



Participatory Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment: Practice and Theory

Coastal Communities Generating Information on Risk and Risk Reduction



Image: Study by ISRO and AIDMI in Orissa, December 2009, AIDMI.

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HVCA for Building Disaster Resilience Among Disaster-prone Communities

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World Humanitarian Day: What and Why?

August 19, 2011

Since its founding, the United Nations has designated specific days throughout the year to draw the world's attention to critical global issues. The UN yearly calendar involves almost 50 days approved by the General Assembly, ranging from the well known "World AIDS Day" to the lesser known "International Mother Tongue Day." On August 19th 2009, at a small understated ceremony in the lobby of the UN building in New York, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched a new addition to the UN calendar: World Humanitarian Day. It marks the day of the horrific bombings that took the lives of 22 humanitarian aid workers in Baghdad, among them, Sergio de Mello, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. World Humanitarian Day exists to acknowledge tragedies such as this—and to honour the extraordinary sacrifice and commitment of humanitarian aid workers around the world, and the fact that many of them choose to work on the frontlines in emergencies in some of the world's most insecure places: many pay the ultimate price for making that choice. But World Humanitarian Day is about more than loss and sacrifice: the UN General Assembly declared that this day should also "increase public awareness about humanitarian assistance activities worldwide, the importance of international cooperation, as well as to honour all humanitarian aid workers who have worked in the promotion of the humanitarian cause."

Raising awareness of these issues is more critical than ever. Why? Humanitarian needs are growing faster than our ability to deal with them: to put it simply, disasters are on the increase, humanitarian aid budgets are decreasing, and more and

more people are suffering and dying—unnecessarily. We only need to look as far as the on-going famine in East Africa for evidence of declining support where more than 12 million people need urgent aid following a severe drought. As reported by CBC news, "Donations have not been pouring in at a fast pace... donor fatigue is an issue for East African relief efforts. The UN has only raised US\$1.1 billion of the US\$2.4 billion requested from donor countries for famine relief". In 2010, despite the massive flooding that has affected 20 million people, devastating an area greater than the size of England, (in both Pakistan and parts of India), the UN appeal for \$460 million is only one-third funded! Part of UN OCHA's (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) job is to raise money for the global humanitarian system. In 2010, these were valued at more than US\$11.3 billion, of which US\$7.1 billion was received. This is shocking and unacceptable.

Over the past 10 years, we have seen the total number of people affected by natural disasters rise sharply. An average of 211 million people are directly affected each year, nearly 5 times the numbers affected by conflict. Women and children are particularly vulnerable: they are already affected by poverty, insecurity, hunger, poor health and environmental decline. Climate change is also expected to dramatically affect patterns of population movement and migration. The millions of people who will be displaced from their homes and who will lose assets due to prolonged droughts and cyclical floods or storms will be especially vulnerable. These people will require significant humanitarian protection and assistance.

Despite the growing urgent needs worldwide, levels of humanitarian funding decreased by 11 percent between 2008 and 2009, dropping from almost \$17 billion a year to just over US\$15 billion. Global spending on humanitarian aid hit US\$16.7 billion in 2010, but devastating disasters and rising delivery costs meant almost 40 percent of needs still went unmet. Escalating food and fuel costs made it more expensive to procure and deliver aid. Food prices have risen by more than 40 percent since 2007 while oil prices are up 36 percent in real terms. The global economic crisis has put huge constraints on the overseas aid budgets of all donor governments, but the impact of the recession is being felt most painfully by crisis-stricken people in poor countries. Jobs - already rare - are disappearing; remittances sent home to relatives by emigrants who have left home in search of work are declining; food and fuel prices remain high; and the basic necessities required to farm and maintain access to food are becoming harder to access, making food production less secure.

The drivers of poverty and of humanitarian crises are increasing, not only because of the economic crises, but also because of the increase in urbanisation and population pressure, global health pandemics, increasing food insecurity, worsening water shortages, and increasing numbers of people on the move. Meeting these challenges requires preparedness—and that requires more flexible funding sources as well as more flexible emergency responses and humanitarian interventions to address these emerging and complex developments.

In 2009, Concern Worldwide and its partners directly responded to 44

disasters in 17 countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean and assisted over 2.5 million people with cash, food, shelter, health care, and water and sanitation. In 2010, Concern Worldwide and its partners reached 3.7 million people directly through 41 emergency interventions in 16 countries. Conflict and extreme weather events —cyclones, flooding and drought— were responsible for the majority of the emergencies. But our humanitarian work is not just about responding to large, high-profile emergencies. Our humanitarian interventions also meet the daily humanitarian needs of the poorest populations. These needs are not always generated by large, sudden, globally visible disasters, but are often driven by what may mistakenly appear as a small events: the failure of a single crop, a mudslide, the death of the primary family income earner. Any of these events can tip a vulnerable family or community from poverty into a life-threatening crisis. And that crisis will almost certainly make them more vulnerable to future shocks and stresses, forcing them to sell their assets and make choices that undermine their future well-being and their children's prospects. Protecting the poorest communities from these "small" shocks is a critical part of Concern's humanitarian work.

