of presenting you the manual for Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment. We do welcome all comments and suggestions for improvement.

Hanoi, January 2010



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OVERVIEW OF THE MANUAL

The ***Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) – Manual for Vietnam Practitioners*** aims to provide a comprehensive guide, for disaster risk reduction in general and particularly for those facilitating vulnerability and capacity assessments in the community.

The manual is primarily aimed at VCA facilitators and practitioners of the Vietnam Red Cross. The manual is also a source of reference on the VCA tools and process for Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) practitioners in Vietnam.

This manual has been developed to achieve the specific objective to improve VNRC's Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) processes, tools, and ultimately output. There are three sections to this Manual.

The first section: "*What is VCA*" provides conceptual information, key components and outlines the main components that guide the VNRC Facilitator while undertaking the VCA process.

The second section: "*Principles of conducting a VCA*" highlights important linkages of the VCA tool between development and disaster management. In addition, this section emphasizes different approaches of conducting VCAs.

The last section: "*Practical Guide for conducting a VCA*" provides accessible and practical information on different VCA tools and ways to conduct VCAs with the active participation of vulnerable groups. It also provides information on the process of facilitating a VCA in the field. This section serves as the "how to" guide for the Facilitators based on the information provided in the previous two sections.

The development of this manual is supported by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department under the 6th DIPECHO Action Plan for South East Asia. This manual is developed by VNRC staff at all levels and the Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC) in Vietnam and The Netherlands. During the process, there was an active exchange of information with INGOs, government organizations, technical agencies and CBDRM professionals.

PART A:
WHAT IS VCA

PART: WHAT IS VCA

CHAPTER 1: DEFINITION

1.1 Basic terminologies in disaster management

Vulnerability

The extent to which an individual, community, structure, service or geographic area is likely to be damaged or disrupted by the impact of a particular hazard.[1]

Capacity

The capacities of people and the communities they live in are the basic building blocks of disaster preparedness and development. Capacities are the resources and skills people possess, can develop, mobilize or have access to, which allow them to have more control over shaping their own futures. Capacities are comprised of a range of assets, including physical assets like the ownership of land or currency and skills, like literacy. In addition, capacities may include social assets, like the existence of community organizations or national welfare systems, and finally they can be personal assets, like the will to survive or belief in an ideology or religion.[2]

Hazard

A hazard is a natural or man-made phenomenon, which may cause physical damage, economic losses, or threaten human life and well-being if it occurs in an area of human settlement, agricultural, or industrial activity. Man-made hazards include armed conflict, intimidation, hostility, etc. Hazards can also be a sort of deprivation, such as environmental and technological deprivation, political or economic deprivation, illiteracy, etc. Hazards may be caused by a combination of factors whereby man-made events exacerbate a natural phenomenon, for example when deforestation increases the risk of flooding. The disruption caused to people's lives can be in the form of personal injury, malnutrition, the loss of property or livelihoods, or in extreme cases, the loss of life.[3]

Disaster

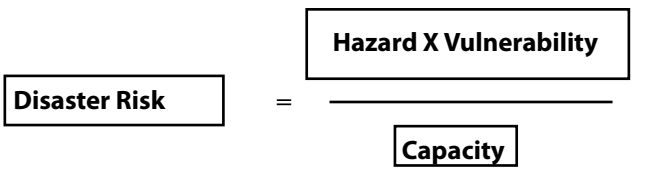
A serious disruption of the functioning of a society causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources. Disasters may be classified according to speed of onset (sudden or slow) or according to their cause (natural or man induced, or perhaps a combination of both). Disasters combine the elements of hazards and risks, and vulnerability.[4]

Disaster Risk

The potential disaster losses, in lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and services, which could occur to a particular community or a society over some specified future time period.[5]

[1] VNRC (2000) Disaster Preparedness Manual
[2] VNRC (2000) Disaster Preparedness Manual
[3] VNRC (2000) Disaster Preparedness Manual
[4] VNRC (2000) Disaster Preparedness Manual
[5] UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction (2009) http://undp.org.ge/new/files/24_619_762164_UNISDR-terminology-2009-eng.pdf

Disaster risk depends on the relationship of hazards, vulnerability and capacity of community, which is illustrated by the relationship below:



For example: Hazards to which a commune is not vulnerable, like high water in areas where the commune does not use the area for either living or farming will not become a disaster. Similarly, if a commune has the capacity to stop the high water from entering, it will also not become a disaster. However, in case the houses and paddy fields of the commune are located in a flood-prone area and the commune has no capacity to prevent that (e.g. no dam) and people in that area cannot swim, the risk that the hazard of high water will develop into a disaster will be greater.

1.2 Definition of VCA

A Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) involves a process of collecting and analyzing information about hazards that people face in their locality, their different levels of vulnerability and their capacities to cope with these single or multiple hazards and their ability to recover from them when they strike.

The main purpose of a VCA is to allow the community to identify and understand their vulnerability, capacity and the hazards that they are facing. This helps in identifying local priorities to reduce their vulnerabilities and to develop their capacities. The result of such assessments form the basis for the community to undertake community based disaster risk management planning.

VCA is not just the process of collecting data using the most participatory tools but also a useful tool for raising community awareness. It helps identifying existing & potential vulnerabilities and capacities of the community. Therefore, VCA is useful as a participatory evaluation method by the community. VNRC Facilitators could facilitate this with participation of the local authorities.

The VCA process contributes to:

- A greater understanding of (the nature of) existing hazards and level of risks the community is facing;
- The identification, estimation and ranking of community issues, concerns, problems and resources with regards to social, economic, cultural, demographic data, etc;
- An understanding of the causes and complexity of problems faced by the community and information relating to how communities cope with this situation.

