

**IFRC VULNERABILITY AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT
TRAINING REVIEW**

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBDP	Community Based Disaster Preparedness
CBDM	Community Based Disaster Management
CBDRR	Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction
CBFA	Community Based First Aid
CD	Community Development
CVTL	East Timor Red Cross
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DM	Disaster Management
DPP	Disaster Policy and Preparedness Department
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DP	Disaster Preparedness
ECHO	Directorate General for Humanitarian Assistance (European Commission)
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus/Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome
HQ	Headquarters
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ISP III	Institutional Strengthening Partnership (Program), Phase III
LBD	Learning by Doing
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NS	National Society
PHAST	Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation
PNS	Partner National Society
PMER	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Review Department
PMI	Indonesian Red Cross
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
RC/RC	Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
VCA	Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
WPNS	Well Prepared National Society

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) is a key element of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Societies' (International Federation) disaster management systems. With support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Assistance (ECHO), the VCA methodology was updated over 2006 and early 2007 and several National Societies (NS) worldwide are being trained in its use. The International Federation carried out a review in late 2007 to assess progress with implementation of the revised training curriculum in the Asia region.

Key Findings

Meeting partnership objectives: The 2007 expected results for the International Federation's institutional strengthening partnerships with ECHO and DFID, in relation to VCA training, have been mostly achieved in the Asia region. A total of 60 National Society (NS) staff and volunteers were trained in the new VCA learning by doing (LBD) methodology at regional workshops in Laos and China. This training can be expected to lead to a number of new NS disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster mitigation activities with communities in Asia.

However, with the exception of a few NS, it is unclear whether or how the VCA analyses or follow-up activities will be linked to the broader strategic objectives of the NS or to national disaster response or contingency planning. Several NS participants stressed that they would first have to persuade their leadership of the value of doing VCAs before they could put their training to use.

The first four of the twelve steps in *How to Do a VCA* explain the importance of deciding whether a VCA is appropriate for the needs of a NS or branch, sensitizing the leadership at all levels, setting up a management structure for the VCA and identifying the VCA objectives. The review findings strongly indicate that some resources need to be dedicated by the International Federation to encouraging and supporting these processes to take place. This could include regional workshops and national pilot integrated VCA planning exercises, targeted at NS leadership. A self-assessment of the capacity of the NS and its partners to conduct VCAs and support community action plans should be incorporated, drawing from the Well Prepared National Society (WPNS) analysis.

Climate change and urbanization receive some attention in the VCA LBD materials and methodology, but these themes will need to be further integrated into the training over 2008-09.

Relevance to NS: The majority of course participants confirmed the relevance of the new VCA LBD curriculum at the operational level. Most saw the potential of VCA to mobilize and encourage community self-help approaches, making the best use of limited resources and reducing external dependency. The emphasis on learning how to analyse information was seen as a strength, as these were important skills that many find difficult to master. A significant proportion also recognized the importance of forming partnerships with other organizations to follow up on the action plans.

The new VCA LBD manuals and training methodology include a strong focus on livelihoods and these were frequently the highest priority of more poor and vulnerable communities. However, most course participants had little or no experience of livelihoods programming and/or this was not a priority of their NS. For a number of NS, even if partnerships were formed with NGOs or

government, resource limitations would make it difficult to identify feasible activities to support communities to reduce their livelihoods-related vulnerabilities. Trying to motivate communities to tackle other disaster mitigation problems “from the bottom half of the list” was quite challenging.

The facilitators in Laos and China felt that five days was insufficient time to run a VCA LBD course. Key issues identified by the participants could only be given limited attention such as: forward planning, exit strategies and sustainability. Some modules had to be compressed or rushed and participants could not be given adequate rest breaks. The VCA LBD also gives less emphasis to the theoretical content of the training than the previous version. This sometimes led to confusion about the objectives and applications of tools among the course participants. It was suggested that VCA training be broken down into different levels – eg “beginners” and “advanced.”

The initiative taken to directly involve community leaders in the Laos course prior to doing field exercises was an effective approach for increasing understanding and managing expectations. At the same time, the criteria used by the hosting NSs in both countries to select the ‘practice’ communities was unclear. It is possible that expectations of follow-up support may have been raised which the local NS branches may be unable to meet.

Integrated approaches: While some NS in the region have made considerable progress towards integrated use of VCA, several others reported that it remains a challenge for them to persuade different departments to cooperate on joint needs assessment and complementary programming initiatives. This challenge is compounded by overlapping training programs (such as CBDP, CBFA, PHAST, etc) and/or the simultaneous introduction of training in new and complicated areas (for example, HIV/AIDS). The fragmentation sometimes reflects NS preferences, sometimes donor funding priorities and sometimes a lack of coordination within the International Federation. VCAs were seen as a labour-intensive exercise for both NSs and communities. It would not be cost-effective to carry out such an extensive analytic and planning process, if it would only be used to fund a single one-off activity in the end.

A number of NS reported that rationalisation of the number of training courses would be preferred in order to better use scarce human and financial resources. In the Americas region, the International Federation’s *Centro Regional de Referencia en Preparacion de Desastres* (Regional Disaster Preparedness Reference Centre) has developed one harmonized training curriculum for NS’ National Intervention Teams. The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) also teaches VCA as a series of modules within a broader DP and DRR curriculum. The potential to adapt and promote these models throughout the Asia region should be explored by the Secretariat and delegations with NS.

Links between disaster preparedness (DP), relief and recovery: The VCA LBD manuals and training methodology are well designed and respond to the lessons learned by the International Federation over the past decade. They clearly illustrate the relationship between VCA, DRR and disaster mitigation in a practical way. The links between DP, relief and recovery are not as well covered. While the limitations of the methodology for such uses must be recognized, VCA databases, skills and experience can provide a valuable source of background information for use in DP, contingency planning and emergency or early recovery assessments. These beneficial uses of VCA should be highlighted in future training to reinforce and contribute to achieving the expected results of the ISP III regarding increased use of VCA in national DP planning.

Follow-up support to trainees: There is a danger of continuously expanding the number of new VCA courses offered without allocating enough resources to follow-on supplemental skills-building processes for those already trained. The VCA LBD course was valued by all, but is not enough by itself to ensure that the participants have sufficient skills and confidence to implement the VCAs well and responsibly. At least one half of the participants to the Laos and China courses will require further training or coaching. Language barriers were also a factor in this outcome.

While the need for follow-up support was recognized in DPP's VCA training plans for 2007, this did not extend to the identification of specific activities or resources to implement them in the budget. Coaching, mentoring and peer-to-peer learning activities (such as workshops or refresher courses to encourage networking and experience-sharing) will be required. Cross-cultural and linguistic issues need to be given realistic consideration in planning such events. It was suggested that a VCA or community participation training focal point should be identified at the regional or zonal level, with the selection criteria focused on developmental, rather than humanitarian, skills.

Modest support needs to be provided to less well resourced NS for follow up activities, as has been the case with some NS receiving global level funds for VCA training in their countries. It has been suggested that CHF 1,000 is not sufficient for start up activities and the amount should be raised to around CHF 5,000. It has also been suggested that funding should be provided over 3 years, not 1 year, as VCA is focused on strengthening community processes and takes time to implement well.

The VCA follow-up should be closely linked to and mutually reinforcing of efforts currently being made by the Secretariat to strengthen and harmonise disaster management training overall.

Quality issues: The quality of the training (and the VCAs carried out) is at high risk of declining within a number of NS, as barely skilled individuals are being tasked to train others. The development of a quality assurance system for VCA training, based on core competencies required, is critical to ensuring that the training is appropriate. For example, in Central America, the CBDP Reference Centre coaches VCA training course graduates through the first 2-3 VCA training exercises that they carry out within their own NS and provides feedback on their competencies.

The key skills and learning needed are already identified in *How to Do a VCA* and could be developed into a set of core competencies for monitoring the quality of training. This includes community development and facilitation skills, which should be considered not only as core VCA competencies, but also core disaster management competencies.

Systems for tracking VCA training outcomes with NS also are not well developed. This has been recognized by the Secretariat and a first step taken toward developing a monitoring system during the review. Further development and refinement will be needed.

Guidance materials: The four VCA LBD manuals have not had wide distribution yet, so it was too early to get user feedback. However, a view commonly expressed was that the Secretariat produces many large manuals which do not get well used in the field. Some core concepts and terminology used in the VCA training also are not easy to convey cross-culturally. A short and simple summary of the main messages in the manuals may be useful, along with a guide to 'commonly asked questions' and an explanation of when to use each manual (ie all do not need to be read at once) Course participants would further appreciate greater access to case studies and examples of VCA in practice, especially at the branch and chapter level, and in local languages.

Recommendations

Supporting skills development of trainees:

1. Develop a strategy and workplan for follow-up support to VCA trainees in Asia over 2008-10. Incorporate specific activities and a budget for coaching, refresher training and peer-to-peer learning at the national and regional levels. This should include the recruitment and/or training of in-country or regional technical advisors with strong community development, facilitation, coaching and local language skills, wherever feasible. The strategy and workplan also should ensure that the expansion of new VCA LBD training courses is kept in balance with the support required for those previously trained to further develop and consolidate their skills.
2. As a first step, allocate funds for follow-up training on facilitation and community development in China to ensure that those already trained have the skills to teach their colleagues and to build a critical mass of personnel who can carry out VCAs. Approach a PNS to fund a Mandarin-speaking national technical adviser with prior training and community development experience.