India witnessed 431 natural disasters over the last two decades affecting more than 152 million people with human loss of 143,039 as reported by Prevention Web. The number of natural disasters in India is more than the combined natural disasters of four African Countries (Ethiopia 86, Chad 44, Sudan 77 and Somalia 66). About 59% of India's landmass is prone to earthquakes, 40 million hectares are prone to floods, 8% of the country is vulnerable to cyclones and 68% is susceptible to droughts. Rising sea levels, less predictable weather, population growth and environmental degradation mean that most of these risks are expected to increase in the coming years. Over the past fifty years India's flood affected areas have more than doubled from 5% to 12%. Humanitarian needs are growing faster than the Government's capacity to deal with them. Aid is often delayed, inadequate, and often issues of disasters and dignity, and accountable to the disaster victims are overlooked.

Our work in India has proven that we can successfully reduce the risk of disasters and minimise their impact in the poorest communities. Concern is building the capacity of communities to reduce the impact and risk of disasters in Orissa, Bihar,

Assam and West Bengal by setting up local Emergency Response Teams and recruiting volunteers to ensure that they are better prepared. Our Emergency Unit is working hard to ensure that disaster risk reduction is integrated into all our programming in India and into the school education system in India. Important research is being carried out on the effects of climate change on the coastal areas of Orissa, which will allow us to deliver more intelligent, informed, and proactive programming. Excellent work such as this often goes unnoticed, yet it must be supported by donors if we are to effectively and efficiently protect populations from future emergencies.

In light of these realities and challenges, I cannot overstate the importance of this day. This day pays tribute to and recognises all of the important work being done in India and all over the world to protect the poorest and most vulnerable. It also honours those who promote the spirit of and need for humanitarianism and who have done exemplary work in the sector. I recognise the sacrifices made by aid workers around the world to alleviate suffering and save lives-and acknowledge the growing need for our work to continue. ■

– **Dipankar Datta**, Country Director
Concern Worldwide India



Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar (XIMB), in association with Concern Worldwide, hosted the World Humanitarian Day Observation on 19th August, 2011. Organised by the Social Responsibility Cell (SRC) of XIMB, the theme for this year was 'People helping People'. The chief guest for the occasion was Mr. T. Nanda Kumar, Member, National Disaster Management Authority; and the event was presided over by Mr. Dipankar Datta, Country Director, Concern Worldwide; Prof. S. Parsuraman, Director, TISS, Mumbai and Mr. Mihir Bhatt, Founder, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), Ahmedabad.

Tribute to Humanitarian Aid Workers on World Humanitarian Day

Concern Worldwide India joined hands with Xavier Institute of Management, Bhubaneswar (XIMB), to commemorate World Humanitarian Day on August 19, 2011. The two-hour event organised at the XIMB auditorium was attended by a gathering of about 800 people including students and faculty of XIMB and six other management institutions in Bhubaneswar, Concern staff and partners, Orissa Inter Agency Group members and media house representatives. The assembly paid tribute to humanitarian aid workers across the globe who has sacrificed their lives to alleviate suffering and save lives of others. It also took note of the invaluable humanitarian service being provided by aid workers amidst several odds and threats to their lives. The event was well organised by the Management students from the Social Responsibility Cell (SRC) of XIMB with the guidance of XIM faculty and Concern staff. Fr. P T Joseph SJ, Director XIMB welcomed the guests.

The chief guest on the occasion was Mr. T. Nanda Kumar, Member, National Disaster Management Authority and he spoke about the measures taken by the national government to provide humanitarian assistance to people in crisis situations. He also shared that despite best of intentions delivery of



Candles lit in memory of aid workers who laid down their lives serving humanity.

Image: Jyotiraj Patra, Concern Worldwide India

humanitarian aid is still delayed and this sector needs drastic improvement. He emphasised on the need for better use of science and technology and increased public participation to improve humanitarian responses.

Delivering the key note address Prof. S. Parsuraman, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, a veteran of several humanitarian missions himself, dwelt on the issue of increasing incidence of humanitarian crisis of very high magnitude. He reasoned that the global trend of wealth creation has made the lives of the poor and marginalised people more vulnerable. Non-inclusive development has added to the vulnerability of the poor. Although there has been an increase in the social protection measures in India it

has been grossly inadequate to reduce the vulnerability of the poor.

Mr. Dipankar Datta, Country Director, Concern Worldwide India elaborated that the UN has declared August 19 as the World Humanitarian Day to acknowledge the extraordinary sacrifice and commitment of humanitarian aid workers around the world and honor those who choose to work on the frontlines in humanitarian crisis in some of the world's most insecure and hostile situations and even paying the ultimate price for making that choice. He added that the day is observed to "increase public awareness about humanitarian assistance activities worldwide, the importance of international cooperation, as well as to honor all humanitarian aid workers who have worked in the



Mr. T. Nanda Kumar, Member, National Disaster Management Authority.



Prof. S. Parsuraman, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.



Mr. Dipankar Datta, Country Director, Concern Worldwide India.

promotion of the humanitarian cause." He also elaborated that while the number of people requiring humanitarian aid is rapidly increasing, the world is witnessing a decline in humanitarian aid which could endanger the lives of millions across the globe.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Mihir Bhatt, Founder, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), Ahmedabad spoke about the problem of corruption in aid administration and stressed on the need for enhanced accountability and transparency in the management and delivery of aid and called for a multi-stakeholder approach involving parents, businesses and civic society and a commitment to eliminate corruption in humanitarian work.