- The identification of the most affected and the most vulnerable in relation to the five components of vulnerabilities: livelihoods, well-being, self-protection, social protection and governance;
- An understanding of how disasters will affect different groups within the community and particularly the vulnerable groups such as children, women, elderly, disabled and ethnic monitories;
- The identification of the capacities within a community and an idea of what should be strengthened;
- The identification of adequate and successful community-based empowerment measures;
- The knowledge of which initiatives should be undertaken to address identified vulnerabilities while maximizing existing capacities;
- The process of determining indicators that help to track changes in people's involvement in good local governance through continuous community assessment;
- Raising awareness in the community in order to become more resilient;
- The identification of specific information on constraints and opportunities for local development activities.

Khanh Hung commune, Vinh Hung, Long An

CHAPTER 2: DESCRIPTION OF VCA

2.1 Key components of VCA

Why do VCA?

The key to all Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programs is to reduce vulnerability and to increase the community's capacity. With a reduced vulnerability and increased capacity, a commune can work towards preventing disasters, prepare for disaster response and mitigate the impact of disasters. VCA is a method to work with the commune so that they can develop a clear understanding of their own Vulnerabilities, Capacity, relevant Hazards and the relationship between these elements. VCA is one of the main assessment methods used in DRR and CBDRM. It also helps to connect with underlying issues. Because of the VCA, the commune can identify areas that they need to develop so that they can become safer.

Who

The community is the main implementer of the VCA. The VCA Facilitators have the role to facilitate the whole process. The VCA Facilitators could mobilize community focal persons/ catalysts to work with the community and arrange for the VCA to take place.

When

The VCA could be conducted all year round. However, it is advisable to take into account the working calendar and festivals at the commune level. It could be relevant to do the VCA before the disaster season or before composing the Social Development Plan of the commune. The VCA could be done annually depending on the situation in the commune.

Where

In principle, the VCA could be carried out in all communes in Vietnam. However, in practice only disaster prone communes should be selected as VCA consumes time and resources.

How

- Undertaking a VCA requires time and resources depending on the conditions in the community. It is important to have a clear objective agreed by all people involved in the process before entering the community as well as preparation steps such as who, what etc.
- VCA tools are participatory methods for data collection and analysis. These include: direct observation, hazard mapping, transect walk, seasonal calendar, historical profile, historical projection and visualization, Venn Diagram, problem tree, etc.
- The overall VCA process is briefly presented below:
    - **Preparation:** identifying objectives, resources, selecting location, time frame and manpower →
    - **Planning and field pre-assessment work :** Preparation of action plan, assessment team, logistics, appropriate facilities and procedures →
    - **Advocating** to local government on maximizing participation of grassroots people and following-up of VCA results →
    - **Collecting information** → via *Secondary data* → via *research in the community* using VCA tools →

- **Analysing** hazards, vulnerability, capacity to diagnose risks →
- **Verifying/validating** information with the community (village and commune level) →
- **Planning and Advocacy for Transformation** of vulnerability to capacity →
- **Reporting** → Following up (integration into local development plan and implementation of the identified DRR measures).

What are expected outputs of VCA?

The VCA outputs are used as inputs for community preparedness, risk reduction plans and also to improve the local development plans. The expected outputs from the VCA process are as follows:

- Community understands its own environment in relation to hazards and disaster risk;
- Community realizes its own capacities to cope with the hazards and risks;
- Community and local authority agree on actions needed to prevent or reduce the effects of disaster;
- Relevant measures on disaster risk reduction are implemented and evaluated: mitigation, prevention, preparedness;
- Baseline assessment information becomes available. This can become the reference point to an emergency and disaster preparedness needs assessment, following disaster;
- Commune People Committee can use the VCA report to attract funds from higher governments and other donors.

The VCA results will be utilized more broadly at national and international levels. For example, it will provide a chance for community voices to be heard in the development of certain policies (like strategies to deal with climate change).

2.2 Outlines of VCA elements

Chapter 1 has outlined the definitions of Vulnerability, Capacity, Hazard, Disaster Risk and Disasters. It also provided an overview of the link between these elements. This chapter provides an overview on how to assess these various elements.

2.2.1 Vulnerability Assessment

A Vulnerability Assessment is the process to define the risk factors of each kind of hazard and analyze the reasons that cause such risks. In addition, it describes a set of prevailing conditions or constraints of an economic, social, physical or geographic nature, which limit the ability of the people to mitigate, prepare for and cope with the impact of hazards.[6]

Vulnerability has been defined in relation to five components that embody most aspects of people's exposure to a given natural hazard. Once a VCA has been linked to the different components of vulnerability and the relationships between them are understood, it

[6] based on UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction (2009) http://undp.org.ge/new/files/24_619_762164_UNISDR-terminology-2009-eng.pdf

becomes much easier to identify the related capacities that need to be strengthened.[7] These five components[8] are:

- **Livelihood and its resilience** determine well-being and concerns income-generation, which in turn dictates whether people can live in a safe house and location (self-protection). Although poverty reduction and asset protection are not specific areas of Red Cross Red Crescent activity, many VCAs show that in order to reduce people's vulnerability, one must protect and strengthen their livelihoods. Tracing, for example, can have a positive effect on livelihoods, by assisting in returning much-needed labour to a household or enabling better access to lost assets (as well as raising morale and mental well-being).

- **People's well-being** in terms of (mental) health and nutrition, is crucial to their resilience, especially in the case of disasters that result in reduced food intake and health risks (e.g. from contaminated water). It relates to Red Cross Red Crescent activities in vaccination and other aspects of preventive medicine (including HIV/AIDS programs), food security and nutrition, first aid, and water and sanitation programs.

