

# A practical step by step VCA guide for Red Cross and Red Crescent field practitioners and volunteers



# The International Federation's Global Agenda (2006–2010)

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Over the next two years, the collective focus of the Federation will be on achieving the following goals and priorities:

## ***Our goals***

**Goal 1:** Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.

**Goal 2:** Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.

**Goal 3:** Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.

**Goal 4:** Promote respect for diversity and human dignity, and reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion.

## ***Our priorities***

Improving our local, regional and international capacity to respond to disasters and public health emergencies.

Scaling up our actions with vulnerable communities in health promotion, disease prevention and disaster risk reduction.

Increasing significantly our HIV/AIDS programming and advocacy.

Renewing our advocacy on priority humanitarian issues, especially fighting intolerance, stigma and discrimination, and promoting disaster risk reduction.

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*Cover photo: Timor Leste Red Cross and Lao Red Cross*

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International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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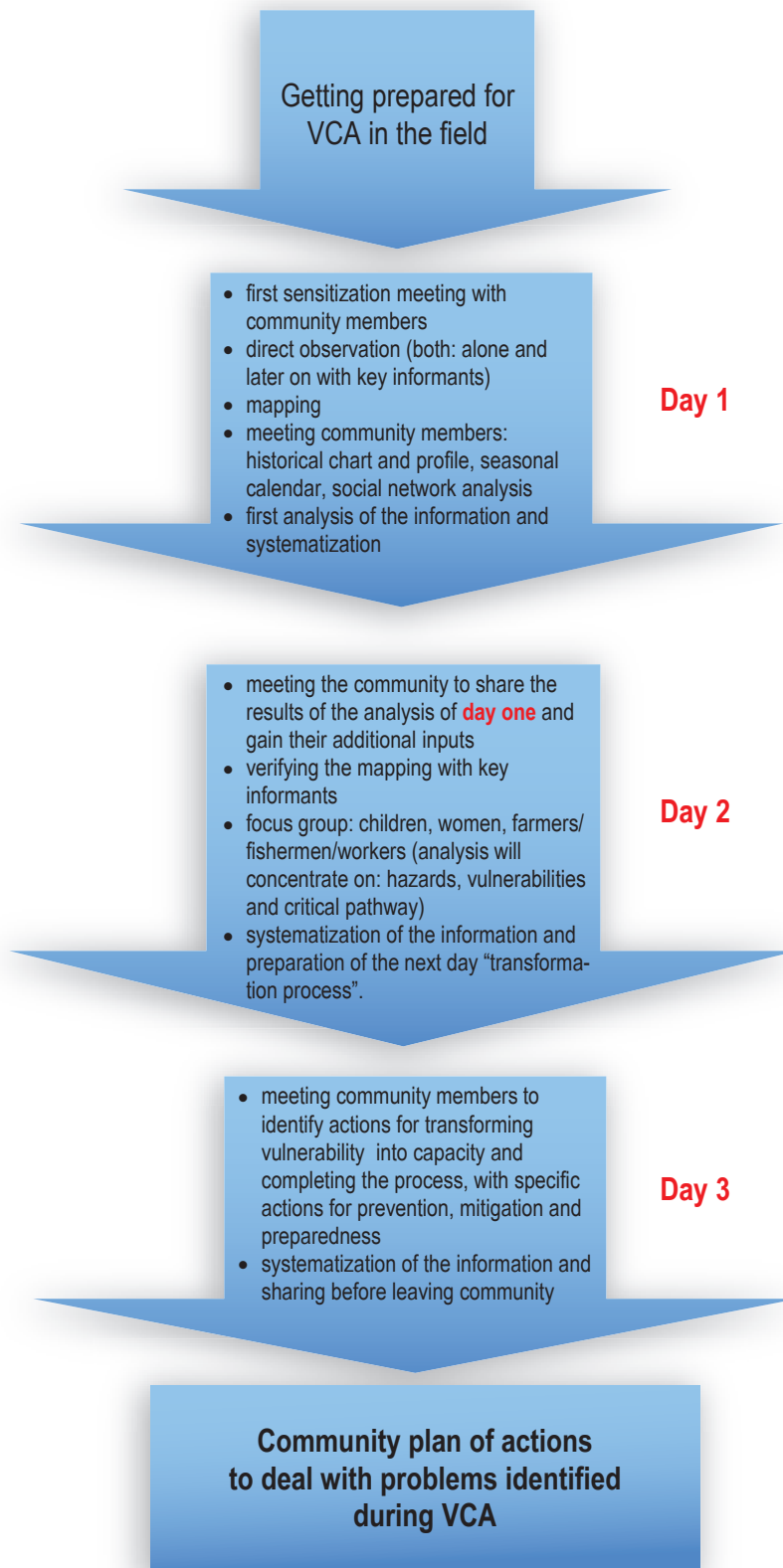
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# A practical step by step VCA guide for Red Cross and Red Crescent field practitioners and volunteers

## VCA is one of the best community based planning tools

The structure of the guidelines can be illustrated as follows:





## 1. Background

The VCA is a key element of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (International Federation) disaster management systems. With support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO), the VCA methodology was updated in early 2007 and many National Societies worldwide are being trained in its use.