Strengthening effectiveness and relevance of training:

3. Encourage NS to follow the process outlined in the first four steps of the *How to Do VCA* manual to ensure that the NS has the political will, human resource capacity and funding base to responsibly and effectively carry out VCA *before* providing VCA LBD training courses. Allocate resources to supporting regions and NS to carry out such planning exercises and directly incorporate WPNS capacity analysis into this process.
4. Systematically identify and strengthen the specific linkages between VCA and DP training and guidelines (ie contingency planning, emergency needs assessment, relief and recovery), including the development of guidance notes for trainers in these areas. Include CBDP/DM, CBDRR, CBFA and PHAST in this work, to the extent possible, as this is where most overlaps with VCA training occur. Specify required actions and a timetable across the relevant departments of the Secretariat, drawing from experiences in the Americas and Indonesia, as a key element of moving towards a more harmonized DM professional development curriculum.

Ensuring quality of training:

5. Develop a formal accreditation and M&E system for VCA training, based on the core competencies in the VCA LBD manuals, to ensure appropriate use and quality of the training. This should be linked to broader disaster management human resource development strategies.

Improving content and use of guidance materials:

6. Further integrate climate change and urbanization issues into the VCA training materials and methodologies. Provide follow-up guidance on methods to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities for NS who may want to program in this area.
7. Simplify and summarise the core concepts and terminology used in the VCA LBD manuals to facilitate cross-cultural learning and translation into multiple languages.
8. Provide written guidance to NS on the selection of 'practice' communities for VCA LBD courses to ensure that the participating community's expectations are realistic.
9. Investigate possible methods and funding sources to increase the outreach of key supporting materials, the VCA case studies and guidance notes, to a wider audience of field practitioners.

In order to achieve the agreed objectives and outputs of the Institutional Strengthening Program III partnership with DFID, Recommendations 1- 4 and 6 should be given the highest priority during 2008 followed by Recommendations 5, 6, 8 and 9 over 2008-2009.

IFRC VULNERABILITY & CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TRAINING REVIEW

BACKGROUND

Vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) is a key element of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Societies' ("International Federation") disaster management systems. With support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Assistance (ECHO), the VCA methodology was updated over 2006 and early 2007 and several National Societies (NS) worldwide are being trained in its use. This work drew from lessons learned over the past decade and was carried out within the framework of the Global Agenda for Action, Strategy 2010 and the Federation of the Future – the key strategic planning documents of the International Federation.

The main feature of the revised VCA methodology was the introduction of a learning by doing (LBD) approach which aims 'to provide a much clearer focus on disaster preparedness (DP) as a program for reducing vulnerability and increasing capacity before a disaster happens.'¹ A review was carried out by the International Federation in November-December 2007 to assess progress with implementation of the revised training curriculum in the Asia region (Annex A: TOR).

OBJECTIVES

Within the context of the DFID and ECHO thematic funded programs to strengthen disaster management in the International Federation, the specific objectives of the review were to:

- Assess the progress of the activities against the long-term International Federation ECHO/DFID Partnership strategies.
- Assess the relevance of the training provided in relation to the implementing capacity and strategic objectives of the National Societies.
- Review the content of the training in terms of making the linkages between preparedness, relief and recovery
- Assess additional needs of the NS's and delegations in the region to develop and sustain the activities in 2008 /9

METHODOLOGY

Data was gathered and triangulated through: review of secondary information; semi-structured interviews and focus groups with key informants; direct observation; and the development of case studies of the outcomes of two VCA LBD training processes (Sri Lanka and East Timor).

The consultant reviewed the VCA LBD training manuals, lessons learned materials, regional progress reports and preliminary information from a Provention Consortium project to develop "guidance notes" on the outcomes of DFID-supported VCA activities (Annex B: documents consulted). The consultant also participated as an observer in two regional VCA LBD training courses, one for South-East Asia and Indo-China (Laos, 19-23 November 2007) and one for East Asia (China, 4-9 November 2007²). These courses were supported through DFID ISP III and

¹ IFRC (2006), *What is VCA? An introduction to vulnerability and capacity assessment*. Geneva: IFRC, p 22.

² This was followed by a one day introductory course on emergency needs assessment on 10 December.

ECHO thematic global level funding. Interviews and focus group discussions were held with participating NS, Geneva-based and regional-based International Federation staff; and the course facilitators (Annex C: interviewees and focus groups).

Baseline data also was collected on the participants of the Laos and China courses for use in future monitoring and evaluation in the two sub-regions (Annex D).

The limited time available and scope of the review did not allow for comprehensive institutional capacity assessment of each participating NS. This information was largely drawn from the self-analysis of the course participants, which also did not include NS from the South Asia region. Likewise, the two cases studies (Annexes E & F) were selected using purposive sampling techniques, so caution should be exercised in generalizing the lessons learned to the wider Asian context, particularly given the diversity of countries in the region.

PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Objectives: The International Federation’s institutional strengthening partnerships with both ECHO (Mar 2007-Mar 2008) and DFID (Jan 2007- Dec 2010) incorporate a strong focus on supporting NS to increase and improve their disaster management (DM) capacities, especially in disaster prone and low-income countries. The strengthening of risk, vulnerability and capacity assessment processes at the community and national levels is seen as a key element of a strategic approach to reduce the risks to and impacts on communities of disasters. This includes linking needs assessment processes to national and regional level disaster response and contingency planning.³

For 2007, in relation to VCA, the short-term global level focus of ISP III has been on improving VCA tools to be better utilized (along with other DM tools). Geneva and regional International Federation support is expected to decrease after this phase and direct support to NS to increase. In addition to conducting VCA LBD training in several countries, activities “to support NS to carry out VCAs at community and national levels and to link them to national disaster response contingency plans” have been carried out. The ECHO program has focused on training “some 60 VCA practitioners at regional level” and supporting “10 national VCAs using the LBD approach.”

The expected results to which these VCA activities are expected to contribute include:

- **ECHO:** “Measurable increase of preparedness activities at regional and global level that contribute to a sufficient humanitarian capacity and coordination on the ground.”
- **ISP III:** “Targeted NS have undertaken a risk and vulnerability analysis that is reflected in programme planning” and “integration of climate change, urbanization and livelihood issues into standard assessment guidelines.”

The anticipated longer-term results for the ISP III, to which VCA activities should contribute, include: a measurable reduction in disaster risk in targeted countries; the inclusion of risk reduction in DM programming (ie in policies, strategies and other planning/analyses at global, regional and

³ Refer to Objective 1 of *Partnership between DFID and IFRC Annual Workplan* (p 4) and Specific Objective of *EC-ECHO Contribution agreement: Strengthening the humanitarian response to natural disasters through thematic support to the IFRC: Annex 1* (p 2)

country levels); and the inclusion of specific country risks and capacities in updated NS capacity profiles.

Shorter-term results: The expected VCA training results for 2007 have been mostly achieved in South-East Asia, East Asia and Indo-China. A total of 60 NS staff and volunteers from thirteen NS were trained in the new VCA LBD methodology at the Laos and China regional workshops (details in Annex G), with the largest number (22) coming from the Red Cross Society of China (RCSC). 40% (24) were female and 60% (36) were male, though the gender balance varied considerably between different NS. Approximately 50% of the participants worked in disaster preparedness or relief. The remainder worked in health/first aid, disaster risk reduction (DRR), organizational development (OD), training or project management/administration job roles.

Across the two courses, 50% (30) of the participants came from the branch level and 50% (30) from the headquarters (HQ) level of their NS. Several HQ participants intend to explore ways to apply the VCA LBD in programs such as: Community-Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP); health including Community-Based First Aid (CBFA) and HIV/AIDS; and Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR). The majority of branch level participants are planning to train colleagues to do VCAs and/or to carry out VCAs at the branch and chapter level, mostly focused on identifying follow-on disaster mitigation and risk reduction activities. In some cases, such as the East Timor RC (CVTL), follow up planning commenced immediately after the return of the participants from the course. The tracer study planned for late 2008 should yield rich information on the number, quality and expected or achieved results of these activities.

The new VCA LBD manuals and training methodology include a significant focus on livelihoods. This was reflected in the training outcomes, with livelihoods emerging as the strongest theme in the China course and a key theme in the Laos course. Climate change and urbanization are covered in the VCA LBD manuals to a certain extent, but these themes will need to be further integrated into the training materials and methodologies over 2008-09, as the International Federation's strategic work in these two areas progresses.

Longer-term results (ISPIII): The continued roll-out of VCA training in Asia over 2008 can be expected to lead to a number of new NS community-based risk reduction and disaster mitigation activities. The content of the manuals and course also encourages the formation of partnerships with government and other organizations to undertake cohesive and integrated follow-up planning.

While over half of the NS interviewed had already established or were planning to develop partnerships, with the exception of a few NS, it is unclear to what extent their future VCA analyses or activities will be linked to their broader strategic objectives or to national disaster response or contingency planning. The South East Asia (including Indo-China) VCA Focal Group identified this as a key challenge during their September 2007 meeting: *“Most of VCA has been done on the project basis only. For the longer term, NSs should have strategic planning for conducting VCA in high risk communities.”*⁴

CVTL has made the furthest progress on strategic applications of VCA in the region, with a form of VCA LBD having been undertaken throughout every district in the country during 2004-05 and used as the basis for the development of an integrated four-year strategic plan for the NS.

⁴ VCA group meeting minute, 4-5 September 2007, Bangkok, Thailand.

The opportunities and challenges to strengthening the strategic use of VCA by Asian NS over the next three years largely relate to the perceived relevance of VCA to the core work of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement by NS leadership and to strengths and limitations of the current training strategy. These are outlined in detail in the following sections.