- **Self-protection** is linked to having an adequate livelihood, to afford the protection of home and assets. The capacity to build a house that will withstand local hazards (e.g. earthquakes and hurricanes) depends partially on an adequate income. However, cultural and behavioural factors can also affect the priority given to the protection from infrequent hazards. Assistance is often needed in terms of necessary skills and techniques, and to encourage compliance with protective measures.

- **Social protection** is generally provided by local institutions (e.g. self-help groups, local government, NGOs, etc.) and involves precautions that people cannot manage on their own, such as flood protection, or ensuring compliance with building codes. This is reflected in Red Cross Red Crescent activities such as hazard mitigation (e.g. cyclone shelters in Bangladesh, community flood precautions in Nepal and the Solomon Islands).

- **Governance** reflects the way in which power operates to determine how resources and incomes are allocated and whether a civil society exists and is active (e.g. in open media discussions about risks and/or the existence of organizations that can press for adequate social protection for vulnerable people). This is one of the Red Cross Red Crescent's roles in advocacy and in its auxiliary role to the government.

[7] IFRC, How to do a VCA, page 15 (date)

[8] All definitions of the 5 components derived from IFRC, What is VCA, page 38

The five components are interlinked. For example, a household's livelihood determines the well-being of the family, including their food, health and morale. This is an important factor to cope with and recover from any disaster. In case the well-being of a family is secured, this family will be more resilient towards disasters. Similarly, livelihood security is crucial for a family that is solely dependent on fishing. If the fishing boat and nets are washed away, it is unlikely that the household can easily recover.

Livelihood - an important factor influencing vulnerability and capacity of individuals/households

For each component, Vulnerabilities can be categorized into three areas. Table 1 shows these categories, with examples.

Types of Vulnerability	***Examples***
1. Material/Physical	• Location of community houses, farmlands at hazard prone locations • Design and construction materials of houses and buildings • Lack of basic infrastructure (road, dykes, etc) basic services (health, schools, sanitation etc) • Insecure and risky (single) sources of livelihood
2. Organizational/social	• Lack of leadership and initiative to solve problems or conflicts • Exclusion of certain groups from decision-making about community life or unequal participation in community affairs • Absence or weak community organizations
3. Attitudinal/motivational	• Negative attitude towards change • Passivity, fatalism, hopelessness, dependency • Lack of initiative or "fighting spirit" • Dependence on external support

Table 1: Vulnerability analysis

Gathering Information on Vulnerability

We should recognize that the assessment of vulnerability depends on location, sector, and interest group and is also linked with poverty. For the VNRC facilitators, remember that the following information is required to be collected for a Vulnerability Assessment

- Who are at risks when a disaster happens?
- What are the frequent losses?
- What are the livelihood means and are they vulnerable to natural hazards?
- How many poor/undernourished households are present? How many of the households depend on unstable jobs? How many on seasonal jobs?
- What is the situation of farm land/resources uses such as fishing?
- What are the living standards, health and nutrition status of people?

- Which knowledge/skills are present in the community for self protection?
- Do social organizations have enough capacity to support people? Is there any dissidence, separation within community organizations and clans?
- How many women, pregnant women, old people are present? How many children? How many disabled people? Are they cared for by the community and/or local authority? Are (some) groups subject to discrimination?
- What is the role of the school?
- Is there a language and/or culture barrier? How many people are literate?
- What is the attitude of local people towards imperative problems?
- Is there access to early warning systems? Are they utilized? Understood?

Information can be gathered by using the VCA tools that will be later discussed in this manual. A clear overview which tools can be used to asses vulnerability will also be presented.

2.2.2 Capacity Assessment

A Capacity Assessment is done to find out the abilities and opportunities, including resources, means, and skills, motivations that exist in individuals, households and communities. This capacity can enable them to anticipate and prepare for disasters, to cope with it, resist it and recover from its impacts. A Capacity Assessment is conducted in relation to a Vulnerability Assessment since both elements are interlinked.[9]

Capacities are assessed alongside vulnerabilities and are specific to time, place, particular hazards and groups of people. Capacity is a key element in understanding and reducing vulnerability of people and VCA methodologies should be designed to consider this. Each VCA should therefore be planned according to its purpose and based on the situation of the locality.

VCA considers a wide range of pressures that are main component of vulnerability of individual or community: **Livelihoods**, **Well-Being**, **Self-protection**, **Social protection**, and **Governance.** Similar to the Vulnerability Assessment, Capacity can also be categorized into these components (see Table 2).

[9] Based on UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction (2009) http://undp.org.ge/new/files/24_619_762164_UNISDR-terminology-2009-eng.pdf

Type	*Vulnerabilities*	*Capacities*
Livelihoods	• One crop agriculture • Low income • Limited option for livelihoods • Indebtedness • Relief/welfare dependency	• Secure livelihoods • Financial reserves • Diversified agriculture and economy
Well-being	• High Density Population • High-density occupation of sites and buildings • Lack of mobility • Low perceptions of risk among community • Vulnerable groups and individuals • Lack of education • Poverty • Poor nutrition	• Good health care facilities • High literacy • Good infrastructure of electricity and roads • Ethical standards
Self protection and Social protection	• Unsafe Houses-located near hazard prone area • Unsafe infrastructure (Road, Dyke, electricity) • Unsafe critical facilities (Health, Schools, Transportation, Drainage etc) • Rapid urbanization • Habit to collect collapsed trees, wood for fuel during storm	• Coping mechanisms • Memory of past disasters • Resilient buildings and well developed infrastructure that cope disasters • Maintenance mechanism of existing infrastructure and facilities • Community solidarity
Governance	• Lack of systemized planning of disaster preparedness and response • Poor management and leadership • Poor land management procedures	• Local leadership • Good governance • Active mass-organization • Presence of VNRC Volunteers • Local non-governmental organizations • Well-developed commune level plans for flood and storm control preparedness and response • Responsible natural resource management

Table 2: Capacity Analysis

Information can be gathered by using the VCA tools that will be later discussed in this manual. A clear overview which tools can be used to asses capacity will also be presented.