In South-East Asia, the use of VCA, geographical information systems (GIS) and other risk- assessment tools to identify and monitor disaster risks is now widespread among National Societies. For example is after the Indian Ocean tsunami and Yogyakarta earthquake, the Indonesian Red Cross Society, known as the Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI), stepped up its activities, using both VCA and GIS, to identify local risks and

relevant solutions for recovery and community-based programmes in the affected areas of Aceh and Yogyakarta. Maps were created to illustrate survey results, shelter locations and housing construction areas. The maps have been used by the PMI to help targeting and prioritization of assistance and also help to identify type of assistance and coordinate use of Red Cross Red Crescent partners' resources.

In November 2007, a South-East Asian regional VCA course hosted by Lao Red Cross which welcomed 25 participants from National Societies in the region to learn the latest methodology and approach from the revised International Federation VCA publications. There was a request from participants to develop some sort of guiding material with a common regional approach to VCA. The idea was to adapt global International Federation VCA tools for the South-East Asian context to support National Society assessment processes through the development of regional guidelines. Based on the

### Lessons learnt from practice

#### A. Integration and mainstreaming

1. National Societies should develop clear objectives at the beginning of the VCA process and ensure they are fully communicated with all levels, especially at the community level with National Society volunteers, villagers and local authorities.
2. Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) incorporated VCA into its integrated community-based disaster risk reduction programme as an assessment tool or entry point. Risk analysis and hazard mapping, which are component of VCA, can help identify high-risk communities where a disaster risk reduction project could be initiated.
3. VCA results should be integrated into not only disaster management, but health and care and organizational development (volunteer development).
4. VCA results have been shared with different stakeholders inside and outside the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, especially local government, which has aided integration. For example the Cambodian, Indonesian and Viet Nam Red Cross Societies included the local authorities in the process.

#### B. Advocacy

1. VCA should be advocated to National Society leaders to gain their support in terms of policy, and human and financial resources.
2. More advocacy at different levels can link VCA results with a community's overall socio-economic development plan.

#### C. Project/programme design

1. Involve the right people. For example, in the PMI a core team set up VCA including a task force with knowledge and skills in VCA to train SATGANA (disaster preparedness and response teams) at district branch level. Then SATGANA provided training for village-level community-based action teams on how to conduct assessments using VCA as a tool.
2. Coordination among different National Society departments/divisions such as disaster management, health and organizational development should be taken into consideration to VCA can be better integrated into National Society programmes. Ideally, the VCA should be done jointly with other departments/divisions.
3. Most VCAs are done on a project basis only. For a longer term effect, National Society strategic plans should include VCAs and longer-term interventions in high risk communities.

#### D. Capacity building

1. To empower of the community, VCAs should maximize the use of community resources, participation and commitment in whole process. To ensure ownership by the community, there must be genuine community participation from project design through to monitoring, reviewing and evaluating.
2. It is important to involve members of the community from the start of the process to build their capacity to take further actions to reduce their risks and vulnerabilities, and to build safer and resilient communities. This means "working with them rather than working for them".

experiences of Red Cross Red Crescent and external partners, it aims to guide National Societies in conducting VCA and adapt the VCA process to their own countries.

One of the challenges faced while formulating and implementing the project or program is that VCA results are not well integrated and adopted as a sustainable developmental plan for communities. In addition, a lack of community participation hampers the best use of community knowledge and materials in implementing VCA. Some key lessons learnt from the implementation of VCA in the last several years are defined here for consideration before, during and after rolling out VCA in our region.

## 2. Our approach

**South-East Asian Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies' reduce disaster risks and build safer and more resilient communities by:**

1. enhancing the capacity of National Societies to better deliver services to the most vulnerable communities
2. enhancing the level of awareness and knowledge on the community about what to do before, during and after disasters
3. identifying misconceptions in communities regarding disasters and by providing accurate knowledge that enables them to better deal with disasters
4. strengthening the capacity of communities to identify and monitor potential hazards and risks, and to map available resources
5. motivating communities to participate in mitigation activities that save lives and livelihoods
6. supporting sustainable networks and partnerships that advocate for disaster risk reduction (prevention, preparedness and mitigation)

### What is VCA?

The VCA is an investigation that uses various participatory tools to understand the level of people's exposure to hazards at the grass-roots level. It is also a tool that enables local priorities to be identified and leads to the design of actions that contribute to disaster risk reduction. VCA identification must be linked with other programmes and activities so that they can be mutually reinforcing.

### What is VCA not?

VCA has its limitations. The entire process could take the wrong course if it is not clearly understood and applied. Sometimes, the capacity-building element of the entire VCA process is wrongly adopted or developed by National Society staff and

Community members rank their problems - LAO RED CROSS



volunteers, who try to link it with institutional and organizational capacity building.

## 3. VCA process and guidelines:

A process for VCA

### 12-step guide to effective VCA (moving from investigation to action)

#### Level 1: National Society support

1. understanding why VCA is being proposed
2. sensitizing (National Society leadership, branches, and partners)
3. setting up a management structure for conducting VCA
4. setting the VCA objectives (e.g. where)

#### Level 2: from assessment to planning

5. planning the VCA (e.g. who will do what, how and when)
6. preparation phase
7. using investigative tools within the community
8. systematizing, analysing and interpreting the data
9. returning information to the community and deciding priorities and actions for transformation

#### Level 3: from planning to action

10. turning vulnerabilities into capacities through practical actions
11. recommendations and report writing for local authorities, donors and partners
12. community intervention/actions for reducing identified risks where applicable

## Level 1: National Society support

**Step 1:** The first and the most critical question are: **Why is a VCA being proposed and will it help reduce vulnerability in communities?**

### Before doing a VCA, ask:

- Is your National Society willing to get involved in working in a participatory manner with communities over the medium to long term?
- Is VCA the most appropriate process for what you are trying to achieve or are there any other methods you should be using?
- Do you have the resources and skills to undertake a VCA and to do the required follow-up?
- Is your National Society willing to make the necessary investments in training staff and volunteers in community works?
- Are there other departments prepared to respond if community needs arise that are not part of disaster management?