Sebastian T V, Emergency Programme Manager, Concern spoke on the various kinds of security threats aid workers face and how it has increased over the past decade. He elaborated on the need for better training and capacity building of aid workers.



Participants at the WHD function 2011.

The other dignitaries who spoke on the occasion included UNDP, UNICEF and the Indian Red Cross Society representatives and spoke on various topics ranging from the strengths and challenges facing humanitarian aid workers in India, various ways in which ordinary citizens could contribute towards helping humanity on a daily basis, and appealed to the audience, especially the youth, to commit to helping humanity in their day to day lives. On the occasion, the Social

Responsibility Cell (SRC) students initiated a 'Donate Blood' campaign by launching an easy-to-use software they developed that could store names, blood groups and contact details of donors. This would be handy to increase availability of blood for those in need. Chiranjeet Das, Team Leader, DIPECHO, Concern Worldwide India thanked the guests, speakers, the participants and XIMB for their involvement in and contribution to the event. ■

– Sebastian T V,
Concern Worldwide India



HVCA: Thinking Beyond Projects

As disaster risk reduction becomes a challenge for everyone in India, Hazard Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (HVCA) is becoming even more important to any initiative aiming at disaster risk reduction. Without HVCA with local communities, risk management approach is not possible to develop or implement. We have seen this fact in the field.

But HVCA is not only for reducing disaster risk but is also important for any sustainable development initiative. This is often missed out in both disaster and development planning. We have found this again and again in evaluations by All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) in Bihar, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kashmir, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Most importantly practitioners have to find ways to apply vulnerability and capacity concept to the condition of poor communities who are going through disaster and development processes. Now there is enough material on HVCA available with UNDP¹ (United Nations Development Programme) as well as NDMA² (National Disaster Management Authority) in India.

Some of you know that Duryog Nivaran³ has pointed out the disaster myths that we circulate among us with great belief and how they also crowd our understanding of HVCA as a concept and as an activity. In our work with Duryog Nivaran we have found that the closer we go to the community more clear these myths become to us.

HVCA cannot be a project based or a community based one-time activity.



Image: HVCA, 2011, AIDMI.

HVCA must not be limited to address project actions, it can go beyond that towards integrating DRR with community development.

We hope that HVCA must be institutionalised in our own small and large organisations, and not only at policy or strategic level but also at operational, monitoring, programme planning and budget making levels. Often we find that two to three areas are covered but not the whole range of steps to institutionalise HVCA. Most lacking, we find, is the provision of budget for HVCA. We are aware of ten years of Concern Worldwide work in India as we reviewed that work last year. This makes us confident that Concern Worldwide and its partners will be able to institutionalise HVCA.

This is easy to say than to do as institutionalising HVCA offers many more challenges and also some opportunities for our work to make communities safer and resilient. HVCA cannot be done by one or two organisations, however powerful and resourceful they may be. Without a

circle of active stakeholders and committed partnerships HVCA remains a lame exercise. Similarly, needless perhaps to say, that without inclusion of gender, age, disability, and ethnicity, HVCA remains a marginal effort. It is inclusion of these and more marginal groups that make HVCA inclusive and therefore effective in India. Role of State Disaster Management Plan (SDMP) and Inter Agency Group (IAG) in this is crucial and fundamental. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) agencies can mobilise such partnerships.

In field, many practitioners see that HVCA can start floating up to area level risk and hazards on which we are more likely to have data. We at AIDMI have observed this in our ongoing study of District Disaster Management Plans (DDMPs) in six locations in India. In the end HVCA is effective when it captures community level risks. However

1 For more information visit http://www.undp.org.in/reports_publications and <http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/librarypage.html>.

2 For more information visit <http://ndma.gov.in/ndma/guidelines.htm>.

3 For more information visit www.duryognivaran.org.

HVCA itself cannot help communities if they do not have capacity to address bigger structural risks, scale up and target, and able to sustain own capacity and attract external inputs to reduce risks. In short, HVCA must lead to and must lay foundation for community action planning. And this is not only lacking in our local DDMPs (District Disaster Management Plans) in India but also in Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Malaysia which we found in our June 2011 consultation of 46 Civil Society Organisations of Asia in Delhi for Commonwealth Foundation.

Though importance of participation of people in HVCA is well known among DRR practitioners, all I wish to emphasise is that with what approach—marginal or central—participation takes place makes HVCA "owned" by the community for further use. We have found this in our review of several ECHO partners in *Aila* cyclone recovery evaluation in the Sunderbans over past year. Who participates in HVCA and why is very central question to all HVCA activities.

Do not overlook local traditional knowledge and its value to HVCA

and also at the same time let it not drown emergence of new technologies of mobile, telephone and website and much more. Because, in the end, if well done, HVCA can become an educational process for communities going far beyond from disaster risks to mainstream development itself.

Generally assessment exercises are based on past hazard patterns, but we should not forget to look at possible disaster threats that are new for the community and are likely to happen. There are an increasing number of threats due to changes in natural, economic, social and political trends. Threats unnoticed before, simply because nothing was exposed to them, can easily turn into major problems that no one had predicted (conflicts, industrial hazards, HIV/AIDS). We have to remember that poverty reduction and risk reduction are not separate issues, thus integrated approach must be addressed in our actions towards HVCA.