RELEVANCE TO NATIONAL SOCIETIES

Strengths of new methodology: The majority of the course participants confirmed the relevance of the new VCA LBD curriculum at the operational level, particularly those with prior VCA experience. Most participants said that they could see the potential of VCA to mobilize and encourage self-help approaches within communities. The emphasis in the LBD course on learning how to summarise and analyse information was also seen as a strength, as these were important skills that many find difficult to master. A significant proportion also recognized the importance of forming partnerships with other organizations. Examples of successful and innovative government or NGO VCA partnerships within the Asia region should be shared with future course participants.

My country does not have a tradition of participatory approaches, but I can see the potential of VCA to help people to see their future and to talk to government about it.
- *NS Relief Coordinator*

Limitations of new methodology: Various course participants raised concerns regarding their ability to act on the results of the VCA. In most of the more poor and vulnerable communities, livelihood needs are identified as the highest priority. Some participants and delegation personnel believed that NS in poorer countries may have more interest in VCA, as they feel greater pressure to respond to local livelihoods needs. However, the majority interviewed had little or no experience of livelihoods-focused programming and/or this was not a priority focus of their NS.

For a number of these NS, even if partnerships were formed with NGOs or government, broader resource limitations made it difficult to identify feasible activities to support communities to reduce their livelihoods-related vulnerabilities. Within this context, trying to motivate communities to tackle disaster mitigation problems “from the bottom half of the list” was quite challenging.

Appropriate guidance and support should be provided to those NS who wish to develop capacity in this area – for example, the systematic extension of food security and/or sustainable livelihoods/economic security training into Asia,⁵ introduction of economic security or advice on urban employment issues. For those NS who do not want to work in these areas, then careful consideration should be given to their programming context and the realistic potential for partnerships with other organizations before training personnel to carry out VCAs.

Strategic level uses: Many of the NS participants could not clearly state how the VCA training course they were taking or the follow-up they planned related to the NS’s strategic objectives, including a number of participants in managerial positions. For several, the VCA was seen as a tool to plan a specific community project or activity in their sector. Alternately, it was viewed as a set of tools that could be used to support current programming priorities – for example, some of the tools could be integrated into ongoing CDBP or CBDRR programs. Those with less prior “hands-

⁵ which is already available to some NS through international NGOs or ICRC

on” experience did not appear to have grasped the implications of VCA in terms of building longer-term relationships with communities and the demands that this work would impose on their NS, while those who had used VCA methodologies in the past were quite realistic about the opportunities and risks.

Several NS participants stressed that they would first have to persuade their leadership of the value of doing VCAs before they could put their training to use, an issue also raised by some regional/national delegation representatives.

A lot of Federation staff themselves seem to be ambivalent or misinformed about the appropriate uses of VCA ... unless the Secretariat takes a consistent position, it will be that much harder to convince NS of the value of these participatory approaches. – *Senior NS participant*

While most participants were enthusiastic about the potential uses of VCA in their NS, a number of them raised practical questions about whether VCA would be the most appropriate and cost-effective method of fulfilling their job roles. This was the case where: the NS’s mandate was largely restricted to relief provision and/or a limited interpretation of disaster preparedness and mitigation roles; the government did not support participatory or decentralized approaches to DM; the NS was small and/or lacked the human and financial capacity to reach many communities using what is a quite resource-intensive methodology; or the NS had to cover widespread and isolated areas (ie concerns about adequately training and supporting their branches and chapters). Under such circumstances, some considered that it would be preferable and more acceptable to use less labour-intensive rapid survey methods that could still tap into the views of a wider population.

Integrated programming: The majority of course participants liked the idea of integrated approaches to doing VCA. VCAs were seen as a labour-intensive exercise for both NSs and communities. It would not be cost-effective to carry out such an extensive analytic and planning process, if it would only be used to fund a single one-off activity in the end.

Some NS representatives reported making considerable progress towards integrated use of VCA (eg East Timor, Mongolia, Myanmar). Others advised that it remains a challenge for them to persuade different departments of their NS to cooperate on joint needs assessment and complementary programming. Some Partner National Societies (PNS) also saw VCA as a methodology for DM only, which posed an additional constraint.

A number of participants said that this challenge was compounded by overlapping training programs promoted by the International Federation (such as CBDP, CBFA, VCA, PHAST, etc) or the simultaneous introduction of new and separate training courses in complicated areas (eg HIV/AIDS advocacy, voluntary counseling and testing). The fragmentation and even competition between all of these different training and programming options often reflected a lack of coordination within the International Federation, NS preferences and/or donor funding priorities.

While the International Federation supports integrated approaches to training in principle, the reality is that the different sectoral areas and departments still appear to follow their own training agendas with only a minimal amount of coordination and harmonisation. A number of NS participants reported that this situation is confusing and costly for them – rationalisation of the number of training courses would be preferred in order to better use scarce human and financial resources. In

this vein, 'leading by example' is recommended if member NS are to be seriously encouraged to put VCA at the centre of their disaster preparedness and risk reduction analytic processes.

In Central America and a few neighbouring countries, the CBDP Reference Centre has developed one harmonized training curriculum for NS' National Intervention Teams. The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) also teaches VCA as a series of modules within a broader disaster preparedness and risk reduction training curriculum. The potential to adapt and promote these models throughout the Asia region should be explored by the International Federation Secretariat and delegations with member NS.

Cross-cultural considerations: It was also emphasized by several interviewees that the introduction of VCA and participatory approaches to DM programming will take considerable time and effort in some Asian countries, including careful adaptation to a very different cultural and socio-political context. Bottom-up community methods of working were not common or traditional in some places and would require both advocacy with government and trust-building with communities who sometimes also felt unsure about new ways of working together.

In these instances, the expectations of all stakeholders regarding outcomes needed to be modest. Some felt that currently this was not always the case and: "*the Federation is not taking into account our cultural issues or the readiness of our NS but just pushing an agenda.*" The International Federation has committed to scaling up its DM capacity, including in ISP III. The pressure to expand VCA training and activities will need to be balanced with the will and capacity to deliver in the field.

The SE Asia VCA Focal Group has put considerable thought into adapting VCA to the context of their region. At its September 2007 meeting, the Focal Group reviewed the experience of using VCA LBD in their countries, recorded lessons learned (Annex H: summary) and started planning a regional VCA LBD curriculum. The draft curriculum was delivered, with some adjustments, at the Laos course. The program will be further refined, based on this experience.

Strategic planning processes: Most of these are not new issues and were raised in the 2006 VCA lessons learned and recommendations. Ultimately, the successful development of strategic and integrated approaches will require political will, commitment from senior and middle level managers and a systematic action plan.

The first four of the twelve key steps outlined in *How to Do a VCA* clearly explain the importance of deciding whether a VCA is appropriate for the needs of a NS or branch, sensitizing the leadership at all levels, setting up a management structure for the VCA and identifying the VCA objectives. This manual was not yet published when global and regional planning and budgeting for 2007 VCA training took place; it became available (in English) during the last quarter of the year.

The SE Asia VCA Focal Group felt that these activities should be the responsibility of NS leadership. At the same time, the feedback from the two regional training courses - and the VCA LBD experiences in East Timor and Sri Lanka - strongly indicate that some resources need to be dedicated by the International Federation to encouraging such strategic planning processes to take place. This could be done alongside of the ongoing training of VCA practitioners, as many NS have already been conducting VCAs for several years.

We need some support at the HQ and branch levels, as we must convince our leadership to do something when we return. - NS Branch DM Officer

It was suggested that (sub) regional experience-sharing workshops be held, targeted at NS leadership. These would focus on the relevance of VCA to a NS's work and its multiple applications to all aspects of DM. 'Hard evidence' could be presented, in the form of case studies and lessons learned, and a dialogue fostered; this could possibly include a presentation from four NS in Central and South America that are currently undertaking comprehensive leadership sensitization and strategic planning exercises with ECHO thematic support.⁶ A concept paper on the costs and benefits of VCA could be circulated in advance as a focus for discussion, in line with a recommendation by the SE Asia VCA Focal Group.

The promotion of holistic VCA planning exercises at the national level (drawn from the first four steps of *How to Do a VCA*) could also help some NS to move from project-oriented to more strategic use of VCAs. When this was done in East Timor, the board members, senior management and government become more responsive to such approaches. However, a lesson from East Timor is that this work must incorporate a rigorous focus on self-assessment of the capacity of the NS and its partners to conduct the VCAs and to support communities to implement their action plans. The results or an update of the Well Prepared National Society (WPNS) analysis should be integrated into the process.

IMPLEMENTING CAPACITY

Foundation skills: Given the compressed timeframe for delivering VCA LBD training, the structure and content of the course assumes:

- Basic community development skills including conflict resolution;
- Communication and facilitation skills.

In both courses, the skill and experience levels of the participants varied widely. Those participants who had been previously trained in the use of participatory rapid assessment (PRA) methods generally displayed more skill and confidence in applying the VCA tools. Those with little or no community development or facilitation backgrounds, a substantial number, struggled. Many indicated that they were expected to deliver training to their colleagues upon return to their NS but did not feel confident to do so. Some International Federation delegates also did not have substantial training or experience in these areas, yet were expected to promote and support NS in using such methods.

Simply including these skills among the selection criteria will not produce appropriate trainees in many cases. The branch/chapter staff and volunteers in a number of NS, who would be the people actually carrying out VCAs, may have had little opportunity in their NS or other roles to develop these skills. Teaching others to change attitudes and/or practices can be challenging where staff and volunteers may be used to working in a particular way –eg designing and delivering formal household surveys.