2.2.3 Hazard Assessment

A Hazard Assessment is a process that community members undertake to collect information and interpret information on hazards and threats that can have an impact on the community.

Purpose of Hazard Assessments:

- Understanding general situation of community
- Identification, investigation and monitoring of any hazard to determine its potential, origin, characteristics and behaviours
- Raising awareness on hazards, disasters, its causes and effects based on disaster that happened in the past, frequency and types of disaster
- Diagnosing/raising community awareness on trends in hazards (e.g. climate) and the impact of hazards on the community

Information to be collected:

- Source or the root of the hazard (factors)
- Warning signals
- Time from when warning is issued to when the hazard happens
- Strength and scope of the hazard (losses)
- Frequency
- Duration (how long the hazard takes)
- What kind of disaster
- Level of impact and losses
- Need to emphasize the collection of information and what information needs collecting

Information can be gathered by using the VCA tools that will be later discussed in this manual. A clear overview which tools can be used to asses hazards will also be presented.

Suggested questions

- What kind of natural hazards often occur in the area? Moreover, what is the biggest impact?
- What are the warning signals?
- In which months do the hazards occur?
- How many times a year do the hazards occur?
- Are there floods? How long do they last (one or two days)?
- What did you do when hearing, feeling and seeing warning signals?
- Which of the following are applicable to your situation? Social problems/imperative hazards: injuries accident, hunger-poverty, debt, illiteracy and unemployment, conflict.

- Which environmental and health problems (e.g. pollution, diseases) are present?
- Which changes of tendency of the above hazards (increases/reductions over a time period) may be noted?
- What are the impacts of those hazards to the lives of the people in the community?
- What are the changes of people's knowledge and attitude towards above hazards?

2.2.4 Risk assessment

As mentioned earlier, the relationship of hazards, vulnerability and capacity of a community is linked with disaster risk. A Risk Assessment determines the nature and extent of risk by analyzing potential hazards and evaluating existing conditions of vulnerability that could pose a potential threat or harm to people, property, services, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend.[10]

One example of a method to list the relationship between hazard, vulnerability, capacity and risk is provided in Table 3:

Hazard	Vulnerability	Capacity	Risk
Floods	✓ 98 households are living in unsafe houses near the coast (6 disabled people, 50 children under 12) ✓ 50 families living in low areas ✓ The malfunctioning loudspeaker system, can only reach 4 out of 6 villages ✓ 3 villages have no rescue teams ✓ 50% road is soil and weak ✓ Rice crop is mature at the time of flooding.	✓ Strong commune rapid response team (20 persons) ✓ 4 good rescue boats ✓ Good-functioning health post: personnel, materials, stock of medicine ✓ 3 rice trading families committed to loan rice. ✓ 2 private trucks can be mobilized.	✓ Human safety in 3 coastal villages and 2 flood-prone villages (especially children and disable) ✓ People loose residence: Houses collapsed and damaged ✓ Loss crops and later hunger for 50% of population.

Table 3:Vulnerability, Capacity and Risk towards flood

Information to be collected in order to understand the people's perception of risk:

- According to the people in the community, which hazards may cause most damage to them?
- What are their highest risks? Ask people to measure and rank the disaster risks.
- Which risk should be reduced first or what should be protected first? Which risks are acceptable?
- Which element(s) at risk need to be protected? Which are the highest priorities?

[10] based on UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction (2009) http://undp.org.ge/new/files/24_619_762164_UNISDR-terminology-2009-eng.pdf

2.2.5 Disaster Risk Reduction Measures

Disaster Risk Reduction Measures identification should be based on the information gathered through the VCA process. The VCA results should take the form of improvement to project design and implementation of local disaster risk reduction measures that increase community resilience. In addition, the VCA results can also be used for long term planning within broader risk reduction initiatives by the local authorities. Specific actions resulting from VCAs might include:

- A shift of emphasis to different economic and livelihood activities, or a different mixture of such activities;
- The introduction of economic support mechanisms (e.g., micro-credit, cash for work) and social support systems to increase the resilience of vulnerable communities;
- The repair, strengthening or redesign of vulnerable infrastructure and facilities;
- The relocation of vulnerable communities and facilities;
- New land use, planning or building regulations;
- The preparation of disaster mitigation and preparedness plans;
- The strengthening of institutions and communities to enable them to implement the recommended actions and provide a basis for initiating future actions;
- Formal contributions to policy debates, especially regarding the broader, underlying pressures contributing to vulnerability in the project area.

What are potential risks of this community?

PART B: PRINCIPLES OF VCA

CHAPTER 3: VCA APPROACHES

As stated in the previous chapter, a VCA should be led by the community itself. Therefore, to maximize the effectiveness of the process and its outcomes, a VCA needs to follow:

- Participatory approach
- Community development & capacity building
- Intensive inclusion of vulnerable groups

3.1 Participatory approach

A participatory approach is based on the notion of participation: the extent to which people are involved in decision making and related activities that have an impact on their lives and living conditions. Participation can range from people simply participating in an activity to people being the principal actors and decision makers in a complex process.

In the VCA process, communities should be fully engaged because:

- They themselves understand the local opportunities and constraints best;
- They have the greatest share in ensuring their own survival and well-being, given their own interest in the development of their community; and
- They have a good understanding of local realities, negotiation options and strategies to be adopted and should be at the forefront of empowered action to manage and reduce risk.

Therefore, participation of all sectors, particularly vulnerable groups is central to the success of VCA.

Based on Grassroots Democracy Principles[11] and following the four onsite motto,[12] that became the Government principle in disaster management the following key factors of participation must be considered during the VCA process.