**Tip:** The decision to undertake a VCA cannot be taken lightly. It requires time, effort and serious responsibility involving the National Society's headquarters and its branches, as well as communities.

**Step 2: Sensitizing** National Society leaders, branches, local authorities and partners to VCA in getting their support for the whole process.

### Step 3: Setting up a management structure for conducting VCA

A management structure on several levels must be created to ensure that the VCA functions effectively, (see figure 1).

#### Useful tips on forming a management structure

When forming the management structure, make sure the following tasks are completed.

- Draw up terms of reference, to include the roles and responsibilities (division of tasks) of all those involved, whether they are part of management committee or not (e.g., the board, the secretary general, etc.).
- Obtain a clear commitment from those involved.
- Outline what is needed for the structure to function (e.g. time, resources, communication channels, etc.).
- Identify potential problems that could occur and possible solutions to them (e.g. relations between different levels).
- Identify when to dissolve the structure.

### Step 4: Setting VCA objectives

The following should be kept in mind in defining objectives:

- The overall objective should answer the question: Why

Figure 1: Management structure for conducting VCA



do you want to undertake a VCA?

- Particular objectives should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART), as well as clear and understood by all.
- Use a participatory process to develop objectives.
- Achieve a strong consensus and commitment among those involved to avoid future problems.
- Determine the size and parameters of the VCA, by answering questions such as: Where will the VCA be implemented? How many communities and which branches will be involved? What human and financial resources are available?
- What are the cultural attitudes and practices of the communities where the VCA will be carried out?

## Level 2: from assessment to planning

### Step 5: Planning the VCA

Now your National Society has decided to carry out a VCA, you have a management structure in place, objectives have been developed and everybody is enthusiastic about starting the VCA. What is the next step? (see table 1)

### Step 6: Preparation phase

This initial phase includes:

- identification of participating branches and communities
- selection and training of staff and volunteers (the implementing team)
- identification and acquisition of necessary resources such as human (Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers) and financial resources
- identification and selection of investigation tools to use in the VCA



Table 1: A sample matrix for VCA

Phases	Activities	Who will ensure it is done?	Resources needed	Jan	Feb	March	April
Preparation	1.						
	2.						
Implementation	1.						
	2.						
Analysis	1.						
	2.						
Project planning & action	1.						
	2.						

**Community identification**

- Which communities are particularly vulnerable?
- In how many communities should a VCA be carried out?
- Is the branch experienced in working with communities? Can the VCA be linked to other National Society activities?
- Is the community interested? Is it sufficiently organized?
- What is the branch capacity? Does it have sufficient number of volunteers to involve in the whole process and to do a longer term follow up?
- Are other non-governmental organizations working in nearby communities? Could you work in partnership with them?

*Tip: It is up to community members to decide whether or not to become involved. If they decide to participate, they will be able to help the team with information gathering. They know best with whom the team should talk, when the best time to find people is and where they can be found.*

**Selection of team members**

- Identify key skills needed for the whole process. Ideally you will develop a multidisciplinary team with skilled people with different background and local context exposure to ensure community issues are clearly explained and identified.
- Diversity: ensure as much as possible the gender balance; minority group representatives should be considered as well.
- Commitment: members should be available and committed for the whole process

**Training course**

All team members must be equipped with all aspects of VCA. Experience has shown that at least two to three consecutive days are needed to train the team.

**Identification of tools to be used in VCA**

All of the tools are designed to identify and understand the difference types of vulnerabilities and capacities. The selection of tools should be based on the following criteria:

- information needed
- number of team members
- timeframe
- community culture
- behavior, norms and experience of the team members

**After all things above are prepared and in place, you are ready to start VCA days in a community where step 7, 8 & 9 in *Level 2* and step 10, 11 & 12 *Level 3* would be addressed.**



Community people should be in driving seat for the whole process  
- VIETNAM RED CROSS

## Women participation in VCA is essential - LAO RED CROSS



The following is a suggested path for conducting a VCA day-by-day in the field and the path's expected outcomes.

### Day one

1. first sensitization meeting with community members
2. direct observation (both: alone and later on with key informants)
3. mapping
4. meeting with community members: historical chart and profile, seasonal calendar, social network analysis
5. first analysis of the information and collection.

#### 1. First sensitization meeting with community members

Reach consensus among the team members of the objectives and the outcomes of the meeting. Do not raise expectations too high. Ensure that communities understand the VCA is a participative assessment process through which they will find out more about helping themselves.

The aim of this meeting is to engage community members in the VCA process. Ensure community members understand the process and the needs to ensure relevant outcomes for their own community.

Agree the work plan with the community, to ensure they are fully aware of what the team will be doing and how it will be

done. Ensure the involvement of community members.

Finally, ask community members to share with the VCA team their opinion about the main hazards/obstacles/needs/issues they normally face.