⁶ Refer to August 2007 ECHO thematic update from DRR Regional Programs, Representation Office for Central America and Mexico/Representation Office for South America, IFRC

Community development and facilitation skills are fundamental to the successful implementation of VCA and all other community-based programming of the International Federation. They should be considered as core competencies for disaster management, as necessary for the provision of quality relief and recovery assistance as for disaster mitigation and risk reduction.

Learning the methodology is not complicated, but actually doing it with communities is. - *NS branch programming staff member*

The International Federation does not necessarily need to run its own training to build this capacity. Several good courses are available through development and humanitarian NGOs, as well as NGO peak bodies. Practical attachments to organizations with sound community experience, including some NS, are another option. Otherwise, a basic level of VCA training will need to be developed for ‘beginners’ to acquire the required skills and knowledge. In either scenario, this training will need to be combined with follow on coaching and mentoring by experienced practitioners.

Analytic skills: The course, understandably, can only provide a limited amount of time to practice the skills learned in VCA. As the case studies from Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste illustrate, practice supported by intensive coaching is needed especially to master the more challenging analytic skills.

Human and financial resources: It is unclear whether a number of NS participants will have the resources available to follow-up on their VCA training. Some expressed concern about their ability ‘to deliver.’ The decisions of when, where and how to use VCA should go together with an assessment of the capacity to responsibly carry it out and support follow-up activities, whether this involves physical resources or staff/volunteer time – ideally through the WPNS process.

We don’t have many staff in our branch and have to cover everything. VCA will take more people to do than we have. I am only one person. – *NS branch staff*

For poor communities, there was a fairly consistent view among most interviewees that at least modest funding support does need to be provided by the NS, given the significant investment that they make in participating in a VCA, often at the cost of other important livelihoods activities. For less well-resourced NS, it has been suggested by some that CHF 1,000 (the amount provided as seed money for activities following some globally funded VCA training programs with NS) is not sufficient for start up activities and the amount should be raised to around CHF 5,000 to be meaningful. It has also been suggested that funding be provided over three years, rather than one year, as VCA is meant to strengthen community capacities and this takes time to do well. One of the main selling points for CBDP in China was that it brought some secure funding to communities.

In countries with a lot of donor support, some NS participants felt it was important to understand the broader funding context. Where some donors are simply ‘handing things out’, communities have questioned the need to go through a lengthy planning process with the NS to access resources.

Language skills: A considerable number of participants in the Laos course and a few in the China course did not have sufficient English to fully participate. They relied on colleagues from their NS to interpret, which put considerable pressure on these individuals to simultaneously learn and interpret over several days. This situation partly arose from an understandable desire to target

training at the NS branch level, as it is these staff/volunteers who are most likely to do VCAs. However, many at this level did not have adequate English comprehension, and it is questionable whether they understood enough to responsibly carry out or train others to carry out VCAs.

Moreover, some of the core concepts and terminology used in the VCA are not easy to convey cross-culturally. Both training courses struggled with achieving clear and agreed definitions of terms such as vulnerability, capacity and hazard. Other technical terms, such as “social security,” which are widely used in the VCA LBD manuals and training need to be further simplified and acceptable translations decided *prior* to delivering a course to a non-English speaking audience.

It was recommended by a number of those involved in the Laos course that regional level VCA LBD practitioner training not be conducted because of these problems. To effectively reach practitioners, it was felt that courses should be held in-country through national or regional trainers. For some NS, this would also be essential to training enough staff and volunteers to carry out VCAs. It was considered more appropriate by some to run regional NS leadership sensitization and experience exchange workshops, as English language skills would likely be higher and the interpretation less demanding.

LINKS BETWEEN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, RELIEF AND RECOVERY

The LBD manuals and training course clearly illustrate the relationship between VCA and disaster risk reduction and mitigation. A strength of the VCA LBD methodology is that it provides NS participants with a practical understanding of some of the key principles behind the Hyogo Framework for Action or HFA (while not directly discussing the HFA).

At the same time, the messages about understanding community socio-economic vulnerabilities and priorities came through so strongly in the two courses that some participants felt unsure about their relationship to the hazard and relief-oriented focus of their NS. It would be desirable to further draw out the linkages between physical hazards and socio-economic vulnerabilities, using concrete examples, to increase the awareness of participants of the range of realistic programming possibilities that they may wish to consider for risk reduction and disaster mitigation purposes.

The links between disaster preparedness, relief and recovery were not covered in either the training courses or the LBD manuals. This is unsurprising, given that the VCA methodology was designed primarily for use in developing disaster risk reduction and mitigation activities, rather than disaster response. Nevertheless, VCA reports can provide a valuable source of background information on capacities and vulnerabilities for use in disaster preparedness and contingency planning. Those trained and experienced in VCA also could assist with conducting quality rapid or in-depth emergency and/or early recovery assessments in future, as has been done with PMI’s SATGANA (disaster preparedness and response) teams.

These beneficial uses of VCA should be highlighted in future courses, if the ISP III’s expected results are to be achieved, regarding increased use of VCA in national disaster preparedness planning. Facilitators will need guidance, including trainers’ notes, on how to draw out these themes. This guidance could be framed within the context of the DM cycle to reinforce the inter-relationships between all of its aspects, including the International Federation’s HFA commitments.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Strategic use of VCA training resources: There is a real danger of continuously expanding the number of new VCA courses and pilot activities offered over 2008-10, without allocating enough resources to the equally important supplemental skills-building required for those already trained.

While the experience-based learning approach of the VCA LBD course was valued by all, it is not enough by itself to ensure that the participants have sufficient skills and confidence to implement VCAs well and responsibly. At least one half of the participants to the Laos and China courses will require further training and/or coaching to master the basic skills required.

The VCA training manual itself stresses the importance of *ongoing coaching and mentoring support* when learning how to do a VCA, particularly knowledge of community-based research and experience of participatory facilitation.⁷ In Sri Lanka, East Timor and the Maldives, this was reported by International Federation delegates to be critical to the acceptance and appropriate use of VCA by NS with communities.

While the need for follow-up support was broadly recognized in DPP's VCA training plans for 2007, this did not extend to the identification of specific activities or resources to implement them. VCA training is not clearly sequenced or linked to other activities to promote and reinforce it. This situation partly reflects a major staffing gap beyond the control of the DPP over several months of 2007, but should be rectified in 2008.

EFFECTIVE TRAINING AND ADULT LEARNING

Training is most effective when –

- Participants are well targeted
- Objectives are clear
- Training is well implemented & self directed with responsibility for learning primarily with the participant
- There is follow up
- Responsible organisational support to participants to implement learning
- It is linked with foundational skills and competencies and supplemental learning systems
- Follows a model of presentation of information, application/consolidation exercise and monitoring learning;
- Supplemented by opportunities for shadowing, exchanges, internships and coaching.

From: T Reines, *Recommendations for Competency-Based DM Framework*, IFRC, July 2007, p 8

For example, the planned coaching of graduates of the September 2006 Turkey training of trainers (ToT) course has only been done on an ad hoc and opportunistic basis. Two of the six Asian NS VCA trainers who participated in the Turkey ToT facilitated the Laos course, one from PMI and the other from the Vietnam RC, together with the Maldives DM delegate who was trained in LBD on-the-job in 2006. A consultant with extensive VCA experience led the China course, supported by a DM delegate from the Americas with VCA training experience. The delegate also received

⁷ IFRC (2007), *VCA training manual*. Geneva: IFRC, p 12.

coaching from the master trainer while delivering the course. Further opportunities of this kind for practice, coaching and professional exchange should be encouraged and formalized.

Peer-to-peer learning was identified by interviewees as another important need for both VCA trainers and practitioners. The development of a practitioners network and the provision of peer support for new VCA LBD practitioners was recommended by the Geneva Secretariat's former DP officer in his June 2006 handover notes. Workshops or refresher courses should be developed at the zonal level to complement the basic training and to encourage networking and experience-sharing. Trainers were also keen to have opportunities to share and update their methods and materials. Other organizations outside of the RC/RC Movement, with VCA or similar community-based experience, should be invited to participate in such events.

Virtually all participants expressed a need for *technical support* from the International Federation to help them to train others in their NS to do VCAs. Some suggested the creation of a VCA or community participation training focal point at the regional or zonal level, with the selection criteria to be focused on a broader developmental, rather than humanitarian emergency, background. In some countries this role could be justified at a national level due to the size, complexity or linguistic context of the NS (eg China). A few PNS may be willing to support such positions in-country, which potentially could be used to encourage integrated approaches to VCA and DM more widely.

Many of these recommendations are consistent with the needs for improving DM training overall identified in the Secretariat's July 2007 consultancy to develop a competency-based DM framework for the International Federation. The VCA follow-up should be closely linked to and mutually reinforcing of efforts currently being made by the Secretariat to strengthen all aspects of DM training.⁸

Duration and levels of training: The facilitators in Laos and China felt that five days was insufficient time to run a VCA LBD course (the trainers manual recommends six days). Some modules had to be compressed or rushed and participants could not be given adequate rest breaks.

As previously indicated, five days is not enough training for those with little prior community development or facilitation experience. Even some more experienced NS personnel are challenged to learn and practice the large range of tools available for VCA, particularly more complex tools such as those relating to livelihoods. The skill and experience levels of the different NS trainers who participate in ToTs also vary widely. While a five day course may be suitable for a highly experienced trainer, it is not sufficient for a trainer with far less experience.