- Participation involves the active engagement of "grassroots people". Those who have no power, who are vulnerable, underprivileged etc. should be paid the highest attention to be mobilized for VCA;
- Participation does not mean just being present and providing information. It should be contributing with ideas and knowledge during the process. Such ideas and knowledge should be acknowledged and appreciated;
- Participation of local authorities (people committees, local government, mass-organizations such as Women Union, Fatherland Organization, etc.) from the start of the VCA process is a pre-condition for an effective VCA, and the implementation of actions based on VCA findings;
- The local government should also allow the VCA to be executed fully and unhindered in order to ensure the most complete participation of community members.

[11] The Vietnamese government promulgated the Regulations on the exercise of democracy in communes in conjunction with Decree No. 29/1998/ND CP as of 15 May 1998 http://www.un.org.vn/.../vie02007/Downloads/PPO/Laws/Grassroots_democracy/D_29-1998-ND-CP-Grassroots_Democracy.doc

[12] On-spot forces, On-spot command, On-spot logistics, On-spot materials/equipment - CCFSC

3.2 Community Development and Capacity Building

Both community capacity building and community development are essential ways to build safer communities. A good VCA should consider these two issues, as it should create an enabling environment where people's knowledge and skills are improved to analyze their own situation and to identify and develop further solutions. The results of a VCA should be helpful to improve the general development of the community. Therefore, a VCA should not only focus on Disaster Risk Reduction, as many of the underlying causes of vulnerability are linked to the overall development of a commune. Addressing root causes of vulnerability such as lack of livelihoods, poverty and local level governance allow communities to understand the problems and the risk associated with it in an overall perspective.

Key Messages for Community Development through VCA

- Focus attention on the long-term impact of VCA that includes a community's capacity to deal with their day-to-day problem.
- While the role of government and non-government agencies is important, the primary requirement for grassroots development is local leadership and local responsibility.
- The communities must be helped to help themselves, and emphasis should be placed on building on their own coping and survival mechanisms. This will help in developing their capacity to deal with the situation.

A community focused and participatory VCA contributes to the capacity building of the commune in terms of awareness raising, grassroots participation and commune planning. The strong involvement of the commune inhabitants themselves (e.g. the commune catalyst) in conducting the VCA tools and analysis and making the plan to reduce vulnerabilities and increase capacities will motivate the commune inhabitants to work on that together and be the owner of this plan. A better understanding of the situation of the vulnerable groups, a better understanding of the responsibilities of the government and mass-organizations will contribute to a more active tackling of commune issues with their own resources.

3.3 Intensive inclusion of Vulnerable Groups

The community is always segmented and represents a heterogeneous group of people based on social/economic status, physical ability, age or psychological characteristics. In the event of a disaster, they are affected differently and the impact on each of them is varying. Such groups as women, children, elderly people, and people with disabilities, the poor, ethnic minorities, people with HIV/AIDS are identified as vulnerable groups. Those groups are always affected the most by disasters, while having the lowest resilience capacity. As such, it is very important that they participate in the VCA process themselves. Each of these

vulnerable groups requires special attention in any planning that is community centred. For the VCA process to succeed, a focus on vulnerable groups while using VCA tools as well as their participation in the process is the most important.

The vulnerable groups are often underrepresented. Furthermore, not enough attention is given to address their specific situation due to unequal power relations within the community. While conducting a VCA the following key consideration should be taken into account with regard to vulnerable groups:

- Adopt procedures to ensure the representation of relevant vulnerable groups in the assessment. Further on in the manual we will give advice on how to engage the vulnerable groups in VCA tools;
- Be very sensitive about gender issues during the whole process by assuring the highest participation of women, especially those who are in difficult circumstances (single mothers and women who are responsible for the income of the whole family);
- Be aware of cultural sensitivities and elements, which may over-emphasize or under-emphasize (e.g. hide) certain groups in the assessment;
- Analyze existing social conditions and relationships interacting amongst different groups;
- Conduct an impact assessment of disaster and relief activities with these vulnerable groups (if applicable).

Village meeting in Ea'r Bin commune, Lac district, Dac Lac

The following tables provide guidance on some of the points to consider and the associated practical considerations to conduct a VCA that includes the vulnerable groups.

CHILDREN		
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VULNERABILITY	CAPACITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VCA
✓ Do not have physical strength as compared to older people ✓ Curiosity can lead to risky situations ✓ Do not have experiential knowledge that older people may have ✓ Less able to control their emotions and may experience psychological effects due to distressing situations	✓ Can play significant roles in assisting their families and communities during the initial impacts and in the aftermath of disaster ✓ Older children can look after younger children ✓ Support network for peers ✓ Can organize volunteer groups to promote protection / safety of children in school and communities ✓ Ability to learn fast ✓ Naturally, they are more flexible to think outside the box compared to adults.	✓ Get information on the total number of children according to age group and gender (Children have specific needs at specific ages, and specific needs dependent on gender). ✓ Children see things from a different perspective to adults given the different ways they interact with their environment, nature of social networks. Therefore, VCA activities with children are likely to yield additional information. ✓ VCA with children should be age specific. Young children may need a more directed exercise such as drawing, whereas teenagers can engage in focus group discussion or even lead a workshop investigating vulnerabilities and capacities. ✓ Mapping is a particularly useful tool to use with children as they will often spend more time in some areas of the locality more than adults (particularly in urban settings). ✓ Focus group discussion with children may often provide information on social issues that may not be perceived as such by adults ✓ "Children, adolescents and young adults are going to experience the most change out of anyone in the community during their lifetimes. It is important that you gather not only information from them but also ensure that they participate both in discussions about change and the chosen strategies to deal with it."

