Digitalizing the Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (EVCA) Tools

The EVCA – *a participatory process developed for communities to become more resilient through the assessment and analysis of the risks they face and the identification of actions to reduce these risks* – is facing challenges as the information collected during the process is often recorded on paper or in a Microsoft Word document. An unintended effect of this practice is that the EVCA is frequently perceived as a one-off exercise producing a document relevant for a specific point in time, rather than an ongoing process. More specifically, collecting and presenting the data and information from EVCAs in paper format inherently has several inconveniences, for example:

■ is under/ or not utilized (Inaccessible, illegible, can't easily be shared across different platforms, etc.)

■ is susceptible of being destroyed, become irrelevant/forgotten

■ is difficult to update (for example to re-do mapping)

■ is not presented in user-friendly way / can't be used for decision making purpose, etc.

The case studies (link) illustrate how three National Societies are turning to technology and data solutions to address some of the challenges in conducting, and making better use of the results of, the EVCA.
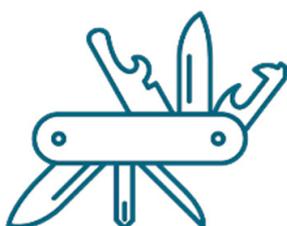
The EVCA presents National Societies (NS'), along with the communities they serve, with a rare opportunity to embark on a digital transformation journey in a non-emergency setting. Essentially, NS' can use the EVCA as a starting point to identify their digital needs regarding humanitarian and operational response & requirements, then actively engage in transforming current practices. For example, the digitalization of EVCA tools will help communities and NS' to gain familiarity with digital tools and methodologies (ex: data collection tools, mapping tools, GIS, etc.) further enhancing their data and digital literacy.
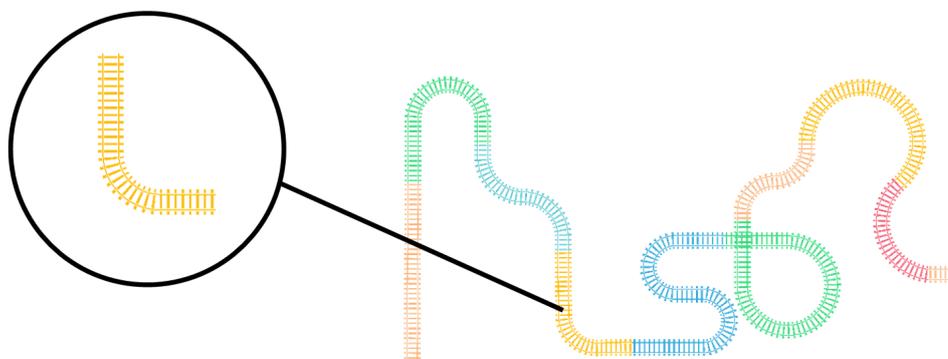
Data Readiness Toolkit

Essentially, data readiness refers to: the ability to use quality and timely information in humanitarian operations and programmes.

National Societies that are data ready will likely collect and analyze data that is useful for decision-making and are less likely to duplicate efforts by collecting data that already exists. Furthermore, they will use tools & methods to present information in a way to support leaders to make decision based on almost real-time data.

The tools and methods used during the EVCAs (for example: mapping, surveys, factsheets, etc.) can be digitalized using specific software/applications like ArcGIS, Kobo Toolbox, etc. Digital maps, mobile data collection and dashboards greatly improve the accuracy, sharing capabilities, usability, and access of the information collected during the EVCA. In-essence, the tools are transformed to become interoperable making it easier to exchange the information collected during the EVCA, both internally and externally. Furthermore, these digital tools are not single purposed with their use limited to the EVCA; they are designed to be multifunctional and/or compatible with other applications greatly increasing their potential. These tools can be used by other departments of the National Society for other purposes, for example: carrying out rapid needs assessment during an emergency response, identifying vulnerabilities while during project design, allocating resources management based on data driven information and maps, etc.

Digitalization of EVCA tools   Path towards digital transformation

It may be useful to view the digitalization of the EVCA tools as part of the larger path towards digital transformation as it augments National Societies' information management capacities, rather than being treated as an individual segment. If funding digitalization of EVCA tools through project, make sure the project aligns with the aim/direction of the organization's overall digital trajectory. Through digitalization of EVCA tools, National Societies can optimize operations and strengthen the delivery of humanitarian services by acquiring experience with specific digital tools (e.g. digital mapping tools / GIS, mobile data collection) and methodologies (e.g. designing appropriate surveys and cleaning data), and data visualization (e.g. dashboards). These all contribute to building the NS's provision of data-informed and digitally enhanced humanitarian services.

International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies | **DRR in Action Case Study**
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There are several implicit conditions to carefully consider when undergoing digital transformation. The first is related to the organization's own digital maturity and information management (IM) capacity. The Prepare Center has put together a Theory of Change along with framework to help National Societies identify their data readiness goals and guidance on how assess organizational gaps. Other considerations are, but aren't limited to:

- Timeline – may require a longer-term vision, as the digitalization can be a lengthy process depending on several variables

- Costs – may require significant investment as it can be an expensive in terms of equipment, staff, licensing, etc.

- Structural reform – organizational change may be required to adopt new technologies

Funding digital initiatives can get expensive quickly as it usually entails purchasing specific equipment, paying for software licenses, hiring qualified staff and/or providing trainings on digital tools, etc. A strategy to reduce costs may be to attempt using open-source software, when possible, to avoid licensing fees. Another potential strategy for funding the digitalization of tools is to attempt to combine project funding with structural funding sources by putting forth multifunctional use of the tools and benefits to the organization as a whole.

Another approach to funding digital transformation is to establish one broader plan with one budget and use pooled funds or crowd funding to cover specific costs outlined in the one budget.

Accoring to the 2020 mapping by the German Red Cross and the IFRC, the following National Societies are using digital tools for various EVCA purposes:

No.	National Society	Digital Tools Used
1	American Red Cross	Mapping
2	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society	Semi-Structured Interviews, Mapping
3	Bolivian Red Cross	Mapping
4	British Red Cross	Community Baseline Data, Mapping
5	German Red Cross	Mapping, Transect Walk, Seasonal Calendar, Household & Neighbourhood Vulnerability Assessment, Community Baseline Data, Assessing the Capacity of People's Organizations, Semi-Structured Interview
6	Hong Kong Red Cross (Branch of the Red Cross Society of China)	Community baseline data
7	Jamaican Red Cross	Mapping, Transect Walk
8	Netherlands Red Cross	Community Risk Assessment & Data Collection (510)
9	Norwegian Red Cross	Mapping, Transect Walk
10	Philippine Red Cross	Mapping, Transect Walk
11	Spanish Red Cross	Community Baseline Data, Household & Neighbourhood Vulnerability Assessment
12	Sudanese Red Crescent	Community Baseline Data, Semi-Structured Interview, Direct Observation, Household & Neighbourhood Vulnerability Assessment

For more information about the digital tool use in the EVCA, please contact:

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