Historical Profile and Visualization

What is it?

Historical profile and historical visualization are two similar ways to building a picture of past events that have an effect on a community and stimulate discussion on what has happened in the past. The tools are a powerful way of allowing people to voice opinions and share their history. It also offers a good opportunity to discuss changes in hazards patterns and compare with secondary data on landscape changes, trends in weather patterns. Awareness of the patterns can influence the decisions taken by community members in the planning process.

➢ In a *historical profile* community members create a timeline of the different significant events and developments over the past several decades.

➢ With *historical visualization*, the community members create a chart showing how key aspects of their lives have changed over time.

🕑 30-60 min each

✏ Paper and pens or PC/tablet.

Resilience characteristics covered:

- Knowledge about risk
- Health
- Basic needs - shelter
- Basic needs - food
- Basic needs - water
- Social cohesion
- Economic opportunities
- Infrastructure and services
- Natural assets
- Connectedness

Community of San Juan de Letran, Salvadorean Red Cross Society

Use them to…

- **Get an insight** into past events, such as major disaster events or crisis, and what changes have occurred over time.
- **Understand** the present situation in the community (causal link between past and present for health issues or hazards and vulnerabilities).
- **Understand** how things may continue to change in the future (trends).
- **Bring** into discussion changes in known risks and new risks (e.g. due to climate change or urbanisation) using secondary information about expected new risks and changes.
- **Serve** as a basis for discussions on future projects within the community.

Skills needed

The **facilitator** should be able to maintain the focus of the participants on the selected topics. It should be someone who can establish trust with the participants and is respectful. Skills in recording systematic information are also important. The facilitator should be able to mediate any discussions or conflicts which may arise.

The tools are more relevant if the **participants** have lived in the community for some time and know the history. They should be able to express themselves clearly, and accurately reflect on past events and changes in the community.

How to do a historical profile

This tool promotes a better understanding of the most significant events of the past and how the community has developed over time. It can lead to a shared understanding of the community's **history** and **identity**.

The aim of a historical profile is for the community to identify all the events and activities that have left their mark on the growth and development of the community. Through the profile, members of the community, especially the younger generation, will get to know and understand how the community has evolved. This can be a powerful tool, as people learn, appreciate and write down the efforts made

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Example from VCA in Barrio Nuevo, Costa Rican Red Cross.

by earlier generations; they will better value what they have and the past achievements of their community members. People will also be stimulated to think ahead: What do past changes tell us about trends in risks and extremes? What needs to be done to manage those risks?

For a digital version, see PASSA youth (Activity 1 – historical profile)

Step 1. Identify areas of interest and timeframe.

Clearly define the topics for which you want to collect information. These could be disaster events including food security or conflicts or health problems (including relative severity), environment and land use changes, and related vulnerability and capacity. You can also identify trends and changes in livelihoods, social changes and migration over time for different groups. Think about the resilience characteristics to identify the topics and indicators for which you want to collect information..

Step 2. Select the participants.

When selecting participants, you will want to find people, who know the community and are open and willing to share their experiences. Historical information is more effective when there is participation from a broad spectrum of the community, especially the elderly who have lived in the areas for a long time, but also adults and young people (to identify new trends) and different groups in the community including marginalised groups.

If the cultural context requires it, you may need to implement this tool on separate occasions: with the elderly and adults and with young people. In other cases, it may be best to divide up the group by men and women or other groups to create safe environments for discussion.

Given that different groups might have conflicting experiences it is important to ensure that the Facilitator captures differing opinions within the group.

Step 3. Discuss historical events

You can work backwards from today to how far participants can remember, or start with some basic historical facts. Start off by asking people if they can recall major events in the community related to the aspects below:

- What have been the major extreme events and their impact – which year, month and how severe?

- Have weather and climate events such as flood, drought and cyclones changed in frequency or severity?
- What have been the major health problems (high levels of non-communicable diseases, substance abuse, etc.) and epidemics? Have you noticed any changes?
- Have there been new emerging ones (vector- or waterborne, which could potentially be affected by changes in climate)?
- What changes have there been in land use and tenure?
- What have been the major political and social events?
- What have been major social changes (e.g. gender roles, migration, violence)

Where relevant, use secondary source information e.g. about historic events in the community (e.g. earthquake 100 years ago) or about external influences on hazards facing the community, such as deforestation in upper watersheds that increases the risk of flash floods, to stimulate a more in-depth discussion.

> *TIP!*
> Memory bias is a potential challenge here, so it is important to triangulate information and try to ask clarifying questions to help avoid misinterpretation of apparent drastic changes**.**

Step 4. Capture the information.