WOMEN		
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VULNERABILITY	CAPACITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VCA
✓ Physical factors: pregnancy, strength, clothing ✓ Reproductive health needs (pregnancy, childbirth) ✓ Cultural devaluation of women / girls in some regions ✓ Social exclusion of women on their own (e.g. widows, household heads) ✓ Different employment opportunities and lower pay than men. ✓ Less opportunity and experience to raise their concerns	✓ Women survivors are vital first responders and rebuilders, not passive victims ✓ Women-led households are not necessarily the poorest or most vulnerable ✓ Women are not economic dependents but producers, community workers, earners ✓ Women hold unique gendered knowledge that is important to decision making	✓ Engage women and men in VCA process equally ✓ Focus group discussions with women in the community with women facilitators are encouraged ✓ Collect gender-specific data (total number of women, include also data on pregnancy and lactating women) ✓ Identify and assess gender-specific needs ✓ Identify and support women's contributions to informal early warning systems, school and home preparedness, community solidarity, community awareness, CBFA etc. ✓ Assess the short and long term impacts of programs on women/ men of all disaster initiatives

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs)		
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VULNERABILITY	CAPACITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VCA
✓ Lack of access to resources / support ✓ Social exclusion ✓ Limited livelihood options ✓ Limited access to evacuation (and information) in disaster. ✓ Comparative poverty ✓ Unaware of their rights (and part of the society is also not aware of the rights of the handicapped)	✓ Can be involved in awareness raising and dissemination of information ✓ Play vital roles during disaster response and relief operation (Such as Clerical staff etc.) ✓ Maintaining social networks ✓ People with Disabilities experiences can be drawn on when planning safer communities (an inclusive community is safer for all inhabitants)	✓ There are different types and degrees of disability (physical, hearing/speech, visual, intellectual, mental illness). This has implications for conduct of VCA ✓ People with Disabilities are often hidden away in many communities. It is important to make efforts to find and involve these people in VCA ✓ Focus group discussions with people with disabilities should be held to ensure they have the opportunity to get their views and ideas heard ✓ People with disabilities should participate in mapping (are identified evacuation routes accessible to all?) ✓ Speak directly with people with disabilities as they are the best source of information regarding their needs ✓ Ensure that all your messages are communicated using multiple formats ✓ Prepare to conduct assessments with alternative means of communications (drawings, symbols, body language, etc.)

ELDERLY		
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VULNERABILITY	CAPACITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VCA
✓ Physically weak ✓ Poor health ✓ Financially insecure ✓ May not want to leave their homes ✓ Lack of access to information ✓ Do not want to be a burden to their children and so they may not easily accept their children's help	✓ Experience of how to explain disaster ✓ Tradition and folklore reflecting experiences ✓ Respected and influential in the community (important for role in VCA) ✓ Understanding the history	✓ The elderly have a particularly valuable role to play when using Historical Profile and Historical Visualization and Projection ✓ Historical knowledge of the elderly also could make identification of future trends more accurate (particularly the impact of climate change) ✓ The use of these tools also provides a useful opportunity to share historical information with younger members of the community

Elderly actively participate in VCA process

POOR (Rural and Urban)		
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VULNERABILITY	CAPACITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VCA
✓ Lack of stable employment, low income ✓ Temporary housing ✓ Majority are internal migrants/ often-illegal migrants ✓ Low level of access to education ✓ Lack capital funds and often need to work excessive hours. ✓ Health problems due to lack of access to medical treatment ✓ Live in very poor environmental conditions. ✓ Often have to care for many children. ✓ Low social cohesion among new migrant populations ✓ Susceptible to social negatives and inequalities in policy ✓ Issues pertaining to land tenure and associated common amenities such as hospitals, schools etc. ✓ Rural poor often agriculturally dependent which leads to vulnerability to natural hazards	✓ Capacity to recover quickly ✓ Willing to support others in the community ✓ Flexible when finding livelihoods ✓ Adapt quickly to new living environment ✓ Urban poor have often better education compared to rural poor areas	✓ Spend more time on the ground since urban poor population is heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. ✓ Spend time looking into the root causes of poverty, this also leads to vulnerability to disaster.

ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS		
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO VULNERABILITY	CAPACITIES	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VCA
✓ Lack of access to education, information and skills ✓ Often live in remote, isolated areas (potentially dangerous). ✓ Less developed infrastructure in remote areas. ✓ Low understanding by others of customs and traditions of some ethnic groups ✓ High levels of poverty ✓ Income depend on weather and environment conditions ✓ Lack of understanding the majorities languages	✓ Good level of assistance to each other ✓ Good natural shelter ✓ Culture and tradition handed from generation to generation ✓ Knowledge of how to use local materials ✓ Mobilize strengths of community ✓ Indigenous Knowledge on coping with natural disasters	✓ Find out about indigenous coping capacities for disasters ✓ May provide substantial information on the impact of changing climate when doing historical profile and historical visualization and projection ✓ Prepare for a different language with engaging a translator

Table 4: Involving Vulnerable groups

Sharing indigenous knowledge in Hua Pang commune, Moc Chau district, Son La

CHAPTER 4: ADDRESSING EMERGING CONCERNS IN VCA

While addressing natural hazards, its underlying risks and impact in a VCA, it is important to take into account the factors changing the nature of such hazards and the way this is affecting people. The nature of floods, storms, typhoons, drought and other disasters has changed over recent decades and is affecting communities differently than before. The vulnerabilities of people have increased due to such unpredictable behavior. In recent times, additional threats such as Avian Influenza, epidemics, pollution and even the economic crisis have led to ever-increasing vulnerabilities within communities.

It is important for the Facilitators to understand those emerging trends while conducting the VCA. Addressing the risk of a commune is aimed at the future, therefore looking at the past is no longer sufficient. Facilitators should look at risks constantly changing and equip the community to deal with those risks.