Often you can find that HVCA is constrained by, limited by, existing policies, regulations, and roles without matching share for advocacy.

And you will also find yourself wondering to whom HVCA is accountable to?

The current publication is not covering all that we should under HVCA. For example, we are leaving out urban HVCA and HVCA for slow onset of disasters. Both need additional approach and understanding and we plan to do so in areas that prone to slow onset disasters like droughts; and surrounding by man-made hazards and will address in our near future publications.

HVCA is as much useful for preparing for disasters and emergencies as it is for risk reduction after disasters. HVCA can help do both, monitor impact of DRR measures and evaluate investments in long term recovery, both, lead to enhanced levels of accountability.

Though concepts of HVCA are basic and in many ways timeless, HVCA itself is almost always specific to an event, location, time, and community. In this light, the issue of *southasiadisasters.net* on HVCA is as much new to us all as it is basic, time tested and covering different concerned aspects. ■

– Mihir R. Bhatt



Mr. Chiranjeet Das, Concern Worldwide India, stated "HVCA is also effective tool for capacity building of humanitarian agencies".

Ensuring Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in HVCA Process

Certain groups of persons are particularly vulnerable and/or have particular needs in the event of a disaster. The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disaster have guided for the steps to be taken for the following vulnerable groups: internally displaced persons, women, children and adolescents, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/ AIDS, single parent households without extended family support or child headed households, ethnic minority groups and indigenous people. Risk assessment through HVCA exercise is vital to such vulnerable groups, as the specific human rights concerns hazards the most vulnerable groups may face, and some of the practical steps that can be taken to protect them.

How to ensure the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in HVCA Exercise?

Following table shows the information to be collected and analysed in regard to rights of PWDs while conducting HVCA exercise. This helps to meet the rights of PWDs in emergencies.

Rights of Persons with Disability	Persons with Disabilities in HVCA		
	Hazard Assessment	Vulnerability Assessment	Capacity Assessment
Non-Discrimination	Ensure the inclusion of PWDs during hazard assessment	Ensure the locations of PWDs in the area during vulnerability assessment	List out the present capacities available for PWDs
Participation and Consultation	Consult and make sure the participation of PWDs during various hazard assessment exercises	List out the vulnerability issues of PWDs in disasters through consultations	Make a list of capacities of vulnerable groups to cope up during emergency situation (Physical/Non Physical)
Protection of life, physical integrity and health of PWDs exposed to imminent risks	List out the hazardous situation for protection of life, health and physical integrity of PWDs	Put the vulnerability aspects of PWDs in context of hazardous situation for protection of life, health and physical integrity	What are current capacities and what capacities do they require in hazardous situation for protection of life, health and physical integrity
Special attention during evacuation	Find the routes, which are hazardous for evacuation of PWDs	Which are the vulnerable areas (within village) to evacuate the PWDs?	Make a list of current routes and discuss the possible new evacuation routes for the evacuation of PWDs
Special attention to protection against violence, including in camps and collective centres during and after emergencies	Find out the present hazardous situation of PWDs in camps against violence	What is the vulnerable condition of PWDs against violence in camps?	Are there any special facilities available in camps for PWDs to save them against violence? Are PWDs capable to deal with violence conditions in camps? In what way?
Access to and adequate provision of humanitarian goods and services	What is the hazardous situation to get humanitarian goods and services?	What are the vulnerability aspects to access humanitarian goods and services?	Are there special norms or arrangements to access humanitarian goods and services?
Unimpeded access to food for persons with specific needs	What is the hazardous situation to access to food?	What are the vulnerability aspects to access to food?	Are there special norms or arrangements to access to food?

Accessibility of sanitation facilities	What is the hazardous situation to access sanitation facilities?	What are the vulnerability aspects to access to sanitation facilities?	Are there special norms or arrangements to access humanitarian goods and services? Are there special toilets made for PWDs to be used during emergencies?
Adequate shelter addressing the specific needs	What is the hazardous situation to access to adequate shelter?	What are the vulnerability aspects to access to adequate shelter?	Are there special norms or arrangements to access to adequate shelter for PWDs?
Specific health care	What is the hazardous situation to get special health care?	What are the vulnerability aspects to get special health care?	Are there special facilities/ arrangements to access special healthcare?
Special attention to children with disabilities in accessing education	What is the hazardous situation to get education for children with disabilities?	What are the vulnerability aspects to get education for children with disabilities?	Are there special facilities/ arrangements/ special schools to access education to children with disabilities?
Consultation and participation in planning and implementation of shelter and housing programmes	Ensure participation of PWDs in planning and implementation of shelter programmes and find out hazardous situation	Ensure participation of PWDs in planning and implementation of shelter programmes and find out their vulnerability aspects	Ensure participation of PWDs in planning and implementation of shelter programmes and find out capacities of PWDs (Physical and Non-Physical)
Access to livelihoods and skills training	What is the hazardous situation to get livelihoods and skills training?	What are the vulnerability aspects to get livelihoods and skills training?	Are there special facilities/ arrangements available to access training on livelihoods and skills?

Reference: IASC Operational guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situation of Natural Disasters, January 2011.