A note-taker – either a participant, another specified person or the facilitator – should write the events discussed down on a blackboard, a large sheet of paper or a word or excel table in chronological order. Make sure participants are aware of how you are going to proceed and have agreed that the information will only be used for the purpose of investigation.

Example (adapted from Make that Change)

1944	First ten families settle in the community
1951	Construction of the railway and presence of 20 railway workers
1954	Railway workers lived in the village. Main railway station was donated to the community and became the school.
1957	Fire in the community destroyed two houses. The church was built with the support of the community.
1959	Heavy rainfall caused river to flood 10 houses near the river bed; 5 houses damaged
1960	Water system providing potable water to one-third of the population was constructed accounting for about 200 houses in the community. Electricity coverage was extended to half of the population.
1980	Paved road linked to main highway.
1987	Earthquake destroyed many houses and services.
1989	A clinic with 30 beds was inaugurated.
1990	Dengue outbreak killed four people. River flooding – about same magnitude as 1959, but 17 houses damaged.
1991	Hurricane Alex severely hit the community and flash floods destroyed at least 120 houses while another 50 were damaged.
1992	Community Disaster Group created.
1994	Heavy migration to the capital due to heavy droughts and job losses, which affected the economic situation of many households.
1999	Drainage collapsed along with tonnes of garbage.
2003	A sports centre was constructed.
2009	Strong rains; river flood higher then ever and 29 houses were evacuated and 15 damaged.
2010	Hurricane James hit (milder than Alex in 1991) – the sports centre served as evacuation centre; 15 homes damaged.

The example above shows how and when major events occurred and how they impacted on the community. Through further discussion with community members, you can find out how the community has changed over time.

Optional Step 5 - Discuss impacts and additional information

You can also add more columns to your historical profile as depicted in the example below to capture not only what happened in the community but how it impacted it and which organisations where involved thus collecting more information about both the vulnerabilities and capacities in the community. Ask question such as:

- Have hazards affected men, women, disabled people, age groups or minority groups differently?
- How have past events affected gender roles?
- Based on past events, what capacities do men, women, boys and girls have for coping with, responding to, recovering from and preparing for future crises?
- How did people react when difficult times happened? What coping strategies did they implement? Which ones worked? Which ones did not work? Did they have consequences (negative or positive)?
- Who provided assistance during difficult times?

Example of extended historical profile that includes the effects in the community and active organisations (Community of Barangay Bakhaw Sur, Philippine Red Cross).

DATE	EVENT	EFFECTS IN COMMUNITY	ORGANIZATION ASSISTED
1962	Foundation of Buswang Old-Bakhaw Sur Elementary School (BOBSES)	Community Literacy Program	DEPED, LGU KALIBO, PERALTA FAMILY
1970	Barangay Health Center Established	Improved health care in the community	SANGUNIANG BARANGAY, MR. ROMEO INCENSARIO, BHW'S, MUNICIPAL HEALTH CENTER
1980	Barangay Hall Constructed	Seat of Barangay Local Government	LGU-AKLAN BIDA 20% DEVELOPMENT FUND
November 5, 1984	Typhoon Undang	Devastation in the community	LGU/ RED CROSS/ DSWD
1990	Earthquake	Loss of Livelihood	LGU KALIBO
	Start of Road Construction	Provided better access in the community	
1992	Municipal Dumping Site Started	Health hazard	
2000	Start of food processing livelihood	Improved livelihood and increase in income	NAVARRA FOOD PRODUCTS SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL, TESDA
2004	El Nino Phenomenon	Drought	MUN. AGRICULTURAL OFFICE, DA, 20% DEV'T FUND, LGU KALIBO, LGU AKLAN, SANGUNIANG PANLALAWIGAN
	Construction of Sacro Costato Convent		
2006	Construction of the new Health Center and Barangay Hall	For better delivery of health care and government services	LGU-AKLAN 20% DEVELOPMENT FUND
2007	Construction of RC Supermarket Warehouse	Barangay Capacity	RC Supermarket
June 21, 2008	Typhoon Frank	Flooding and Soil Erosion	RED CROSS, DSWD, LGU AKLAN, LGU KALIBO, TSU TSI FOUNDATION, GMA KAPUSO FOUNDATION AND SAGIP KAPAMILYA
2010	Construction of Starline Furniture	Barangay capacity	Starline Furniture
2011	MOA Signing with Philippine Red Cross	Barangay capacity building	Philippine Red Cross
2012	Construction of Circumferential Road and Drainage System	For better access in the community and lessen flood	SANGUNIANG PANLALAWIGAN, LGU AKLAN, 20% DEV'T FUND
2013	Construction of Fu's Merchandise Warehouse	Barangay capacity	Fu's Merchandise
November 8, 2013	Supertyphoon Yolanda	Flood, Soil Erosion, Loss of livelihood, Damage to Property	RED CROSS AKLAN CHAPTER, DSWD, LGU AKLAN, LGU KALIBO, MDRRMO, PDRRMO, SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL, RC 143-BDRRMC
2014	Groundbreaking of Housing, Daycare Center and Chapel	Improved living condition	THE LAMB SHALL LEAD INTERNATIONAL, DIOCESE OF KALIBO
	MOA with KALAHI CIDDS	Infrastructure project to lessen the effects of flooding	DSWD, DILG, KALAHI-CIDDS
	Construction Of Multi-Purpose Hall	Use as daycare center, evacuation center and other recreational used.	LGU AKLAN, SANGUNIANG PANLALAWIGAN, DILG 20% DEVELOPMENT PLAN