The VCA LBD approach also gives less emphasis to the conceptual and theoretical content of the training. This sometimes led to confusion about the objectives and applications of tools among the course participants. Additionally, key issues identified by the NS participants could only be given limited attention such as: forward planning, exit strategies and sustainability.

Some participants from the China course suggested a "multi-layered" approach be taken to VCA training and that it be broken down into different levels – eg "beginners" or "advanced" VCA. VCA training could be carried out in phases, with a clear plan for outreach to the different levels of the NS – including sensitization of the NS leadership (Steps 1-4 of *How to Do a VCA*).

⁸ T Reines, *Recommendations for Competency-Based DM Framework, IFRC, July 2007*

Competency-based approach: The development of a quality assurance system for VCA training, based on the core competencies required, is essential to ensuring good VCA outcomes both for communities and NS. A number of interviewees expressed fears that, under the present approach, the quality of the training (and the VCAs subsequently carried out) is at high risk of decreasing from level to level – ie a person who has been formally trained in an LBD course and is now marginally skilled at the national or branch level may then train colleagues at the same or lower levels of the NS who will receive even less skills and knowledge.

You can't just come from a course and be a practitioner... you need to monitor the person, observe them doing a VCA and give feedback. - *VCA facilitator*

In Central and South America, the International Federation's Community-based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) Reference Centre coaches VCA training course graduates through the first 2-3 VCA training exercises that they carry out within their own NS and provides feedback on their competencies. One facilitator felt that this model could be taken further, by only giving a course certificate after a participant has been coached through 2-3 follow-up VCAs and certified as competent to train others.

The key skills and learning needed are identified in *How to Do a VCA* (summary: Annex I). These could be developed into a set of core competencies for monitoring training quality.

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E): Systems for tracking VCA training outcomes with NS are not well developed. This partly reflects work and reporting overloads and partly a lack of systematic follow up by the International Federation. The DP officer's handover notes highlighted the need to develop a performance measurement system. He reported that an initial meeting had taken place with the Secretariat's Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Department (PMER) earlier in 2007 to discuss this but there was no further follow up.

The first steps for developing a tracking system have been taken during the review process, with the creation of basic profiles of the trainees from the Laos and China courses. These profiles will need to be further developed and follow-up undertaken with the participants at regular intervals (ie ideally, every 6 months) to find out how they have used the training and any suggestions they would make for improvements, based on their own experiences of its practical application. The capacity of regional or zonal offices to carry out this follow-up will also need to be carefully assessed and modest supplementary support provided, if needed. The International Federation and its donors have invested a considerable amount of funding into VCA – a small additional amount of funding allocated to monitoring the progress of the trainees would help to protect that investment.

Guidance materials: The four VCA LBD manuals have not had wide distribution yet, so it is too early to get user feedback (three could be distributed in English at the Laos course, but none were available in Mandarin at the time of the China course). However, a view commonly expressed during the review was that the Secretariat produces too many large manuals which do not get well read or used in the field. A short and simple synthesis or summary of the main messages of the four manuals may be useful, as together they comprise well over two hundred pages, along with a separate guide to "commonly asked questions." Another suggestion was to provide guidance on

what parts of the manual to use in different situations so that individuals realise that they do not have to read or understand all of the content at one time.

Some materials are too complicated for our branches and volunteers to use. These need to be simplified. - *NS participant*

Many NS participants expressed the desire to receive more case studies and examples of VCA in practice, both to educate their leadership and to give them advice and ideas. Neither the VCA case studies already produced by the Secretariat, nor the earlier Provention Consortium guidance notes, appear to have reached this audience.

Provention does not specify end users for the guidance notes they are currently preparing on DFID-supported International Federation VCA activities but suggests these may include “branches, volunteers, CD workers, local government and NGOs.” This would seem to be the most appropriate group of practitioners but brings with it both distributional and linguistic challenges. Despite the costs, local language and communication methods will be required in most Asian countries. An appropriate portion of global, regional and/or national level VCA funding could perhaps be allocated to translation and distribution of selected VCA case studies (often more cost effective if done in-country) or sponsorship sought from donors or the private sector.

‘Practice’ community selection criteria: The initiative taken by the Laos course organizers to invite a community leader to join the course for the week⁹ and to have participants meet with a group of community leaders prior to doing the VCA LBD exercises, was an effective approach for increasing understanding and managing expectations.

At the same time, the criteria used by the hosting NS for the selection of the community(ies) where the course participants practiced their skills was unclear. Some members of the village were not well informed about the purpose of the VCA training and many of the participants did not have the skills or experience to ensure that the objectives of the exercise were clearly explained. It is possible that expectations of some follow-up support may have been raised which the local Laotian and Chinese NS branches may not be able to meet.

This has really helped me. I never thought about vulnerability, capacity and risk before...now I can pursue this ... and will be putting together a [watsan] proposal for the government. – *Laos community leader*

Clear guidance to NS on the selection of practice villages would appear to be needed for future VCA LBD training courses. The greatest strength of the course – direct interaction with real people in real situations – could also be its greatest weakness, if care is not taken in how that engagement happens.

⁹ As the individual was elderly, he presumably had more time available than other younger community leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Supporting skills development of trainees:

1. Develop a strategy and workplan for follow-up support to VCA trainees in Asia over 2008-10. Incorporate specific activities and a budget for coaching, refresher training and peer-to-peer learning at the national and regional levels. This should include the recruitment and/or training of in-country or regional technical advisors with strong community development, facilitation, coaching and local language skills, wherever feasible. The strategy and workplan also should ensure that the expansion of new VCA LBD training courses is kept in balance with the support required for those previously trained to further develop and consolidate their skills.
2. As a first step, allocate funds for follow-up training on facilitation and community development in China to ensure that those already trained have the skills to teach their colleagues and to build a critical mass of personnel who can carry out VCAs. Approach a PNS to fund a Mandarin-speaking national technical adviser with prior training and community development experience.

Strengthening effectiveness and relevance of training:

3. Encourage NS to follow the process outlined in the first four steps of the *How to Do VCA* manual to ensure that the NS has the political will, human resource capacity and funding base to responsibly and effectively carry out VCA *before* providing VCA LBD training courses. Allocate resources to supporting regions and NS to carry out such planning exercises and directly incorporate WPNS capacity analysis into this process.
4. Systematically identify and strengthen the specific linkages between VCA and DP training and guidelines (ie contingency planning, emergency needs assessment, relief and recovery), including the development of guidance notes for trainers in these areas. Include CBDP/DM, CBDRR, CBFA and PHAST in this work, to the extent possible, as this is where most overlaps with VCA training occur. Specify required actions and a timetable across the relevant departments of the Secretariat, drawing from experiences in the Americas and Indonesia, as a key element of moving towards a more harmonized DM professional development curriculum.

Ensuring quality of training:

5. Develop a formal accreditation and M&E system for VCA training, based on the core competencies in the VCA LBD manuals, to ensure appropriate use and quality of the training. This should be linked to broader disaster management human resource development strategies.

Improving content and use of guidance materials:

6. Further integrate climate change and urbanization issues into the VCA training materials and methodologies. Provide follow-up guidance on methods to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities for NS who may want to program in this area.
7. Simplify and summarise the core concepts and terminology used in the VCA LBD manuals to facilitate cross-cultural learning and translation into multiple languages.
8. Provide written guidance to NS on the selection of 'practice' communities for VCA LBD courses to ensure that the participating community's expectations are realistic.
9. Investigate possible methods and funding sources to increase the outreach of key supporting materials, the VCA case studies and guidance notes, to a wider audience of field practitioners.

In order to achieve the agreed objectives and outputs of the Institutional Strengthening Program III partnership with DFID, Recommendations 1- 4 and 6 should be given the highest priority during 2008 followed by Recommendations 5, 6, 8 and 9 over 2008-2009.

ANNEX A: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Review of DFID and ECHO thematic funded disaster preparedness training activities 2007

Overview

The consultant is to carry out an evaluation of two trainings in East and South-East Asia that are being carried out and supported through DFID and ECHO thematic funding.

The consultant will participate as an observer in training sessions that are to be carried out in Laos and China scheduled to take place during the last quarter of 2007. These training sessions will primarily focus on VCA and emergency assessment.

VCA and emergency assessment are the back bone of International Federation's disaster preparedness and relief operations. All activities have been developed with the framework of the Global Agenda for Action, Strategy 2010 and the Federation of the Future – the key strategic planning documents of the International Federation.

The review will look at the quality of the training provided and the sustainability of the training methodology and process in each country and regional context. The review will also look at whether the training given makes appropriate linkages between preparedness, relief and recovery and consider the implementing capacities of the NS's to follow up on the training and what further support they will need during 2008 /9.

Objectives

Within the context of the DFID and ECHO thematic funded programmes to strengthen disaster management in the International Federation, the objectives of the review are to:

- Assess the progress of the activities against the long-term International Federation /DFID Partnership strategies.
- Assess the relevance of the training provided in relation to the implementing capacity and strategic objectives of the National Society's (NS).
- Review the content of the training in terms of making the linkages between preparedness, relief and recovery
- Assess additional needs of the NS's and delegations in the regions to develop and sustain the activities in 2008 /9
- Examine previous NS VCA efforts (minimum two countries) and document the impact of the on improved and expanded service delivery. These documented case studies would also include lessons learned and provide some key recommendations for future.

Review Methodology

The consultant will spend 2-3 days reviewing all relevant key background documents, reports and other secondary information.