#### 2. Direct observation

*Note that the results of this activity will be agreed later by the community. Careful recording of the information and collection will contribute significantly to reaching full agreement with the community.*

The team should systematically observe objects, people, events, relationships, participation and record these observations. This gives a better picture of the disaster/hazard situation, especially of things that are difficult to verbalize. This is a way of cross-checking verbal information.

#### There are two techniques:

1. direct observation; informal observation
2. participant observation

The following direct observation examples can help you to identify hazards and capacities in the field:

#### Infrastructure

1. drainage: availability, type, is it functional?
2. building: architectural design, proximity to other buildings, material type, shelter
3. sewerage system: availability, septic, soak away, sewer



lines

4. utilities: electricity, water, telephone
5. essential services: health clinics, police stations, hospitals, schools, markets, solid waste management, roads/transportation, post offices

### Practices and vulnerabilities

1. school (fire): no fire detector, extinguisher
2. playground (stampede): no safety rails, only one exit
3. petrol station (fire explosion): gas leakage, no fire hydrant
4. ponds (drowning, diseases): stagnant water
5. church/temple/mosque/pagoda (collapse): weak structure, old wooden building

### Socio-economic situation

1. house structure: well or poorly structured homes, utilities
2. environment: is the neighborhood clean and hazard free
3. family structure: nuclear family or extended family, are children taking care of children
4. living conditions: How do children appear to be (well nourished or mal-nourished; too crowded in the home); are school age children in school or at home; are adults at home with children?

### Livelihoods

1. what appears to be the main household income, e.g. a cash crop such as cocoa or coffee or a particular type of paid employment?
2. be aware that asset constraints vary from place to place, group to group and across income levels; poorer groups typically have more limited access to assets and are more constrained in their choice of livelihood strategies than



Ethnic groups' involvement should be seriously taken into consideration where applicable - VIETNAM RED CROSS

richer groups

3. different social groups within a community typically experience differing risk factors in their livelihoods; these need to be understood if vulnerability is to be reduced.

### Lifestyles

1. daily routine
2. family structures
3. community interaction
4. capacities
5. skills
6. buildings as shelters/meeting places
7. teams, organized leaders

## 3. Community mapping

One of the key ways of collecting VCA data is through the activity of community mapping. This offers an opportunity to identify in more detail the vulnerabilities and capacities such as living conditions, behavior and environmental factors.

Nowadays, GIS can provide a lot of detailed information regarding the main risk areas and vulnerabilities related to specific hazards. This kind of information is relevant for institutions that work on disaster risk reduction activities.

However, community mapping exercises give community members a greater awareness of their own Situation. Technological information may not reflect this because risks have to do with community behavior, attitudes, living conditions and identity. For example, a community map could identify drainage conditions and the possible collapse of the system because of garbage accumulation.

The team will need to work on the following types of maps:

**Map 1:** spatial map: an overview of the main features of an area in relation to space

**Map 2:** hazard/risk/vulnerability map: identify hazards and risks in the community. Each hazard should have a separate map

**Map 3:** capacity/resource map: draw a map showing local resources and capacities as well as the gender and ethnic differences or land use zones

Once all the maps are developed, the team will need to analyze the information and identify the most vulnerable people. Then a transect map can be drawn (see map 4 details below)

### Making sense of your data

This is best done as a group exercise. The following example identifies risks and capacities drawn from analyzing the maps:

**Risks:**

- poorly constructed and clustered houses are at high risk of flooding
- people are migrating due to high rate and neglect of the area
- poor drainage resulting in skin disease, flu-like symptoms etc
- lack of garbage disposal resulting in rodents and pest infestation
- clustered houses have the potential for block fires
- entire area is at sea level which increases the risk of flooding

**Capacities:**

- three levels of education are found in one area (primary, secondary and high)
- people are Willing to pass on knowledge and skills (fishing/farming/mechanics)
- a health centre provides needed health care
- new management for sanitation now addresses health concerns

- People are willing to discuss issues affecting their community

**Map 4:** Transect map

When drawing a transect map, consider:

- the analysis from the other maps (spatial map, hazard/risk/vulnerability map, capacity/resource map)
- as part of the analysis it was identified that the most critical areas of higher risk require better understanding of vulnerability.
- the risk analysis was developed taking into consideration the different potential hazards that threaten the community.

The following minimum elements should be included:

- type of ground/land conditions
- livelihood of the particular area
- level of local organization
- main hazards and risks
- conditions that increase vulnerability
- beliefs and values
- capacities



Risk analysis through mapping - THE THAI RED CROSS

Table 2: Example of historical visualization

	People	Houses	Trees	Livestock	Health	Facilities
1980	5 icons	4 icons	12 icons	4 icons	TB/yellow fever/ cancer/malaria	2 icons
1990	10 icons	5 icons	12 icons	4 icons	TB/cancer/ HIV AIDS/diabetes	3 icons
2000	10 icons	6 icons	4 icons	5 icons	TB/cancer/ HIV AIDS/diabetes	3 icons
2008	15 icons	6 icons	2 icons	6 icons		4 icons

### 4. Meeting community members

The meeting with the community will have two main objectives. They are to:

- gather more information using the tools listed below
- validate the information gained by direct observation by the VCA team with inputs from key informants

Remember that a participatory process is of great importance. It is not training. Make use of the tools and methods (questions-and-answer, group work, brain storming etc). You will need to fill in the following charts with community members (see the explanations below):

- historical chart
- historical profile
- seasonal calendar
- institutional and social analysis

Once you have finished the charts, share the results of the direct observation with them to get community feedback, input and ownership.