– Vandana Chauhan

CALL FOR PAPERS		AIWEST-DR 2011 November 22–24, 2011	
Annual International Workshop and Expo on Sumatra Tsunami Disaster & Recovery		SCSTW-4 (South China Sea Tsunami Workshop)	
"Strengthening Community Resilience: Lessons Learnt from the Indian Ocean Tsunami 2004, Great East Japan Tsunami 2011 and Beyond"			
<p>The AIWEST-DR is an annual event to commemorate the tragic event of the 2004 Sumatra Tsunami Disaster that have affected many countries around the Indian Ocean and also to learn and prepare for, based on the recovery experiences from the disaster, building a future society which has a strong resilience to tsunami & similar Disasters. The AIWEST-DR was started in December 2006 to inaugurate the establishment of Tsunami and Disaster Mitigation Research Center (TDMRC) of Syiah Kuala University,</p>	<p>Banda Aceh that is located in the middle of the most tsunami-devastated community in the region and losing more than 190 faculty members and thousands of students and staff. Following the successful organisation of AIWEST-DR from, 2006, the 6th Workshop will be organised in November 2011. This year workshop is in conjunction with 4th South China Sea Tsunami Workshop (SCSTW-4).</p> <p>Tsunami and Disaster Mitigation Research Centre (TDMRC) of Syiah</p>	<p>Kuala University of Banda Aceh, Indonesia would like to invite researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and other parties interested in Disaster Risk Management to join the 6th Annual International Workshop and Expo on Sumatra Tsunami Disaster and Recovery (AIWEST-DR) 2011. The AIWEST-DR 2011 will be conducted in conjunction with the 4th SCSTW4.</p> <p><i>For more information:</i> E-mail: aiwest-dr@tdmrc.org, office@tdmrc.org, website: http://www.aiwest-dr.org</p>	

Engendered HVCA

Gender doesn't replace the term "Sex", which refers exclusively to biological difference between men and women. The term "GENDER" is used to analyse the role and responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and need of men and women in all areas in all societal order. As the words hazard, vulnerability and capacity from Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) field has a direct relationship with human being, it also impacts differently to men and women. Therefore it is essential to analyse the gender view on HVCA. It is also important in planning. In the process of HVCA, gender views should be focused and highlighted. From the vulnerability point of view, the women, adolescents girls and the girl children are more vulnerable than the men in pre, during and post disaster situation.



Image: SWAD

Gender analysis is one of the key areas of HVCA process.

Gender and HVCA

Vulnerability	Capacity
<p>Physical or Biological:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reproductive health problems • Lesser physical strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Stampedes √ Air dropping for relief <p>Social, Cultural and Organisational:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural devaluation - Social and traditional values for saving boys create difference between boys and girls. • Mostly the role of decision making both in communities as well as in households are performed by men; women in spite of having decision making capacity remain silent or over heard, which indicates a patriarchal society. So they are voiceless in demanding. • Tolerate any types of violence from anybody (family members or outsiders) of any forms has become a practice and she is born to bear it. This makes them prone to sexual harassment. • Till date the women have very less or limited mobility. <p>Psychological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive • Emotional • Face greater stress <p>These makes them prone to trauma and incurable diseases etc.</p> <p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have very less access to and control over resources than men. • Victims of gendered division of labor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Unorganised sector √ Underpaid √ No union representation • Double burden of productive and reproductive labor • Men migrate leaving behind women headed households 	<p>Pre Disaster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women can play a vital role in household level preparedness • Produce risk and vulnerability maps with others for their community • Can effectively deliver the role in the VDMC or Task Force • Can actively participate in the learning process through training and could apply that at the time of need • Design water and sanitary systems • Food security of the community • Can mobilise the community • Trained in simple ways to protect children from diseases after disasters <p>During:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide early warning message • Women can effectively and equally contribute as any task force member. Especially the women can execute rescue and evacuation and first aid at the time of emergency. • Manage shelter • Manage relief distribution <p>Post Disaster Situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-structural Mitigation Initiatives such as: awareness generation, capacity building program, community organisation etc. • Lobby and Advocacy can be done through SHG (Self-help Group) for their livelihood promotional planning.

Lessons Learnt

- Women are more vulnerable and affected differently; therefore their active participation in HVCA process is equally important as men.
- As a human being they have general need but being women they have also specific needs as well as problems.
- Women should not be perceived as victims in general but they have some individual as well as institutional capacities, which are needed to be explored.
- They are proved as contributors in DRR activities.
- There is a window of opportunity to empower women but it should be implemented properly.
- If development and emergency management fail to empower women, it also fails to empower the community.

Conclusion

Women have remained backward owing to many factors though the scripture has laid down an exalted status for them. In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness and recognition of the fact that women who forms half of the society cannot be ignored. An increasing role of women in Reducing Risk and Vulnerability is extremely vital. Women of our country contribute their best to reduce the risk and vulnerabilities of the disaster and could contribute in making the community resilient and progress of the society without any glare of publicity.

Therefore, it can be concluded, not only in DRR program but also in all development programs, *"it is better to plan with women rather than plan for women"*. ■

– **Binapani Mishra and Sangram Keshari Tripathy**,
Society for Women Action
Development (SWAD), Puri, Odisha

COMMUNITY VOICES

Voices on Practicing HVCA



HVCA is very useful tool to build relationship, accountability, ownership, and empowering community. However these advantages can be achieved only through effective orientation and participation of the local community.