This will be followed by a period of a maximum of 20 days of fieldwork, comprised of:

- observation (of training activities, meetings or workshops);
- interviews and focus group discussions with a representative cross-section of stakeholders including: Geneva-based staff; Regional and/or Country Delegation and/or Zone office staff; NS leadership and staff; NS volunteers; beneficiaries, if appropriate (i.e., if activities have progressed to the stage where beneficiary input and impacts can be assessed).

Outputs

The consultant will provide a narrative report that will clearly focus on the following outputs:

1. Appropriateness of the new VCA training tools and their implementation in the two regional training workshops.
2. A baseline competency assessment of trainees for tracking their skills development to measure the impact of training over a period of time.
3. A set of recommendations on how to improve on the use of VCA outputs by the NS's and how to overcome any limitations (if any) with in the tools.
4. Provide at least two case studies showing previous impact of a VCA process on programming and service delivery of the National Societies involved.

The report should be between 10 to 12 pages long, excluding the case studies. It will be shared with the National Societies and delegations.

Timeframe

The missions will take place and the final report is to be submitted by 31 December 2007.

Mission dates:

VCA, Laos, South East Asia: 19–23 November 2007

VCA/emergency assessment, China: 10–15 December 2007

Reporting line: Head of Disaster Policy and Preparedness department

ANNEX B: DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

AusAID (2004), 'Capacity Development Principles and Practices.' AusAID: Canberra.

Bouris S (2007), 'Findings of the Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment in Maduvvaree and Meedhoo' (draft). Geneva: Community Risk Assessment and Action Planning Project, Compendium of Case Studies and Guidance notes, Provention Consortium.

Castellanos X (June 2007), 'End of mission key points for handover.' IFRC: Geneva.

Cruz Vermelha de Timor-Leste (May 2005), *Looking Forward to a Better Life: A Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment in Timor-Leste*. CVTL: Dili.

Cruz Vermelha de Timor-Leste (2006), *Saving Lives Improving Lives: CVTL Strategic Plan 2006-2009*. CVTL: Dili.

DFID/IFRC (2006), *Partnership between DFID and IFRC Annual Workplan: January to December 2007*. DFID/IFRC: London/Geneva

EC-ECHO (2006), *Contribution agreement: Strengthening the humanitarian response to natural disasters through thematic support to the IFRC: Annex 1*. EC-ECHO: Brussels.

IFRC (2006), *What is VCA? An introduction to vulnerability and capacity assessment*. IFRC: Geneva.

IFRC (2007), *How to Do a VCA: A practical step-by-step guide for Red Cross Red Crescent staff and volunteers*. IFRC: Geneva.

IFRC (2003), *Make that change: Community based disaster preparedness*. IFRC: Port of Spain.

IFRC (Sept 2007), 'Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment group meeting minute. IFRC: Bangkok.

IFRC (2007), *Vulnerability and capacity assessment: Learning by Doing*. IFRC: Geneva

IFRC (2006), *Vulnerability and capacity assessment: Lessons learned and recommendations*. IFRC: Geneva.

IFRC (2007), *VCA toolbox with reference sheets*. IFRC: Geneva.

IFRC/Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (Nov 2007), 'Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Report.' IFRC: Colombo.

IFRC & Communities (2006), 'Maduvvaree and Meedhoo Communities Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment: Maduvvaree: 23th – 29th June 2006. IFRC: Male.

Reines T (July 2007), 'Recommendations for Competency-Based DM Framework.' IFRC: Geneva.

Stockholm Environment Institute/IFRC/Sri Lanka Red Cross Society (Sept 2006), 'Matara Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Report. SEI: Stockholm.

ANNEX C: INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Individual Interviews

Trainers:

Mr Sidney Crawford, Disaster Management Delegate, Panama Regional Delegation
Ms Bevita Dwi M, Community Based Disaster Preparedness Program Coordinator, PMI
Mr Jan Gelfang, Consultant
Ms Tran Tu Anh, Program Coordinator, Netherlands RC, Vietnam
Ms Vicenza Mancuso, Disaster Management Delegate, Maldives Delegation

International Federation:

Ms Emma Delo, Livelihoods Delegate, Sri Lanka Delegation
Mr Simon Eccleshall, Recovery Senior Officer, Disaster Management Department, Geneva
Mr Nguyen Hung Ha, Regional Disaster Management Program Officer, South East Asia Regional Delegation, Bangkok
Mr Qinghui Gu, Regional Disaster Management, Delegate East Asia Regional Delegation, Beijing
Mr Hisham Khogali, Senior Officer, Disaster Management Department, Geneva
Ms Yvonne Klynman, Policy Senior Officer, Disaster Policy and Preparedness Department, Geneva
Mr Kamal Niraula, Disaster Management Delegate, East Timor Delegation
Mr Bhupinder Tomar, Disaster Preparedness Officer, Disaster Policy and Preparedness Department, Geneva

National Societies:

Dr Aurelio, Board Member, CVTL

Focus Group Discussions (cross-section of course participants from each National Society)

- Australian RC
- Cambodian RC
- Chinese RC
- East Timor RC/Indonesian RC
- Hong Kong RC
- Laos RC
- Mongolian RC
- Myanmar RC
- Thai RC
- Vietnam RC/Spanish RC (Vietnam)

Qing Li	M	37	China,Inner Mongolia	3	Sr Relief Officer	Emergency relief Avian influenza	Understand methodology	Use in job role
Liu Yong	M	40	China,Gui Zhou	3	Relief Officer	Disaster relief	How to do VCA	Use in community work
Chen Bang Xia	F	32	China,Chong Qing Muni	5	Relief Assistant	Health; emergency relief	How to use VCA in her work	Do VCA – put into practice
Yang Xu Sheng	M	30	China,HQ	1 mo	Director, Project Management Office	Medical	Find out purpose of VCA and how to do it	Train others in NS & form a group to do VCA
Luo Sheng Lan	F	24	China,HQ	2	Officer, Project Management Office	Project management HIV/AIDS youth peer educ'n, DM,VCA	New tools to analyse info, identify problems, find out capacity,methods to do VCA in communities where CDBP being implemented	Use tools/methods to plan more relevant CDBP projects ; share knowledge with CDBP & CBDRM programs
Zhou Jun	F	?	China,HQ	?	Officer, Relief Division			
Liu Wei Wei	F	25	China,HQ	2 mo	Officer, Relief Division	CBDP	Methods of doing VCA	As part of planning for doing CDBP projects
Eric Tai	M	?	Macau, HQ	?	Relief Officer	?	?	?
Timothy Lam	M	28	Hong Kong,HQ	1.5	Internat'l & Relief Service Officer	M&E	To get hands-on experience in doing a VCA before actually conducting one shortly	Organise a VCA workshop for fellow workers
Budkhand Sharavsamba	F	23	Mongolia,UB City,Chingeltei	1.5	Instructor	Nil	What is VCA, how to collect information	Will organize VCA work in her mid-level branch first
Enkhtuya Byambasuren	F	28	Mongolia,HQ	5	Health-1 st Aid Program Officer	Proj. planning process, volunt. manag.,WINPACCS finance management	When to do VCA, how to gather info. from community, how to analyse info	Meet with different groups (eg children, adults, etc) and do VCA based on local conditions & situation
Ariuntungalag Chojijilsuren	F	23	Mongolia,HQ	?	Social Care & Volunteer Prog Officer	Vol. prog. dev't & manage., public health in emerg., community organis.	Tools used in VCA How volunteers participate in VCA	Organise and carry out VCA
Bold-Erdene Enkhbold	M	28	Mongolia,HQ	4	DP Program Officer	Vol.management, Proj. cycle, public health in emerg., refugees	Able to do VCA in any country	Use to work with community
Mari Morimoto	F	?	Japan	?	IFRC DM Delegate, Beijing	BTC; induction	Understand VCA	Use to implement CDBP

ANNEX D.2: BASELINE DATA ON LAOS COURSE PARTICIPANTS (30)

NAME	SEX	AGE	NS	# YR	POSITION	PRIOR VCA TR?	HAS DONE VCA?	PERSONAL LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PLANNED USES
Nhek Siphon	F	25	Cambodia, HQ	6	Training Officer, CBDP	N	Y	Learn how to use VCA tools in a practical way	Use VCA tools in her projects
Yin Bunsopheaktra	F	27	Cambodia, HQ	7	DRR Officer, CBDP	N	Y	VCA tools, vulnerability analysis, plan of action, reporting, M&E	Integrate new tools into HVCA curriculum
Khun Sameng	M	28	Cambodia, HQ	3	Database/Training Officer,HRD Dept	N	Y	VCA tools; assessing who are most vulnerable for use in emergency situation targeting	Develop a VCA tool based on local & reg'l capacities & linked to SOPs & coord. with global system
You Lana	M	43	Cambodia, HQ	16	Head, Planning Sub-Department	N	N	Gain deeper understanding of PRA tools & new tools	Use in community planning process in DM & health share knowledge in NS
Plan Molin	M	28	Cambodia, HQ	3	CBDP Trainer, DM Division	Y HVCA	Y HVCA	Update VCA knowledge & improve skills; get new info re lessons learned	Improve conducting HVCA; share knowledge with others
Amirullah Sagena	M	37	Indonesia	7	Volunteer (Teacher)	N	Y	Learn methodology, tools, preparation & analysis	Conduct VCAs; facilitate some VCA courses
Nuriyani Abu Bakar	F	29	Indonesia	5	Volunteer	N	Y	More knowledge about VCA	Conduct VCA, especially in health, watsan, DP
Bountheung Menvilay	M	56	Laos, HQ	10	Director, DM Dept	N	Y	Gain much more theory & practice; apply to work	Use in CBDP program in targeted villages- help them understand issues and reduce disaster risks
Phaypaseuth Oudomkham	M	50	Laos, HQ	7	Chief, DP Section	N	N	How to use VCA process in communities; how to analyse data	As baseline assessment info to use as entry point for emerg;in CBDP program; to increase community understanding of known risks & hazards
Bounnhong Phommachak	M	36	Laos	2 mo	DP/R Staff	N	N	New knowledge for job	Do VCAs
Sengkong Phouang Chanla	M	50	Laos, Vientianne	3	DP/R Staff	N	N	Improved knowledge about VCA	Use in job – do VCAs
Saysamone Mingboupaha	M	43	Laos, Luang Namtha	6 mo	Branch Deputy	N	N	How to do VCA; PRA tools for VCA	Do VCA in targeted at risk villages
Amphone Chanthayong	F	22	Laos	1	DP Staff	N	N	Learn VCA methodology & tools	To improve her work in community training