#### Historical calendar

In this activity, the team will create two charts:

- Chart one: historical visualization with graphic information
- Chart one: historical profile with written information

The team needs to gather information about what has happened in the past and produce a historical visualization and profile. The areas to be part of the analysis should be as wide as possible. These can include diseases, access to food, work, main disasters, violence, crime, trees and lifestyles among others. It gives an insight into past hazards, and changes in their nature, intensity and behavior. It helps us understand the present situation in the community (and the casual link

between hazards and vulnerabilities) and makes us aware of changes over time. (see table 2)

The chart developed by the team (both VCA team and community people) should reflect community history. The team should be encouraged to ask questions such as:

- what is this chart telling me?
- what has happened?
- why has it happened?
- What are the trends?

Analyse the chart by comparing the vertical and horizontal axes. Reading horizontally across the chart, the developments and events occurring within a decade can be compared with other decades by looking up or down.

#### Historical profile

While gathering information, address all the possible elements involved in community development. Starting with how they gained access to the land, ask about the building of the first houses, and the type of crops and livestock. Indicate when and how utilities were developed, when schools were build, how the community developed economically and what the main disasters were. Table 3 below is an example.

Table 3: Example of a historical profile

Year	Description
1970	Community established
1972	Huge migration 5,000 people arrived
1973	First built school, health center, etc
1980	Typhoon Nina hits
1981	Red Cross/Red Crescent branch set up with 5 volunteers
1983	First temple built
1990	Health centre completed



**Seasonal calendar**

This tool can be used to show different events (e.g., typhoons, floods), experiences (e.g., recession, long periods of droughts), activities (e.g., carnival, harvest) and conditions (e.g., social and economic) throughout the annual cycle. It identifies periods of stress, hazards, disease, hunger, debt and vulnerability. It identifies what people do during these periods, how they diversify sources of livelihood, when they have savings, when they have time for community activities and what their coping strategies are. The calendar identifies gender specific division of work both in times of disasters and during normal times.

The different types of problems are put into the vertical axis and the months of the year in the horizontal. Marking an ‘X’ indicates its presence in any one month. An example is shown in table 4 below.

**Institutional and social analysis**

Draw a diagram that shows key organizations, groups and individuals in a community, the nature of relationships and their level of importance. This is done to identify organizations (local and outside) their role/importance and perceptions that people have about them. Identify individuals, groups, organizations that play a role in disaster response and can

support the community. This is done by the following steps:

1. The VCA team and the community identify key organizations (six to eight) active in a specific community
2. The organizations are ranked on their geographical closeness to the community, five being the closest and one being the furthest away.
3. Then they are ranked on their importance to the community on a scale of one to five, five being the highest and one the lowest importance.

This tool shows that there are sometimes organizations that could be highly relevant to the community, but are too far away to service its needs. There are also other organizations that are working in the community, but have not been recognized by the community as relevant to them. The general idea is to reflect how some organizations could align themselves better with community needs. Using information from people in the area rather than making assumptions on their behalf should reduce the potential for misrepresentation.

*Note:* when doing the ranking, each member of the community will do his/her own ranking first on a piece of paper, verbally or graphically. Later, combine the answers to get an average. (table 5)

Table 4: Example of a seasonal calendar

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Low income				x			x	x	x			
High income	x	x	x								x	xx
Immigration and migration	x	x	x	x	x	xx					x	xx
Drug trafficking		x	x	x					x	x		x
Road accidents				x					x			X
Flu, coughs, colds	x										x	x
Typhoon						x	x	x	x	x	x	
Forest fire	x	x	x	x	x							
Drought						x	x	x				
Floods								x	x	x		
House fire												x

Table 5: Example of an institutional and social analysis

Institution	Closeness	Average	Importance	Average
Women’s Union	(1-1-2-4-2)	3	(1-1-2-1-1)	1.2
Red Cross/Red Crescent	(4-4-5-5-2)	4	(2-3-4-5-5)	3.8
Youth Union	(5-3-2-2-2)	2.6	(5-2-1-4-3)	2.5
Farmers’ Bank	(2-4-4-5-4)	3.8	(1-5-4-5-5)	4
AIDS Foundation	(1-4-5-4-1)	3	(1-5-5-4-2)	3.4
Health Centre	(3-5-5-3-5)	4.2	(5-5-4-5-5)	4.8

From investigation to action through maps - CAMBODIAN RED CROSS



**Some questions that may guide you:**

- What is the history of the organization?
- When was it created?
- Why was it created?
- How many members does it have? Are they active or passive?
- Is this number increasing or decreasing?
- What is their involvement during meetings?
- How are decisions taken?
- Does the group have a community development plan?
- Are the group’s committees functioning?
- What has the group contributed to the community in the past?

**5. Analysis of the information and systematization**

When you and your team meet again, develop the hazard matrix analysis, which VCA practitioners will recognize. This

is shown in table 6 below.

If the hazard matrix is properly done, it will be of significant value for the VCA. To fill in the hazard matrix, review the information you have gathered so far to answer these questions.

**1. What are the risks?**

- a. Identify the hazards in the community
- b. Determine the potential impacts in case the hazard became real (that is, if there was a disaster). In identifying the impact, include structural, non-structural, social, economic and other factors.) Who in the community would be worst affected?