– **Jyotiraj Patra**, Programme Officer (Advocacy), Concern Worldwide India

The West Bengal Disaster Management Authority is trying to integrate the village level plans into the block level disaster management plans through gram sansad level plans to gram panchayat to panchayat samiti.

– **Himandri Maitra**, Disaster Management Officer, Government of West Bengal



The vulnerabilities and capacities must be assessed by different categories including physical and material; social and organisational; attitudinal and motivational; political and institutional.

– **Mamata Sahu**,
Deputy Team Leader,
Concern Worldwide
India



High-risk communities can be identified by more detailed investigation through community participatory HVCA. Though the vulnerability maps exist in the villages, they are not linked with individual vulnerability.

– **Binapani Mishra**,
Secretary,
SWAD

It is important to consider the social contexts in which risks occur. All people do not necessarily share the same perceptions of risk and their underlying causes and thus, whenever vulnerability or capacity assessment is carried out, the person doing the assessment should take only the overview.

– **Sangram Keshari Tripathy**,
Project Coordinator, SWAD



HVCA process will make risk reduction more specific by internalising aspects like early-awareness, social analysis, transparency and increasing coping mechanisms.

– **Bani Ballabh**,
Programme Manager, Sabuj Sangha

– **Aparna Shah**

Community, Information and Resilience: Building on the Opportunities

Efforts to support and strengthen the resilience of at-risk communities have shaped the systematic development of many innovative and context-specific approaches to disaster risk reduction, variously termed as community-based, community-managed and community-led. This preference for and focus on processes and products which contribute towards institutional mechanisms for risk reduction have been heavily influenced by the fact that risk is a social construction which is deeply embedded in the existing socio-cultural, economic, political and ecological setting at a given point in time. Thus, initiatives to understand the risk at the community level have to have adequate mechanisms and approaches in place to not only collect and collate these perceptions and understandings but also to develop risk reduction measures based on these. Such information collection processes have become more participatory ensuring the inclusion of the marginalised voices and concerns and in turn contributing to a process of socio-political empowerment as well.

Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (HVCA) is one such tool for Participatory Community Risk Assessment (PCRA) which supports communities to systematically generate information on various dimensions of hazards the community is exposed to and the underlying vulnerabilities and existing capacities. More importantly, their active engagement in and ownership of the entire exercise and the outcomes ensures that the resulting risk reduction framework is socially accepted, culturally sensitive, ecologically compatible and politically appropriate.



Image: HVCA, 2011, AIDMI.

Publication on "Understanding Risk and Intervening to Increase Resilience with Vulnerable Communities" launched by (from left) Mr. Chiranjeet Das, Concern Worldwide India; Mr. Mihir R. Bhatt, AIDMI; Mr. Shyamkumar Das, Handicap International; and Ms. Sarah Lee, ACTED on July 11, 2011, Kolkata, India.

Although the emergence of an information society, primarily triggered by a rapid surge in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), has impacted each and every aspect of society there is no one accepted definition of information, even within Information Science (IS). While further discussion on this is beyond the scope of this article, the notion of information by Norton (2000)¹ would help us to better understand this in the context of risk perception among communities. According to him: "Information is more than recorded words and languages; it is images, music, light, any entity that interacts as largely as in concert with the universe or as minutely as subatomic particles". And this rich repertoire of information at the community level is very often missed because of the methodologies adopted, most of which are heavily technology-oriented and thus exclusionary by

design. More innovative approaches like that of the Public Participatory Geographic Information Systems (PPGIS) have been successful in engaging the communities by making such a technology-intensive system such as GIS more simple and easy-to-use by the communities. One such initiative is by five DIPECHO partners in four countries (Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique) who have been generating high resolution vulnerability and hazard maps to support local authority and community structures for disaster preparedness and response using PPGIS. Information available with communities, as part of indigenous cultural practices and Traditional Knowledge Systems (TKS), has been instrumental in building Community Based Early Warning Systems (CBEWS) which helps in last mile connectivity² and thus reaching out to the unreached.

1 Norton, M. J. 2000. *Introductory concepts in information science*. Medford, NJ: ASIS.

2 Thomalla et al., 2010. *From Knowledge to Action: Learning to go the Last Mile*, SEL.

As part of Concern Worldwide's ongoing DIPECHO project in India, partners have been facilitating the entire process of community-led information generation at three different levels:

- a. Through HVCA to understand the existing situations and help communities better understand the interplay between hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities in a disaster context;
- b. Through mobile-phone based tracking of entitlements under various social security schemes communities themselves will ensure the reach of such entitlements to the most vulnerable; and
- c. Through community-based micro-insurance demand survey to design, develop and deliver a demand-driven, appropriate and affordable micro-insurance product, an effective market-based risk transfer initiative.

Actors and agencies involved in and responsible for facilitating community resilience building would further enrich the content and context of their actions through ensuring greater participation of communities across the continuum: from information generation to interpretation for knowledge building on hazards and vulnerabilities. And this has been categorically recognised at the Third Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (May 2011) and the Statement on Science and Technology³ recommends 'promoting local capacity for the fast transfer of emerging knowledge and technologies into practice and provide feedback to science' as one of the key action areas contributing to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA, 2005-2015). ■

– Jyotiraj Patra

Programme Officer (Advocacy)
Concern Worldwide India

3 <http://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/scientificandacademiccommunitiesand.pdf>

CAPACITY BUILDING

Need based HVCA

Disaster preparedness has become a vital tool in reducing the impact, and improving the recovery of communities who endure events such as flooding, earthquakes, or cyclones. However, before working on finding solutions for a disaster, it is imperative that communities understand what hazards exist and the capacities they have to minimise and prepare against the risks. This assessment process ensures that the plan developed is unique, and appropriate to the community's condition.