The tools used for VCA must take into account issues like climate change and urbanization so that the overall vulnerability and capacity are a true representation of the problems faced by the community. In this manual, climate change and urbanization are discussed to give a general idea on its impact on vulnerability and capacity.

4.1 Climate Change

Climate change and extreme weather present a high potential to set back development efforts. Vietnam is one of the ten countries worst affected by sea level rise and more intense and frequent extreme weather.[13] Along with increased risk of more intense typhoons, salt-water intrusion, floods and droughts, climate change can also bring longer- term effects on temperature and seasons.

Some of the direct impacts of climate change are related to agricultural production, fisheries, forestry, human health, coastal zones and water resources. These have certainly increased the vulnerability of poor people and the attention results in an enhanced programmatic approach for disaster risk reduction. Obviously, climate change and its impact at the local level means that VCA needs to cover these emerging trends: during the collection and analysis of secondary data; while discussing hazards with the community; and during the analysis of such information. How this can be done will be explained later in this manual when the process and VCA tools will be discussed.

The objective of introducing climate change to the community when we are discussing disaster preparedness is because communities will face a future that might not be similar to their experiences from the past, and therefore they need to be prepared to cope with these new and potentially exacerbated risks.

[13] World Bank News Release, 12 February 2007 http://econ.worldbank.org

Effect of climate change on occurrence of disasters in Vietnam

Floods

Rainfall in all parts of Vietnam is becoming less predictable and falling at different times of the year as the rainy season shifts towards September – November. In the Mekong Delta, the annual Mekong flooding has been affected with a higher duration of inundation. Provinces of An Giang and Dong Thap has seen a different pattern of rainy season in recent years. This has affected the rice cultivation and fisheries.

Drought

Due to rainfall concentrating more in the rainy season, combined with higher temperatures and increased evapotranspiration, droughts are expected to occur more frequently in Vietnam. Vietnam's recent history counts several drought periods. Most recently, in 2004/2005 Ninh Thuan, Binh Thuan, Dac Nong, Dac Lac and Gia Lai provinces experienced severe drought. Drought affects communities in many ways, from hampering livelihood activities (e.g. effects on agriculture) to social disruption and increasing risks of famine and diseases due to lack of safe water. While other hazards like typhoons and floods have a high impact due to their sudden onset, drought is slow-onset, but has a long-term impact. Its duration may range from months to years and the area affected is often very large.

Typhoons

The occurrence of typhoons in Vietnam is said to have shifted to later in the year, and will make land fall further south. This means that people in these areas are unfamiliar with this hazard which exposes them. For example this was the case in December 2006, when typhoon Durian hit the Mekong area and caused a lot of casualties and damage because people were not prepared and experienced.

Sea level rise

During the past 30 years, the sea level has increased by five cm in Vietnam. It is predicted to rise further with about 9 cm in 2010, 33 cm in 2050, 45 cm in 2070 and 1 m in 2100. Vietnam is very vulnerable to sea level rise, as low-lying areas such as the Mekong delta and the Red River delta are densely populated. It is therefore predicted that an estimated 10.8 percent of the nation's population would be displaced with one -meter sea level rise. Sea level rise is not the only concern. Coupled with intense storms and/or typhoons it potentially means storm surges can reach further in land, affecting more people and larger areas.

Source: World Bank (2007) working paper, "The impact of sea level rise on developing countries: a comparative analysis"; Susmita Dasgupta, Benoit Laplante, Craig Meisner, David Wheeler, and Jianping Yan.

4.2 Urbanization in Vietnam

Like many South East Asian countries, Vietnam has a growing population and experiences more urbanization. Although this is an inevitable part of economic growth, urban society is experiencing serious internal breakdowns due to increasing inequalities, because of extreme income disparities. The interaction between urbanization based on rapid industrialization on the one hand led to internal population migration resulting in difficult living conditions. For most of the people who live in urban settings and who migrated to urban areas, making a living is the main concern. This has already led to increased vulnerability due to strain on the existing infrastructure, growth of improvised settlements and other social issues. Vietnam has seen such changes in the last couple of decades as more industrialization is happening and people are moving to urban settings in search of better opportunities.

Factors contributing to vulnerabilities in urban settings

- Migrated population from rural areas (poverty is getting migrated to cities) in most cases
- Living in informal settlements
- Vulnerable housing and infrastructure,
- Poor health and sanitation facilities
- No regular income sources
- Mostly located in areas prone to various hazards

Assessing vulnerability and capacity in urban settings is a difficult task and using VCA methods that originally focus on rural areas do not always yield proper results. As said before, for people living in urban areas, livelihood and survival is the main issue so there may be less attention to existing or future hazards. In addition, the "community" approach is not really accepted by such populations, given that there are often no historic and social connections amongst people and that these populations are more transient than those in rural areas. Networks are often complex and vary significantly depending on the individual circumstances. In addition, disaster preparedness in urban areas receives less attention than disaster preparedness in rural areas, while the potential risks in urban areas may be even higher. On the other hand, in urban areas it may be easier for the government and social organizations to act effectively, due to the population density and the relatively good infrastructure.

To include urban settings in disaster risk reduction interventions, proper evaluation of vulnerability and potential risk should be conducted by creating awareness in the community. It is important to conduct awareness programs to bridge the gap between the community perception and the emerging risk in urban settings.

In urban areas, coordination among all stakeholders and mobilizing the support for building a safety culture is one of the main aspects before conducting the VCA process. Community mobilization is an essential function of the capacity building process. Advocacy within the community as well as with the city government authorities for disaster risk reduction as part of an urban development process would be very helpful.