Aung Thaung Shwe	M	44	Myanmar, Than Dwe	27	Volunteer	N	N	Get more knowledge about VCA and how to use PRA tools in communities	Will apply VCA & community participation approach to reduce disaster risk in his dis.-prone state
Win Htay	M	45	Myanmar, Maubin	30	Volunteer	N	N	Learn VCA terminology, PRA tools, how to do community participation	Share knowledge with local authorities & other vols.; use in DP to reduce risk
Sanda Win	F	33	Myanmar, Myek	18	Volunteer (Jr Asst Teacher)	N	N	To thoroughly understand VCA by applying PRA tools in practice	Share the experience to reduce vulnerability in her locality
May Thu Kha Soe	F	29	Myanmar, HQ	5	Program Officer, Health Division	N	N	How to apply methodol. to practical work in community-based health	Identify & analyse community vulner. & cap. in planning health activities
Hoang Thi Kim Quy	F	31	Spain, Vietnam office	3 mo	Project Officer (DP management)	N	N	Get knowledge & practical exper. of VCA	Better M&E of VCA activities than before
Mingkwan Moungyoo	F	?	Thailand, Chiang Mai	?	Nurse	?	?	?	?
Piengjai Guntape	F	57	Thailand, HQ	34	Nurse (CBDRR trainer)	N	Y	VCA process	Improve VCA; transfer knowledge to staff & community
Pavinee Yuprasert	F	49	Thailand, HQ	27	Nurse (CBDRR trainer)	N	Y	How to do VCA and analyse data	Use in training course & in CBDRR projects in field
Nangnoi Juthaisong	F	33	Thailand, HQ	10	Nurse	N	N	How to do VCA & how to approach communities	Work in CBDRR & DM; share knowledge & network within NS & other organis'n
Luis Pedro Pinto	M	30	Timor Leste, HQ	4	DM Coordinator	N	N	Learn how to implement VCA in his NS	Train volunteers & implement in communities
Cornelio de Deus Gomes	M	30	Timor Leste, HQ	4	Health Coordinator	N	N	Learn VCA terminology, PRA & VCA tools	Train volunteers & implement in communities
Jose de Araujo Goncalves	M	32	Timor Leste, HQ	7 mo	OD Coordinator	N	N	Learn how to implement VCA in his NS; get more experience about VCA	Train staff & implement in communities
Cao Quang Canh	M	44	Vietnam, Qunag Binh	10	?	Y	Y	How to use VCA tools effectively; prob. analysis	Do VCAs in communes
Nguyen Huu Thang	M	49	Vietnam, HQ	17	?	Y	Y	Learn new tools & skills	Implement better VCAs
Nguyen Minh Duong	M	34	Vietnam, HQ	10	Project Accountant	N	N	Learn VCA tools/method; how to plan & conduct VCA with communities	Introduce VCA methodology tools to other NS staff
Nguyen Thi Hien	F	34	Vietnam, Ninh Thuan	16	Standing Board Member	Y	Y	Learn new skills	Teach communities how to implement VCA
Tran Thi Thanh Huyen	F	25	Vietnam, HQ	3	Project Officer	N	N	What is VCA; how to do VCA	Hopes to be given chance to use knowledge in DP projts.

ANNEX E: VCA TRAINING CASE STUDY: EAST TIMOR

Overview

Timor Leste, or East Timor, is a small island nation of around 924 642 people. It became an independent country in 2002 and is among the most disadvantaged in Asia, with much of the population living below the poverty line.

From November 2004 to April 2005, the CVTL carried out a Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) aimed at identifying the needs and aspirations of 'grassroots' people across East Timor. This was done with funding support from the International Federation.

The CVTL assessed vulnerabilities and capacities in all 13 districts of the country. This covered health, hazards, rural institutions, socio-cultural, economic, security and other factors. A total of 208 participative community discussions were held with 2 392 respondents.

The VCA served as the basis for the Cruz Vermelha de Timor Leste (CVTL) to develop its *Strategic Plan 2006-2009*. This was the CVTL's first strategic plan following its formation in the new nation. The Plan identifies five strategic directions: i) improving preventive health and care ii) reducing risks from the disasters iii) mobilising and empowering youth and women iv) promoting humanitarian values and v) strengthening its own organizational capacity.

Training process

A series of meetings and workshops were held by the International Federation's country delegation with the CVTL to decide on whether and how to conduct the VCA. The CVTL led the process, supported by the delegation.

The VCA was conducted by CVTL volunteers and staff, with the advice and guidance of consultants from the Social Welfare Department, University of Indonesia. The consultants were selected because of their knowledge of the local context, including participatory research methodologies, and their ability to communicate in a common language.

The first stage began with one week's training on data collection methods using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques, as the VCA tools available in 2004 were not considered sufficient. The training took place in the Baucau district, where an active CVTL branch with a well functioning office was located.

CVTL national headquarters staff and volunteers from 12 districts were trained (one district was unable to send its representatives in time for the training). There participants, comprised 24 men and 4 women. The training included a pilot data collection exercise in Baucau. This also served as an operational test of the data collecting instruments and overall assessment system, in preparation for the field work to be carried out in the other districts.

CVTL volunteers who had completed the training were then deployed to their respective districts to start data collection. CVTL national headquarters staff functioned as team leaders in the districts, as there were no existing local structures to oversee the work. The communities to be interviewed in each district were selected through random sampling techniques.

The field work took place over approximately six months and was supplemented with secondary data from recent national quantitative surveys conducted by the Government of Timor Leste (GOTL), such as a poverty assessment and a demographic health survey.

The volunteers worked hard and gathered a lot of information but experienced difficulty summarizing and synthesizing the raw data. The consultants went to each district and helped them to pull the information together. This was followed by a national participative analysis workshop in Dili, which was conducted by the consultants, together with the data collection teams.

Strengths

The VCA planning and implementation process helped to reconcile different views within the CVTL about the National Society's (NS) strategic priorities. The consolidated results from all 13 districts provided a clear and realistic picture of the vulnerabilities, capacities and priorities of East Timor's communities and directly influenced the shape of CVTL's strategic directions.

The CVTL carried out the process, with strong support from the delegation. This approach helped to build greater ownership and understanding of VCA at all levels within the CVTL.

VCA helped to change the mindset of many CVTL staff, volunteers and board members from purely emergency response towards sustainable community risk reduction and disaster mitigation, as the CVTL got 'hands-on' experience working with communities and hearing community views. However, this needs continual reinforcement, as it is often easier (though less effective) to advise and direct, than to engage with communities as equal partners, in problem-solving.

The use of VCA in a broad strategic planning context allowed for better program integration to occur between the health, disaster management and organisational development areas.

The CVTL and the delegation were able to use the VCA outcomes and strategic plan to negotiate with Partner NS and other donors for more strategic and structured programming support, rather than simply undertaking ad hoc projects as funding came along.

The GOTL and a number of international organizations also used the VCA data to add to and cross-check their own situation analyses, particularly in districts with greater information gaps.

This led to coordination with other Partner NS and UN agencies, such as the Australian/Austrian Red Cross Societies and UNFPA, which supported some of the priorities identified by communities.

Limitations

The amount of additional training and support that would be required for the volunteers to carry out the work was underestimated. This included, among other things: selecting which tools to use, synthesizing/analyzing data and report drafting. Combined with significant logistical challenges, it was not possible to keep to timelines (data collection took five months, instead of the three months originally planned).

The scope of the VCA exercise was too large for a new NS and a small country delegation and also led to an overly ambitious strategic plan. The CVTL has been unable to undertake follow-up activities in all communities that participated in the VCA to date, due to a lack of human and financial resources; this situation is not fully understood or recognized by some communities.

The capacity of the GOTL and donors to respond has not been as high as anticipated. Some donors also have not supported community priorities (eg maternal and child health), but have followed their own programming preferences and priorities.

Gender balance could not be achieved among those trained to do VCA, due to the socio-cultural context. Mobilising and empowering women is now one of the CVTL's five strategic directions.