Background

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) through its Disaster Preparedness Program (DIPECHO) has supported jointly to Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) and Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) India and for Community Led DRR project in AILA cyclone 2009 affected communities of Sundarbans, West Bengal.

Execution

AIDMI was invited to conduct HVCA training for this project team in Sundarbans, May 16 - 18, 2011 at Taki Hasnabad in North 24 Parganas, which was attended by 26 members of the project. This training was an effective means of local DRR capacity building as a fundamental part of community based disaster risk reduction.

Trainers and participants engaged in a number of activities including multimedia presentations, group exercises, participant presentations, field visit, action planning, and learning games. All activities were designed to build project staff capacities for disaster resilient community led recovery and development actions, stressing the need for community preparedness, conveying the needs and roles of stakeholders, data collection and documentation, and brainstorming problems and solutions. At the end of the training, participants gave feedback and completed evaluation forms.

Way Ahead

Refresher training courses for longer duration (in comparison to the executed three-day training) was found important to participants to keep the knowledge fresh and provide the field team with updated information on an ongoing basis. Participants wanted to learn more about various Participatory Risk Appraisal tools for data collection through community participation and more information on designing interactive data collection tools, analysing data and documentation of the project activities. ■

– Poonam Mishra, ADRA India; Sarah Lee, ACTED; and Sanchit Oza, AIDMI



Image: HVCA 2011, ADRA India.

Community Specific HVCA and Challenges: Incorporating Aspects of Coastal Areas and Communities

Since the long time, there has been increasing recognition of the need to 'mainstream' disaster risk reduction in order to plan for and address natural hazard risk in development planning at the national and local level. HVCA forms a critical part of the DRR programme and it has the potential to instruct the necessary agencies and stakeholders to prepare for emergencies and post-disaster long-term recovery efforts specific to coastal areas. The primary objective of undertaking a HVCA is to anticipate the potential problems and possible solutions to help save lives, protect property, assets, reduce damage and facilitate a speedy recovery through participatory manner. The use of HVCA helps the decision makers, administrators and the community to make risk based choices to address vulnerabilities, mitigate hazards, and prepare for response to and recovery from hazard events.

Coastal community specific HVCA is an effort to integrate issues related to climate change and coastal areas. Climate change is one of the greatest threats to human lives and livelihoods in coastal regions. It will significantly aggravate existing hazards such as flooding from cyclones and storm surges. Other climate-induced risks, including sea level rise, salinity intrusion, drought, and temperature and rainfall variations, are becoming serious threats to food, water, energy, and health security for humankind.

The project 'Building Disaster Resilience of Vulnerable Communities in Orissa and West Bengal, India' supported by DIPECHO to Concern Worldwide India is unique in terms of community specific risk reduction actions in coastal areas and joint initiatives by multiple agencies where ECHO (financial support); Concern Worldwide India (Leading Project); Centre for Youth and Social Development, Society for Women Action Development, and Sabuj

Sangha (Implementer Agencies); Handicap International, Women's Organisation for Socio-Cultural Awareness, and All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (Technical Partner Agencies) putting joint efforts to achieve goal where focus is given for disaster resilience community.

The project with limited duration is initiating several actions, one of these actions is HVCA with focus on both – project focus in terms of identification and design actions based on the need of community and linking DRR with development aspects at village level by Village Disaster Management Plan (VDMP) and involvement of local institutions. The HVCA is given high focus due to following points:

- Lack of understanding of hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities in areas that highly vulnerable to multiple hazards and very little assessment of HVC in the context of natural disasters in coastal areas. There is little analysis of what communities can do on their own to mitigate impact of existing coastal hazards. Information on existing hazards, frequency, their impact, elements at risks, their vulnerability and capacities of the coastal community is not collected, analysed and applied in the village.
- There are cultural dimensions to vulnerabilities of several specific groups including women, children, aged, families with disabled persons and families with HIV/AIDS. Disaggregated data on these vulnerable groups is not available and needs to be collected to link them with action and other existing social protection schemes in the area.
- The VDMPs were developed in 2004 under the GoI-UNDP DRM Programme. In addition to the VDMPs, each Panchayat at the village level has to prepare a Village Development Plan (VDP). There is high need to establish linkages between the VDMP and VDP. The updation of VDMPs is

another important issue that needs to be addressed with context of coastal issues.

In 2011, AIDMI developed HVCA knowledge product specific to the targeted areas. In July 2011, AIDMI, with Concern Worldwide, organised training and workshop on HVCA for partner agencies to build understanding on HVCA and finalise the tool for HVCA. The events concluded with concrete way ahead as listed below:

- Village wise HVCA that recommends specific mitigation actions prioritised by local community.
- Village wise HVCA that leads the process towards complete VDMPs and followed by connection with village development plan.
- HVCA that helps to carry project actions with community-based approach and also build ownership of community on HVCA to link with community development activities.

