

Role Play for VCA Training

This role play was designed to simulate a focus group discussion in a project village. The aim of this exercise is for the trainees to get better acquainted with the concepts of vulnerabilities and capacities and especially their assessment.

Below you find a village description as well as several different characters. Both village and roles are fictional and might or might not reflect the experience of the target groups of the trainees.

Ask the trainees to assess vulnerabilities and capacities in this village with the aid of the VCA tool and the questions for each category of vulnerabilities and capacities.

The given village description and roles are not comprehensive; the information provided does not cover all the questions in the questionnaires. To make it more realistic allow the trainees to expand on their roles, to draw on their experience on how the life of villagers might look like. You can for example ask participants to include information on when agricultural activity or floods are likely to take place, and what seasonal trends are.

Depending on how you give the VCA training, online or in person, you may want to assign a specific character to each participant or send a few characters along with the village description to everyone. Choose what fits best in your situation. It may also be a good idea to split the group up into smaller groups. Online you can use the Break-out-room function of MS Teams for this. If you work with smaller groups consider asking each group to assess a specific category, e.g., group one looks at social capacities and vulnerabilities, group two at natural ones, group three at individual etc.

The VCA Tool with the questionnaires can be found in the same folder as this document.

Additionally, the document "Roleplay Characters" provides only the different characters. It may be used e.g., to print out and cut apart to give a specific role to each participant in a physical session.

Village description

The village lies on the bank of a river. Parts of the village lie on its flood plains other parts are a bit removed from the river and a bit elevated. There are around 300 families in the village. Most households in the community are depending on their own agriculture for their nutrition. The subsistence farmers are growing mainly Sorghum and Corn. Very few other crops are grown, and few would know how to grow anything else, yet some own cattle, chicken, or goats, too. Most fields lie low along and close to the river.

Road conditions are decent, in the dry season at least. During the rainy season the mostly dirt roads can be very hard to navigate, but you are rarely totally cut off. The main entrance into the village remains open even during the flood, any other entry or exit ways are blocked, however and crossing the river may be difficult. The brick school building is relatively new and the best built structure around. Located on a small hill, it has a generator and some spare rooms which are not really used at the moment. Though a school exists, not all children attend it and those that do, do not go everyday as they might be needed at home or in the field. There is a well in the village and a few handpumps, but neither are covered, elevated, or in any way protected from contamination.

Though you do not have public transport or a bank in your village, there is a landline which connects to a handful of houses and mobile signal coverage is decent.

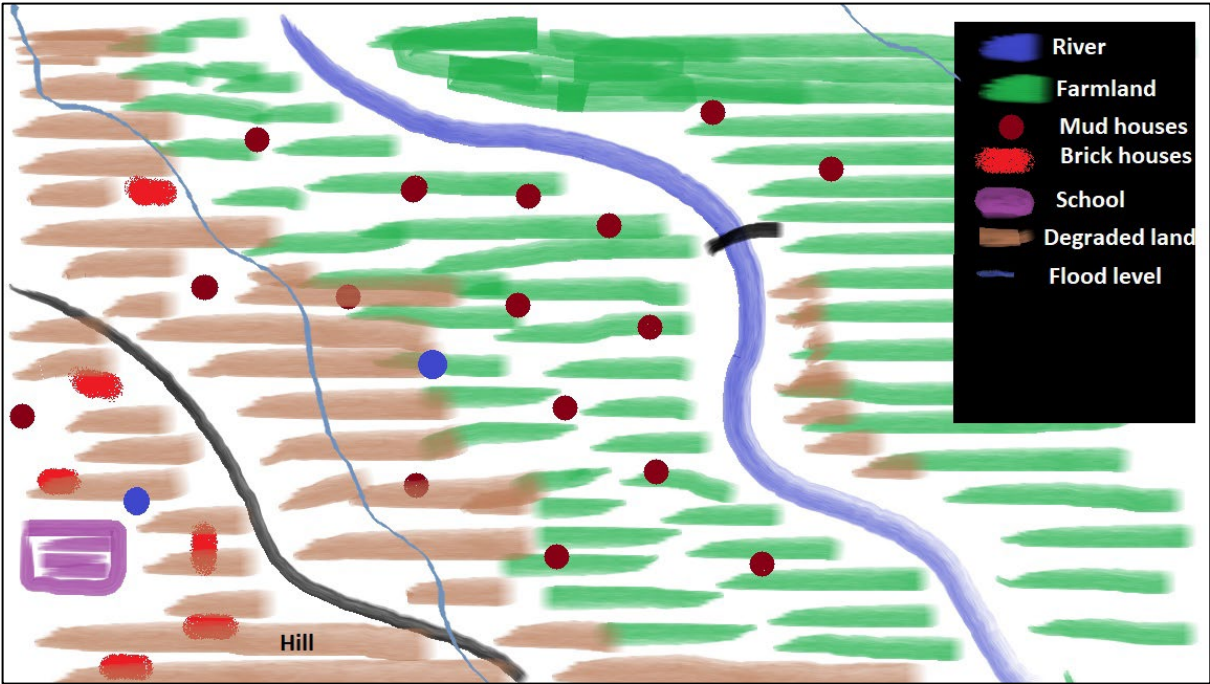
One of the facilities that you do miss is a good health clinic. You have a nurse, but she doesn't have much equipment or a separate place to treat her patients. Anything remotely serious is difficult for her to treat with the limited means available to her.