**2. What makes people vulnerable?**

Identify all the existing capacities in the community capable of minimizing the identified risk, as well the

Table 6: Example of hazard matrix analysis

Hazard/problems/ issues	Potential risk	Vulnerabilities	Capacities	Immediate needs	Mitigation actions
Flood	1.	1.1	1.	1.	•
	2.	1.2	2.	2.	•
	3.	1.3	3.		•
	4.	1.4			•
		2.1			•



capacities that would be required to face up to the hazard.

### 3. What are the capacities?

- a. Identify the immediate needs in the event of a disaster occurring.
- b. Identify the possible mitigation actions if disaster occurred.

**Results of the day one will be four maps (spatial map, hazard/risk/vulnerability map, capacity/resource map and transect map) + historical visualization and profile, seasonal calendar and social network + hazard/risk/problem matrix.**

## Day two

1. Meet the community to share the results of the analysis of **day one** and to seek their additional inputs.
2. Verify the charts with key informants.
3. Meet focus groups of children, women, and farmers/fishermen/workers. The focus group will concentrate on hazards, vulnerabilities and critical pathway.
4. Collecting the information and preparing for the next day's "transformation process".

### 1. Meet the community to share the results of the analysis of **day one** and seek their additional inputs.

Share all the charts created so far with the community to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relevant information. Make any necessary changes in the charts with the community.

Later, split the community into sub-groups (randomly or by gender group etc.). Each sub-group then receives one chart, different to the other and is given about 15 minutes to review it and provide inputs. Later, the chart is rotated to other groups, who can see what inputs have been added by previous groups. This process continues until all charts have been revised

### 2. Verify the charts with key informants

The VCA team has already created a first draft of each chart. Now, ask key informants to give any extra, relevant information to improve the charts.

Make sure key informants understand that the final draft charts with their inputs will be presented during the community meeting on day three.



Direct observation is essential and integral during the course of VCA - LAO RED CROSS



Children should be part of VCA process - LAO RED CROSS



### 3. Focus group

The VCA team should select members of focus groups. It is particularly relevant to have a focus group activity with children and the elderly, apart from other economic or social considerations. It is extremely important to be aware of the local legal requirements and consent procedures to work with children and minors. In all situations, a teacher or social worker must be present.

There are different types of semi-structured interviews:

- group interview
- focus group discussion
- individual interview
- key-informant interview

The following questions could be a guide for your focus group discussions during your fieldwork:

1. Do you all live in the community and how long have you lived here?
2. What is your greatest concern?
3. What would you suggest can be done to fix the problems you are experiencing?
4. What infrastructure do you have in your community?
5. What are your concerns?
6. What diseases affect your community?
7. In the event of a fire, how would the community respond?
8. What do you do with your garbage?

9. What are the guidelines for construction or extending a building?
10. Where do you get your water for drinking, washing and bathing?
11. What is your daily routine?
12. Who are the persons living in this house? Give their age, sex and relationship.
13. How do you feel about living in this area?
14. Describe your family structure and how you provide for them.
15. What was your lifestyle before hurricane Ivan and after or what are the main changes in your daily life after typhoon Xangsane?
16. What have you already tried to fix your problems?

### 4. Collection of the information and preparations for day three's "transformation process" that results in finding new capacities

Once all the information gathered has been discussed and agreed with the community, it is useful to collect it into electronic form. However, if conditions do not allow the use of electricity, the information could be prepared on blackboard or flipchart paper. Whilst this can be time consuming, its importance should not be under-estimated.

Bringing happiness and smiles to people is part of Red Cross and Red Crescent mandate - **INDONESIAN RED CROSS**



## Day three

1. Meet community members to identify actions for transforming vulnerabilities into capacities, and to complete the process, with specific actions for prevention, mitigation and preparedness.
2. Collection of the information and sharing it before leaving community.

### 1. Meet community members to identify actions for transforming vulnerabilities into capacities

**Tip:** Sufficient time needs to be allocated if the VCA is to have an appropriate and long-term effect.

Having identified specific vulnerabilities within specific situations with the charts, it is necessary to break them down into concrete actions. For example, if a group has identified poor construction as a vulnerability in a possible earthquake, actions might include analysing construction techniques used by the community; accessing information regarding areas with a high risk of damage; structural analysis; identifying safe and dangerous areas in homes; actions to be taken during and immediately after an earthquake etc.

To transform vulnerability into capacity, use the following chart.  
**Transform vulnerabilities into capacities**

**Note:** this chart must be developed with or by the communities. Once hazards and vulnerabilities have been identified, the process for transforming them into capacities needs to be developed with community members. In this way, communities continue to increase their level of ownership. In addition, they will become empowered to undertake their own transformative actions. (table 7)

#### The “how” of transformation into concrete actions

Now we are going to analyse the mechanisms for ensuring the community can bring about the suggested actions. In order to do so, we need to bear in mind the following points:

- a. Can this be undertaken immediately?
- b. Does it require resources?
- c. Can we find the necessary resources ourselves? If yes, how?
- d. Does it require technical support? If so, Where from?