There are several common challenges related with HVCA. However these challenges can be overcome through the effective process and involvement of local communities.

The first challenge is the identification of capacities. Though identification of and support to capacities is crucial for HVCA process with any intention, many practitioners find that vulnerabilities are more easily recognised by outsiders. 'Vulnerability indicators are more enduring and part of observable socio-economic structure, while people's struggles and strategies to cope with adverse circumstances, particularly acute ones, are more ephemeral and change quickly. As a result, capacities often remain unnoticed, unappreciated, and understudied'¹. For these practical reasons, many practitioners choose to first identify vulnerabilities, then capacities.

¹ Wisner (2004)

The second challenge is focus on inputs/ outputs instead of impact. The HVCA is very important tool for capacity building. However HVCA that focuses merely on providing services, even training, should be reconsidered with careful analysis of the long-term impact. The Code of Conduct's Principle #6 calls for "attempts to build disaster response on local capacities". This is not enough, says Ian Christophos (2003) in an investigation of capacity building for the ALNAP. Instead, he explains, 'attempts' must show evidence of success. AIDMI's HVCA studies following the Gujarat earthquake, South Asia tsunami, and Bihar floods help provide accountability in this sense. Local capacity building tends to focus on the abstract idea developing human resources. This is important but the results should be measurable. Instead

of focusing solely on inputs, impact should be considered in HVCA. HVCA instead of being just process for planning, institutionalisation of HVCA is more needed.

The third challenge is limited understanding of disaster risk and risk reduction. It is another constraint for effective HVCA that highly links with development aspects. Generally HVCA is carried out by outside agencies with local communities with project based actions. This creates an opportunity for linkages with development actions by different agencies in the same area. The recognition is — risk reduction as an interior part of development work — which is not enough; it must be implementing in a way by involved stakeholders. HVCA is not only tool for risk reduction; by broader perspective it is an effective tool for

poverty reduction, empowering local community and climate change adaptation.

Another important challenge is participation that is not only limited for valid information but must lead towards community ownership in HVCA and follow up actions on the basis of HVCA. Recognition of the abilities of local individuals and organisations has contributed to the understanding of sustainable capacity building. HVCA is not only for outside agencies, ultimately it is creation by, with and for communities involved. The ownership of community leads towards real community-managed, community-owned programmes which is not limited to project actions or sector specific but beyond that — mainstreaming DRR into development. ■ — Vishal Pathak

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

HVCA: Building Disaster Resilience Among Disaster-prone Communities

While hazards are inevitable, and the elimination of all risks is impossible, there are many technical measures, traditional practices and public experience that can reduce the extent or severity of economic and social disasters. Hazards and emergency requirements are a part of living with nature, but human behaviour can be changed.¹ Human beings decide their vulnerability and capacity quotient. Human beings, not nature, determines whether a hazard poses a threat to the well-being of society. How people view hazards and mitigation factors, and how other stakeholders respond to these issues will determine which DRR measures can be taken and which can be overlooked. Disasters cannot be solved in isolation. DRR will be effective if programmes empower people, incorporate their risk perceptions, coping strategies and critical needs.

Risk reduction strategies must be based upon relevant and reliable information. Coping strategies of

vulnerable people change as frequently as risks that they face. Risks and capacities therefore must be regularly monitored, analysed and revised. HVCA is a process used to identify strengths and weaknesses of households, communities, institutions and nations. It is an important tool to support decisions made in Disaster Risk Reduction. Information collected describes the risks that people face and are willing to take in preparation for the next disaster. The process of understanding vulnerabilities and capacities offer options as to how to contribute to the empowerment of communities at risk. HVCA is applied in many ways: at different stages of the development cycle; as a diagnostic or planning tool across different sectors; or in one particular sector such as water and sanitation, health or food. It is important to recognise that HVCA is not an approach only to define who should benefit from relief aid but also to identify in advance, and change where possible, the conditions that create or contribute to the state of

vulnerability of at-risk populations. HVCA provides a better understanding of people - as victims, survivors or vulnerable communities and their willingness to contribute to capacity building and vulnerability reduction at the grassroots level.²

People living in hazard-prone regions benefit from the use of HVCA to enable greater self-reliance through awareness of risks and selection of appropriate options for reducing them. HVCA also plays an important role in raising awareness of hazards, vulnerabilities, capacities and risk that are taken by communities. The process has globally triggered positive responses to initiate risk reduction programmes against disasters that adversely impact their development gains. Finally HVCA is a self-reflection process that brings to light the strengths and shortcomings of daily life emphasising the unfulfilled needs of vulnerable groups. It is an opportunity for all stakeholders to come together and adapt to the ever changing needs of the vulnerable. ■

— Chiranjeet Das, Team Leader, DIPECHO Project, Concern Worldwide India

1 United Nations' (UN) International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR).
2 VCA Guide IFRC.

JOINT LEARNING AND ACTION



Image: HVCA, 2011, AIDMI.

HVCA and Action Plan Tool Development Consultation organised by Concern Worldwide India and facilitated by AIDMI on July 12-13, 2011 at Kolkata, India. The consultation provided opportunity to build the understanding of HVCA; finalise the HVCA tool and plan the way ahead to implement HVCA in the project area and beyond for institutionalising HVCA.



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