

Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment

Description:

The Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment helps to identify challenges (vulnerabilities) and strengths (capacities) present in the community along five mayor areas of life. Can be used to identify impact of disaster and why this impact happened.

Goals of the session:

Identify vulnerabilities and capacities in the community and for different groups within it.

Target group:

Community leaders, men, women, elders, and youth (starting from 14 years old).

Preparation time:

15 minutes.

Duration:

45-90 minutes.

Materials:

Flipchart and markers.

Copyright:

Freely usable.

Process

The participants are asked to discuss what vulnerability means and what the difference is between vulnerability and wealth. Similarly, they discuss what capacities are. The participants are asked to brainstorm and discuss which vulnerabilities and capacities in the five areas “Individual”, “Social”, “Natural”, “Physical”, and “Economic” are present in the community. Use the questionnaires below to facilitate this discussion.

To get a more detailed understanding, the vulnerabilities and capacities can be disaggregated by different groups, e.g., by gender, age, or livelihoods. For the discussion of different groups and the “Social” category of questions in particular, a *Venn Diagram* can be helpful. Then the participants have a brainstorm session on the characteristics of these different groups. What do their living conditions look like? What do they own? How do they make a living? What skills and knowledge do they have?

Depending on the size of the village, participants can make a list of all households and then discuss to which group the households belong. If the village is big, they can take 10 stones (each stone representing 10% of the population) and then determine which percentage belong to which group.

The gathered information is listed on the flipchart for everyone to see, categorized according to vulnerabilities, capacities, and groups. It will be helpful to juxtapose vulnerabilities and capacities so they can be seen at one glance. It may be helpful to

	Vulnerability	Capacity	Suggested activities
Men			
Women			
Agriculturalists			
Pastoralists			

Possible layout.

use different sheets for each of the 5 categories. Make sure you keep the selected information in your records.

Reflection: After capacities and vulnerabilities were identified you can collect ideas of activities to reduce vulnerabilities, based on identified community strengths. Other considerations may include whether the different groups participate in development activities? If not, why do they not participate? Can the more vulnerable households be involved in future development activities?

To guide this discussion a range of questions can be asked. These questions are listed below. For each area, there are general questions as well as extra questions to be asked if the community faces (natural) hazards, e.g., floods, wildfires, drought, or earthquakes. Use these to assess the vulnerabilities and capacities in relation to these specific hazards. Should the community face several hazards, analyse vulnerabilities and capacities in relation to each of them, starting with the most pressing hazard. Important here is to ensure that the main impact of the hazard on each category is recorded. This helps to identify the most pressing area of intervention. The first hazard related question in each category looks at this impact.

Questions to ask to identify vulnerabilities and capacities

Individual Vulnerabilities and Capacities

1. Which people in the community are most vulnerable? Why are they most vulnerable?
2. Which people in the community are least vulnerable? Why are they least vulnerable?
3. Which health problems persists in the community that reduce people's ability to earn a livelihood, care for children, be part of the community or cope with disaster? In which months are these health problems most serious?
4. What skills, knowledge and educational levels exist in the community?

If hazards are present in the community:

5. What impact does the main hazard have on human life and health in the community? For example, death, injury, hunger, reduced ability to work.
6. Which people in the community are most affected by the hazard? Why are they most affected?
7. Which people in the community are least affected by the hazard? Why are they least affected?
8. Have you received any information or training about how to cope with disasters? Where did this information come from?
9. What skills and knowledge help people cope better with disasters? For example, ability to swim; knowledge of wild foods; boat-handling skills?

Social Vulnerabilities and Capacities

1. Which groups exist in the community? (*Venn diagram* can help)
2. Which family links or relatives do people depend on most?
3. Who provides leadership? For example, traditional leader; government officials; religious leader; others.
4. What government services exist in the community?

If hazards are present in the community:

5. How does the main hazard affect social life? For example, more/fewer ceremonies; school attendance drops; migration; more crime or disputes etc.
6. Which community groups is most helpful in times of disaster? Please give reasons.
7. Which family links or relatives are most helpful to you during times of disaster?
8. Are there people in the community who benefit from disaster? If yes, please give details of why and how.
9. Who provides leadership and good guidance in times of crisis? For example, traditional leader; government officials; religious leader; others.
10. What government services still function during disasters, and how do they help the community?

Natural Vulnerabilities and Capacities

1. Which natural resources are present, and which are sparse or missing in the community?
2. Is there restricted access to any natural resource (e.g., water or wood)? Which resources, and why is access restricted?
3. Is there competition or argument over any natural resource (e.g., wild food or banana trees)? Please give details.

If hazards are present in the community:

4. How does the main hazard affect natural resources? For example, impact on drinking water, grazing land, forest, fish, soil, etc.
5. Which natural resources (e.g., water, grass, trees, fish) are most affected by the hazard?
Why does this damage occur?
6. Which natural resources are less affected by the hazards? Why are these resources not damaged or lost?
7. Is there restricted access to any natural resource (e.g., water or wood) during a disaster? Which resources, and why is access restricted?
8. Is there competition or argument over any natural resource during times of crisis? Please give details.
9. Which natural resources (e.g., wild food or banana trees) become especially important during disasters? Why is this?

Physical Vulnerabilities and Capacities

1. What structures and buildings exist in the community? Refer back to *community mapping* done in Step 2: exploring the community.
2. Which important structures and buildings are missing?
3. What communications systems are available in the community?
4. What means of transport are available and still useable during times of emergency? For example, boats, bicycles, other vehicles.
5. What tools, equipment, other physical assets to people in the community possess?

If hazards are present in the community:

6. How does the main hazard affect constructed features (e.g. houses, roads, bridges, school, wells etc)? What impact is seen on tools or other physical belongings
7. Which buildings or structures are most affected by the hazard? Why does this damage occur?
8. What communication systems are available during times of crisis? For example, mobile phones or radios.
9. How do people preserve their tools and household possessions during the crisis caused by the hazard?
10. What means of transport are available and still useable during times of emergency? For example, boats, bicycles, other vehicles.

Economy Vulnerabilities and Capacities

1. Which livelihoods (or income-generating activities) are present in the community?
2. What crops are prevalent and grow well?
3. Which financial assets to people have? For example, cattle, savings, remittances, sellable goods.

If hazards are present in the community:

4. How does the main hazard affect economic activities, such as farming, fishing, factories, or operation of local markets?
5. Which livelihoods (or income-generating activities) are most affected by the hazard?
6. Which livelihoods (or income-generating activities) are not affected or less affected by the hazard?
7. What new ways of generating income are used in times of crisis?
8. Which crops are most affected by the hazard? Why does this happen?
9. Which crops are less affected by the hazard? Why are they not so much affected?
10. How do people get money to buy food or other items during disaster? For example, from savings, remittances, selling, assets.
11. How is paid labour affected by the hazard?