CHAPTER 5: LINKING VCA WITH DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNMENT PLANS

There should be a strong link between DRR and social economic development in general and between DRR and the local development plan in particular. Obviously, if a commune wants to work on poverty alleviation they should take into account the consequences of disasters and impact of disaster management programs to prevent and mitigate these disasters.

For example, the initial goal of a Mangrove plantation program is to reduce the impact of disasters such as typhoons. At the same time, it helps to build feeding and breeding habitats for fish, which in returns provides livelihood options and food security for the communities. The construction of infrastructure (e.g. a road or dam) sometimes negatively influences the vulnerability of a commune, as it could lead to floodings. Building flood protection schemes in certain village could similarly transfer the risk to other communities. As a result, development can in certain cases contribute to an increase in vulnerability.

The VCA conducted by the VNRC Facilitators should not be limited to initiate community disaster risk reduction programs but should also deliver valuable inputs to local government plans and programs on disaster risk reduction and development. The VCA outputs should be taken into consideration while developing the commune plans as it provides good and participatory information on communities' problems and solutions. There are three reasons why there is a need to integrate VCA results into development & disaster management programs.

- To guarantee that the design of development programs and projects take into account potential disaster risks in the local community;
- To ascertain that all the development programs and projects do not further increase vulnerability to disaster in all thematic areas: social, physical, and economic and environmental;
- To ascertain that all the disaster relief and rehabilitation programs and projects are designed to contribute to reducing future disaster risk in the community.

Activities related to linking & using the findings of VCA could be planned based on the results of the institutional and social network analysis (Venn diagram). This is a useful tool to assess the relations of the community with local, district and national government bodies and identify opportunities for engagement with local government entities.

5.1 Linking Disaster Risk Reduction into Development

Disaster reduction is linked with development for the following reasons:

- The underlying causes of poverty, unsustainable development and disasters are often the same;
- Disasters can put development at risk and make it unsustainable. Hence, effective disaster risk reduction contributes to sustainable development;
- Development can cause or reduce disaster risks. Failed development contributes to poverty and vulnerability. In contrast, sustainable development strengthens the security of populations so that disaster reduction interventions can effectively help them to alleviate or avoid disaster risks to themselves and the supporting physical, economic, and social bases of their livelihoods.

Some recent practical examples from Vietnam:

Link between disasters and development	**Situation in Vietnam**
Infrastructure can Increase Vulnerability	• Construction of dams (and roads) leads to flooding of nearby communities • In Mekong River Delta the government have re-housed people in safer location but this has other negative impacts on livelihoods (i.e. locally available options such as fishing in a nearby canal may no longer be available)
Disaster can set back Development	• After Typhoon Linda in 1997, thousands of fishing boats were damaged, causing the loss of livelihoods • In 2006, a commune (Ben Tre province) was hit by a storm, many people went bankrupt (27 out of 50 became indebted)[13]
Development can reduce vulnerability	• People that have more money are able to build their houses better (and typhoon proof) • Stable income will lead to less dangerous livelihoods • Better education helps people to understand their vulnerability and make a plan to improve their capacity

Table 5: Examples of link between disaster and development in Vietnam

[13] Theo thông tin của ông Nguyễn Trọng Nghĩa, Hội Chữ thập đỏ Bến Tre, dựa trên Ủy ban Nhân dân địa phương

5.2 Linking VCA with local government plan for development

Each year, the People Committees of the communes prepare an annual local developmental plan and submit this to the district and provincial authorities to request support for implementation. Each Province, district and commune that is prone to storms and floods in Vietnam is also required by the government to produce an annual disaster preparedness plan. However, these plans are often developed in a top-down method and often based on predicted budget allocations. Ideally, the results of VCA should feed into the communes' disaster preparedness plans and into the DRR part of the development plans. These plans will be shared with the district People Committee by the Commune People Committee. With this, the results of VCA at commune level will influence the government planning at a higher level.

VNRC Facilitators in their Disaster Preparedness programs have conducted a large number of VCAs in different communes nationwide. From these communes, the People Committee used the result of the VCAs for their annual Disaster Preparedness plan.[14] During these projects the VNRC submitted the VCA report to the governments, advocated for the acceptance of this report and advised to adopt the analyses in their DP plan.

Most recently the VCA facilitated by the VNRC addresses a broader scope of the commune life, with taking into account the underlying factors of vulnerability (e.g. livelihood, health). The results of the VCA are now also intended to be integrated in the Social Economic Plan of the commune. In order to reach this, the VNRC involves all stakeholders in the process to integrate the result into the sectoral plan and the overall commune plan.

5.3 Advocacy for VCA

Advocacy is a powerful tool to create and strengthen the linkage of VCAs with the development and the local government development plan. Advocacy entails actions directed at influencing people, policies, structures and systems in order to bring about change. It is about influencing those who make policy decisions.[15] Advocacy is an important step in the VCA process. We need to do advocacy to convince the local government such as the hamlet heads, commune leaders etc. to support the VCA process itself and to accept the VCA report for guidance in designing commune actions. Once the local government understands that the VCA results are not limited to a particular situation but could have a long-term impact to the lives of the people, it will maximize participation of community members.

[14] In the past the purpose of the VCA by VNRC was to help the commune to help to prepare the DP plan only, with a main focus on protective measures.

[15] based on UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction (2009) http://undp.org.ge/new/files/24_619_762164_UNISDR-terminology-2009-eng.pdf

For the Facilitators it is good to realize that not many local level authorities know about VCA and its potential benefit for overall commune development. As a result this is not necessarily an easy task, however it is crucial for the VCA process and its application to have a good advocacy result. The Facilitators should remember that the decision to undertake a VCA process in a particular commune is made after careful assessment of the problems that the community face. Subsequently the VCA should help the Commune PC to make decisions based on the VCA results in planning for their own developmental work.

Voice of children in VCA process

VULNERABILITY AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (VCA)

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