The solutions need to be part of the existing skills and/or resources of the community. If the solution requires money, funding needs to be part of the solution (with creative ideas such as raffles, parties, collections, etc). If it requires certain skills, these need to be found within the community itself, including friends, relations, etc. The last resort should be turning to people outside the affected community. (table 8)

Table 7: Example of transformation of vulnerabilities into capacities

Issues/problems/hazards	Risks/vulnerabilities	Actions to transform vulnerability into capacity
1. Lack of shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Too many people living in one house</li> <li>- No privacy</li> <li>- Social vulnerability</li> </ul>	Housing scheme
2. Lack of material for production (agriculture)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Malnutrition among children</li> <li>- School drop out</li> <li>- Hunger for a few months</li> <li>- Migration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide production tools</li> <li>- Vocational training</li> </ul>
3. Soil erosion (river and sea)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crop failure (due to salt water induction)</li> <li>- Aquaculture production failure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reinforce sea wall/river dykes</li> <li>- Planting trees to protect and reserve</li> </ul>
4. Lack of education/vocational training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low awareness of risks</li> <li>- Migration (men) then no- one cares when hazards come</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide awareness raising</li> <li>- Conduct vocational training</li> </ul>
5. Low income	Low quality of life	Income generation scheme
6. Narrow roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Road accidents</li> <li>- Difficulties in transportation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness</li> <li>- Widen roads</li> </ul>
7. No playground and other places to spend leisure time	Poor health	Build a playground

Table 8: An example of a chart to find solutions:

Actions	Short/medium/long term?	Is finance needed needed?	What resources are needed?	Is technical support needed?
1. Housing scheme	Long	Yes	Land (local authorities); labour (community); funds to procure construction materials (external donors)	Yes (construction engineering)
2. Providing production tools	Medium	Yes	Local authorities and community	No
3. Planting trees	Long	Yes	Land (local authorities); labour (community); seedlings (community and donors); protection (community)	Yes (agricultural engineering)
4. Awareness raising	Medium	Yes	Resource person (community); place (community); finance (local authorities/donors); equipment (community/ community-based organizations (CBOs)	Yes (technical modules from schools or other organizations)
5. Income generation scheme	Medium	Yes	Local authorities/banks/donors	Yes (technical)
6. Widen roads	Long	Yes	Government and community	Yes
7. Building a playground	Medium	Yes	Community, local authorities and donors	Yes



The above actions for transformation need to be taken into consideration for the next steps, where we hope to develop realistic activities within the community. The community's stakeholder analysis previously done (the institutional and social network analysis) will be an important starting point.

## 2. Collection of all information and sharing before leaving community

This is the time for your final collection process. Once done, the team should present their main findings and plan of action to the community (leaders and members) for cross-checking again before leaving the community and working on the final version. When the final report and plan of action are completed, share them with the community again. It is vital for them to hold resource mobilization meetings with other relevant stakeholders or donors to seek any support they need. The team must also share the results with branch and National Society headquarters and relevant donors they would like to be involved. VCA outcomes should be integrated into the

community's official developmental plan as a long-term intervention.

Regular updating, monitoring and evaluating the progress of the action plan are useful to check if technical or other support is needed. Any changes made in the community should be reflected in the National Society's annual report on disaster risk reduction.

Last but not least is **on-the-job training** for community members during the whole process so that they can manage to do it themselves in the future.

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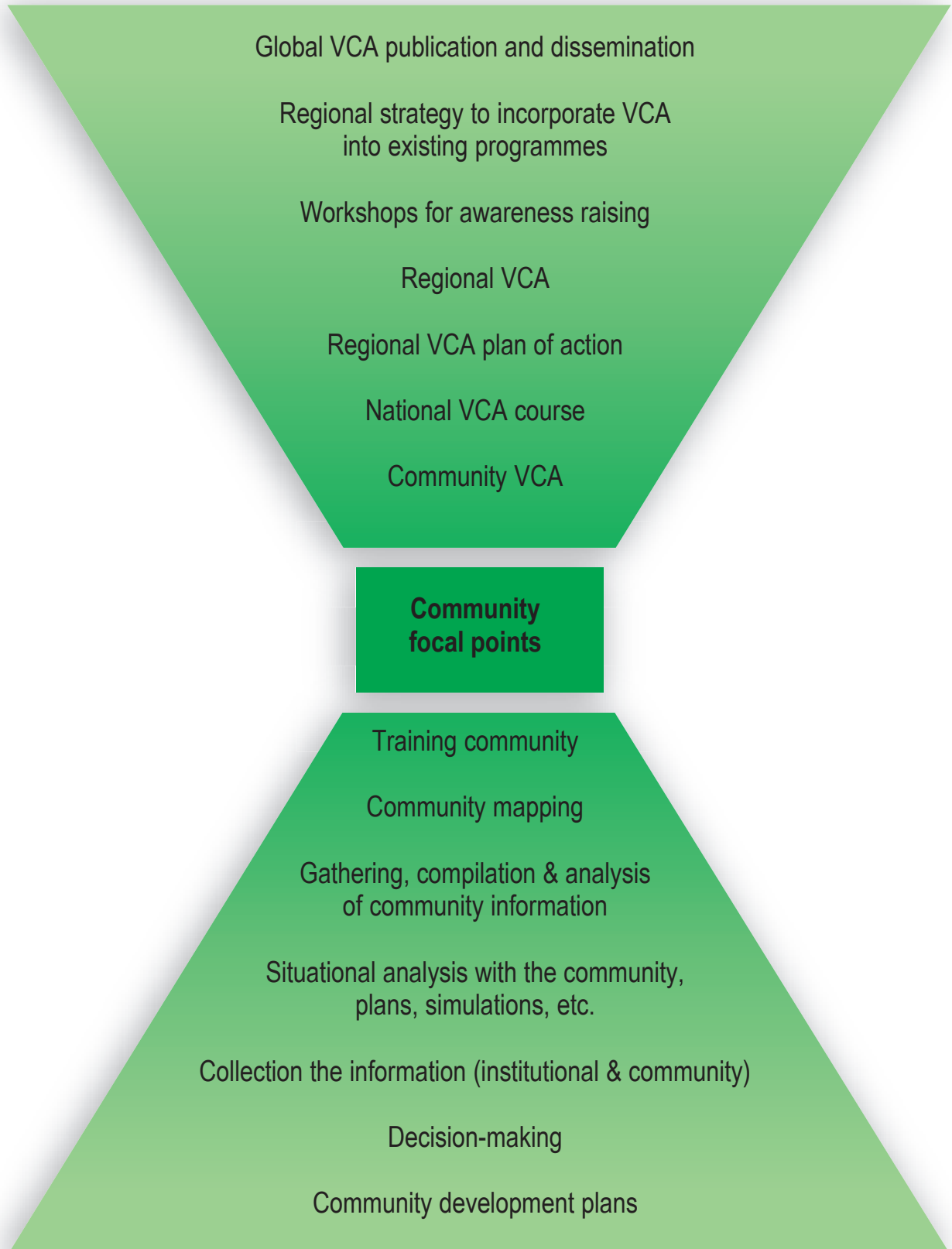
### **Recommended reference materials:**