When you analyse the results of the timeline it can be useful to also divide the key elements into the different resilience characteristics (knowledge of risks, basic needs, social cohesion, economic opportunities, infrastructure and services, management of natural resources and connectedness) to allow for better triangulation with other tools.

When reviewing the events, discuss if some risks appear to have changed in frequency or severity; what might be the likely causes of such changes (e.g. changes in external environment, land use patterns/housing, weather patterns?)

How to do historical visualization

This tool visualises how key aspects of the community life have changed over time. It can pinpoint changes in the nature and behaviour of hazards (in terms of frequency, duration, severity, impact), changes in vulnerability (population pressure, poor housing construction, poor drainage system, degraded ecosystem etc), and also changes in capacity (health facilities, water facilities, schools, roads, communications). Housing, trees, river levels, livestock and hazards, and helps people to think about how their susceptibility to certain risks may continue to change in the future.

Step 1. Identify the participants.

Like for the historical profile, identify people who are representative of the community, especially the oldest and youngest people, who are willing to participate. One way to do this is to divide them according to their ages and time living in the community you can also divide them by gender or other relevant categories for participants to express themselves freely.

Step 2. Define the themes and timeframe.

Decide on the themes you would like to discuss and ensure that all the participants agree to them. Put the themes as columns across the top of a table. For the hazard assessment make sure to include the major hazards and health problems. For the vulnerability and capacity assessment take into account the resilience characteristics and pick elements from them (e.g. natural assets, social and demographic changes, economic activities and livestock, etc.).

Select a starting year (at least 50 years in the past) and create rows by decades You can also add 2-3 decades in the future.

Step 3. Select the symbols and assign values.

Pick symbols to represent the people, houses, trees, money, companies, according to the themes etc. that are to represent the changes on the chart. Each symbol can represent one, ten, a hundred or a thousand items.

Step 4. Discuss and document.

Ask participants to start filling out the table. Promote an open discussion, with the participation of all the group members. Where necessary complement and motivate the discussion using secondary information about the hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities in the community.

Example from a VCA in the Maldives which includes future projections until 2020

Constraints and pitfalls

Ensure that there are enough people present who have a clear understanding of what has happened in the past. Don't worry too much about exact numbers. The number of symbols are just meant to show the perception of the community of the changes to spark discussion. Some of these can later be verified and documented in more detailed figures through secondary data.

Next steps

You can start your analysis by triangulating the information collected through these two tools with other information to ensure validity. The data are also very important in the creation of a detailed baseline study. In some cases, a review of secondary sources may provide additional

information about external influences on hazards facing the community, such as deforestation in upper watersheds that increases the risk of flash floods, or climate change that increases the risk of floods and drought. Such information should be used during the exercise to stimulate a more in-depth discussion with the community and also to interpret the historical profile or visualisation.

You can then organise and analyse the information provided by the tool to characterise and prioritize the hazards and threats in terms of their frequency and impacts, any changes in the frequency or magnitude of the hazards, etc. (see EVCA 5.3.3). Analyse and record information about the changes in vulnerabilities and capacities in the community according to the different resilience characteristics. For example, under the characteristic of economic opportunities you could analyse changes in livestock and its impact with regard to livestock-dependent livelihoods.

Resilience characteristics	Coverage of characteristic by tool	Example of information that can be collected	Vulnerabilities identified	Capacities identified
Knowledge about risk		Dates of major disaster events		
Health		Dates of major disease outbreaks and epidemics		
Basic needs – shelter		Major construction development, changes in building styles and type of houses, density of settlement.		
Basic needs – food				
Basic needs – water				
Social cohesion		Demographic changes, important social events.		
Economic opportunities		Major changes in types of livelihoods and assets, major migration events (urbanization, abroad, influx of refugees).		
Infrastructure and services		Year of construction of key community infrastructure (e.g. hospital, new school), year new government policy of free health care came into effect, # of household with access to electricity		
Natural assets		Changes in quality of natural assets		
Connectedness				