Lessons learned

- The challenge of reducing vulnerability and enhancing capacity requires intimate knowledge and understanding of local reality. This helps to enable sensitive, responsive programs to be developed.
- National Societies must lead the VCA process to really build understanding and commitment. The International Federation has to play a critical support role when a NS is learning these skills, including fielding delegates who have a sound understanding of VCA processes.
- Good coordination and communication between the NS and the International Federation is also essential to a successful outcome.
- Before undertaking VCA, it is important that NS realistically assess their capacity – and the capacity of other stakeholders or partners - to carry out the VCA and to support implementation of community action plans. This includes human, financial and technical support. It also entails deciding on a manageable scope of coverage prior to carrying out any VCA fieldwork.
- It is important to invest time in managing the expectations of the NS and other stakeholders, in addition to those of participating communities, at the beginning of the VCA planning process.
- A formal communication plan should be developed for sharing the results of the VCA with other stakeholders and donors to maximize its potential uses and promote cooperation.
- One week of training is not enough for those conducting the VCAs to develop adequate skills and confidence, especially volunteers with less education or experience. Plenty of coaching, mentoring and practice are required, including conducting regular analytic workshops throughout the data collection process.
- A good quality assurance system is essential when recently trained or less experienced individuals are carrying out VCAs to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results.

ANNEX F

VCA TRAINING CASE STUDY: SRI LANKA

Overview

The 2004 Asian earthquake and tsunami is widely acknowledged to be one of the most devastating natural disasters in Sri Lanka's history. The tsunami caused extensive damage and loss of life in 13 districts, with over 30 000 people killed and a million displaced or otherwise affected. This added to an existing context of prolonged conflict and economic hardship for many in the country.

As part of a broader ongoing program of recovery support to the affected population, the Sri Lankan Red Cross Society (SLRCS) and the International Federation carried out six Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (VCAs) in various divisions of the district of Matara over 2006-07. This followed from a VCA process in the district of Galle, which was supported by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI).

The communities first selected for the VCAs were those where families that had been displaced from their original locations were being relocated and for whom new housing was being built by the RC/RC. The aim was to identify the major vulnerabilities in these communities and the capacities that they possessed to address them. Two specific objectives within this context were: 1) to build community unity between new settlers and host communities and 2) to provide support to restore and strengthen the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households in the community.

The VCA results were used to identify community priorities and potential areas for future assistance by the SLRCS and the International Federation. Individual communities identified different priorities, based on their own circumstances. These ranged from: establishing a risk reduction fund; supporting income generation activities and micro-finance; developing a youth entrepreneurial development program; rehabilitating damaged community halls, lagoons and coir pits; and assessing CBO capacity to support the implementation of priority activities; among others.

Training process

The VCAs were implemented through the International Federation's post-tsunami recovery operation. Planning and conducting the VCAs was a lengthy process, as most personnel came from relief backgrounds and were unfamiliar with participatory research methodologies and livelihoods-oriented programming approaches. The first site selected to carry out a VCA was a community familiar to the Branch Chairman in order to closely monitor the results of the process.

SLRCS and IFRC programme staff and volunteers conducted the VCAs, using learning by doing approaches, with the technical guidance and support of an International Federation-engaged Sri Lankan community participation specialist and the Matara-based livelihoods delegate.

The VCAs commenced with introductory meetings with local authorities, community representatives and the leaders of local Community-Based Organisations (CBOs). Once an agreement on collaboration was reached, resource and social mapping was carried out with the communities, along with well-being ranking, focus group discussions, key informant interviews and livelihood interviews. Data was also gathered on markets, financial institutions and the activities of other local and international organizations already planned or taking place in these communities.

Data analysis took place throughout the process and a follow-up meeting was held with the communities to share and verify the information. This included an explanation of what areas could and could not be supported by the SLRCS/International Federation. The communities were then given instructions on how to submit applications to the SLRCS/International Federation for follow up activities to build social unity that could not be done by the communities alone. These applications were assessed by the SLRCS/International Federation with the local authorities.

At the end of each day the VCA team came together to reflect on what had been learnt during the day, who had been met, what issues had been raised, what capacities and weaknesses had been identified noted and whether this confirmed earlier information or raised further questions. Feedback was also given on the effectiveness of the tools used. When the VCA process concluded, the VCA team met as a group to discuss what they thought had gone well and what they would do differently if they had to do it again.

As each subsequent VCA took place, the methodology was refined and improved. The first VCA took ten people nine days to complete. The pace was too intensive and there were not enough human resources available to carry out the work. The process was reduced to a three-four days intensive block of time initially spent doing the VCA with the community. Then, follow up VCA modules and activities were implemented over time. This proved to be easier for both the SLRCS, the International Federation and the communities to manage.

The number of tools used also was cut down, as it was found that if too many options were given, the VCA facilitators could not master all of them well enough to use effectively. The facilitators were provided with a detailed step-by-step instruction manual on 'Preparation for the VCA,' developed by the Matara livelihoods team. Over the course of carrying out the VCAs, much additional training was given on sustainable livelihoods and the household economy approach.

Strengths

By investing the time to demonstrate the benefits of the VCA process for analysis and programming to the SLRCS Matara Branch in an acceptable and practical way, support was built up for the process. The Branch would now like to include livelihoods in its disaster management program, since employment and poverty are core issues in this district.

The VCA process and tools 'made sense' to the communities as they allowed for a holistic, rather than sectorally fragmented, assessment of their situation. It also stimulated discussion on issues they had seldom, if ever, considered as a community.

The intensive coaching and support given to the trained staff and volunteers while they practiced their new skills, along with regular review and adaptation to both their capacity and the local context, led to significant improvements in the quality of the VCAs carried out. Ultimately, they led to better targeting of the most vulnerable members of the communities for recovery and risk reduction programming.

The process focused primarily on the identification of community capacities, rather than problems and what outsiders could do to help them. In one community, the residents were able to negotiate

with the head priest of the local temple to set up a roadside market on the temple grounds to sell their goods, rather than travelling two kilometers away to another market.

The VCAs were useful for advocacy with the local authorities. For example, the government has agreed to put up streetlights on access roads in one village, making it safer for women at night.

Considerable trust was built between the SLRCS/International Federation and the communities.

Limitations

Other parts of the International Federation's delegation could not be persuaded to make much use of the VCA results for planning their own tsunami recovery assistance activities, as they had already embarked on their own sectoral planning processes.

The capacity of the SLRCS to deliver assistance to the participating communities in their identified priority areas in future remains a question. At the same time, given the high level of trust and understanding developed through the VCA process, the SLRCS and the communities may identify other activities of mutual interest.

It was challenging to find activities and tools that would attract the interest of young men to participate in the VCA process.

Lessons learned

- VCA is a very appropriate methodology for doing any kind of community programming, with a good range of tools from which to choose.
- Strategic planning processes for integrated VCA needs to 'start from the top' and early in a post-disaster operation. All departments of the NS and the International Federation need to be involved from the outset and to contribute to informing a more integrated planning process; otherwise, it is difficult to get them to participate in using the results later. This can lead to the VCAs taking place in an ad hoc way and being under-utilised.
- More than one week of formal training on the VCA tools is needed. Managing community expectations and mastering tools that rank well-being or examine power dynamics is not simple. A lot of practice and guidance is needed to build the experience and confidence of volunteers, especially those who are more used to methods such as household surveys.
- The best way to demonstrate the effectiveness of VCA processes is through the results they achieve. It should be expected that some NS, volunteers and International Federation personnel may be uncomfortable with the loss of control associated with facilitation, rather than direction, of community participation. However, many come to better appreciate the knowledge and ability of communities once they have seen the outcomes of a VCA.

**ANNEX G: NATIONAL SOCIETIES REPRESENTED
IN LAOS AND CHINA VCA TRAINING COURSES**

East Asia course (China)

- Australian RC (1 –currently working in a CRC branch)
- Chinese RC (23)
- Hong Kong RC (1)
- Japanese RC (1 – currently a DM delegate in Secretariat East Asia delegation)
- Macau RC (1)
- Mongolian RC (4)

South-East Asia & Indo-China Laos)

- Cambodian RC (5)
- Indonesian RC (2)
- Laos RC (5)
- Myanmar RC (4)
- Spanish RC (1- locally engaged in Vietnam)
- Thai RC (4)
- Timor-Leste RC (3)
- Vietnam RC (5)

ANNEX H: SOUTH EAST ASIA VCA FOCAL GROUP LESSONS LEARNT AND CHALLENGES

- VCA should be advocated to NSs leaders for receiving their support in terms of policy, human resources,
- NSs should develop and define clear and good objectives from the beginning of VCA process.
- Chose the right persons to involve, for example the case from PMI that a core team of VCA set up including a task force group who has knowledge and skills in VCA to train SATGANA (DP& DR team) at district branch level then SATGANA provide training for village level team named Community based Action Team (CBAT) on how to conduct an assessment using VCA as a tool.
- A common assessment toolkit developed and used
- VCA outcomes have been shared with different stakeholders within and outside the Movement, especially local government for better application and actions.
- VCA outcomes have been integrated into not DM but Health & Care and OD (volunteer development).
- Empowerment of community by maximizing their own resources, participation and commitment in whole process to ensure the ownership
- VCA requires not only human resources but financial resources
- Most of VCA has been done on the project basis only. For a longer term, NSs should have strategic planning for conducting VCA in high risk community
- VCA should address all kinds of risk and develop a comprehensive plan or program to deal with all risks identified.
- More advocacy at different levels for linking VCA outcomes with overall community socio-economic development plan
- Capacity building is needed in the whole process to ensure community has enough capacity in place to take further actions reducing risks and vulnerabilities
- Coordination among different NS departments of DM, Health and OD should be taken into consideration for better integration of VCA into NSs programmes.

ANNEX I: KEY SKILLS AND LEARNING NEEDED BY THE VCA TEAM

- Understanding VCA, including relevant terminology and concepts
 - Participatory methods of investigation
 - How communities function
 - Culture and cultural sensitivity
 - Team-building, decision-making, group dynamics
 - Facilitation techniques
 - Recording and interpretation of data
- From *How to Do a VCA* , p 42, Box 12