- What is VCA (IFRC 2007)
- How to do a VCA (IFRC 2007)
- VCA toolbox (IFRC 2007)
- VCA training guide (IFRC 2007)



Red Cross volunteers assist communities in building "Stone Dragons" to protect river bank from eroding - TIMOR LESTE RED CROSS

## Annex 1: Diagram to explain the VCA process



## Annex 2:

### VCA schedule with a community

#### Example of a VCA schedule for day one

Time	Activities for day one
30 mins	Introduction to community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explain the purpose of the day</li> <li>- Introduce team members</li> <li>- Outline what will happen during the day</li> <li>- Division of group according to arrangement made by community</li> </ul>
2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visit two focus groups (e.g. women and farmers) Interview key informants (e.g. school teacher, village elder, doctor)</li> <li>- Transect walk and focused direct observation</li> </ul>
1 hour and 30 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mapping exercise with group of ten people               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Historical profile</li> <li>+ Seasonal chart</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1 hour	Lunch: Discussion on progress, direct observation (Note: you may have to provide lunch and/or refreshments for some participants and certainly for the volunteers)
2 hours	Assessment of household/neighborhood vulnerability Assessing the capacity of key institutions
1 hour	Evaluation of the day and preparation for the next day



## Annex 3:

### The essential ingredients of VCA

It is important to recognize that undertaking a VCA needs time and resources. Pay attention to the following point

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	A clear objective for the VCA should be identified and stated
<b>LOCATION</b>	A disaster-prone or at-risk community or village should be selected for undertaking the VCA
<b>ASSESSMENT TEAM</b>	Includes facilitators and community catalysts; Red Cross/Red Crescent facilitators play the role of supporters in the assessment process. Community catalysts will be the main players who facilitate discussions
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	The majority are from the grassroots, representing different social groups (ages, religions, occupations, gender, disability etc.), representatives of CBOs and local government
<b>TOOLS</b>	Participatory risk assessment (PRA) tools, e.g. direct observation, hazard mapping, transect walk, seasonal calendar, historical profile, historical projection and visualization, Venn diagram, problem tree; most tools are widely used for collecting information and analysis. Select the most appropriate tools.
<b>PROCESS</b>	<p><b>Planning:</b> prepare an action plan, assessment team, logistics, appropriate facilities and procedures →</p> <p><b>Advocacy</b> to local government on maximizing the participation of people at the grassroots and following up VCA results →</p> <p><b>Collecting information</b> → via <i>secondary data</i> → via informants at <i>grassroots level</i> using PRA tools →</p> <p><b>Analyzing</b> hazards, vulnerability, capacity and diagnosing risks →</p> <p><b>Verifying/validating</b> information with the community →</p> <p><b>Planning for transformation</b> of vulnerability into capacity →</p> <p><b>Reporting</b> → following up (integration into local development plan)</p>
<b>OUTPUT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline assessment information that can become the reference point for an emergency and disaster preparedness needs assessment following a disaster</li> <li>• Community understanding of its own environment in relation to hazards and risks</li> <li>• Community realization of its own capacities to cope with hazards and risks</li> <li>• Community and local authority agreement on actions needed to prevent or reduce the effects of disaster</li> <li>• Relevant projects on disaster risk reduction, mitigation, prevention, preparedness are implemented and evaluated</li> </ul>

## Annex 4: A day in the field

Day Box	
Activities	Expected outcomes
<b>Day 1</b>	
1.	-
2.	-
3.	-
4.	-
<b>Day 2</b>	
1.	-
2.	-
3.	-
4.	-
<b>Day 3</b>	
1.	-
2.	-
3.	-
4.	-

# The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

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## ***Humanity***

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

## ***Impartiality***

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

## ***Neutrality***

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

## ***Independence***

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

## ***Voluntary service***

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

## ***Unity***

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

## ***Universality***

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide





The *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies* promotes the humanitarian activities of National Societies among vulnerable people.

By coordinating international disaster relief and encouraging development support it seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

The International Federation, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



**Building safer and more resilient communities**  
in Southeast Asia