There is no government office or official in the village, other than your village head and council, but in the next bigger village there is one. Sometimes they come and visit and if need be, you can get there, too. But it takes 3-4 hours to get there on foot. Generally, the government helps you with your petitions and sometimes they provide funding if a flood has been particularly bad. Though you have a council, it was not able to provide any kind of leadership during past floods, not to mention the absent government. The village head did a decent job leading during the last flooding, but two men from the village really took charge when the flood came last time. People seemed to be happy about their decision-making and heeded their leadership.

The older people in the village remember that there were more trees in the village when they were younger and along the river vegetation has been decreasing in the last few decades. They also remember that the area has always experienced floods, though they did not use to come as often as they come now, and not this badly either. While 50 years ago the river would flood maybe every 5 years, if that,

the floods no occur almost every year. After every flood you have to rebuild many houses, lose a lot of crops, and many people get sick, and some die. The last flood saw 5 die, 13 injured, and 36 getting sick shortly after. The worst part is, that while you know during what time of the year floods are most likely to occur, they still come surprisingly with hardly any warning for you.

Reconstruction does not only take a lot of time but consume most savings in the village. Whenever there is a flood now, you are dependent on support from the outside. If outside aid does not come, many of you go hungry for a long time.



Characters

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| Village Chief Relatively rich | <p>You are the village chief. You know the community well and are aware of the different social groups existing within. Like most people in the village, you are also active in agriculture. You have the feeling the average yields have been decreasing and suspect that some of the agricultural methods might not be very sustainable but taxing on the soil.</p> <p>During the last flood you felt your authority undermined as two men from the village took charge during the response and people followed them. Grudgingly you have to admit that they did a good job.</p> <p>You live in the middle of the village, a bit elevated in a decent house. You can read and write and grow some crops besides keeping some animals.</p> |
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| Farmer – male Moderately poor | <p>You are a subsistence farmer mainly growing Sorghum. Recently you started growing a cash crop, too, but it has not yielded any profit yet. Besides some simple agricultural tools and common household items you also own a bicycle. Your wife is having physical issues and therefore is not able to work. Your house is a typical house for your village made of mud but with a decent roof. During the last flood you lost most of your crops and got sick shortly after. Your house barely survived. Luckily you had some savings which you were able to keep safe.</p> |
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| Single mother poor | <p>You have lost your husband and are a single mother of 3 children. 2 of them go to school (when they are not needed at home), the other is still at home. Money is scarce. You grow sorghum and corn for your survival. You do not have any savings worth mentioning but you own a few chickens and a cow.</p> <p>You have your hands full with your children. One of them needs to see a doctor but you don't have access to a health facility, other than the nurse.</p> <p>During the last flood you lost all of your crops as well as half of your chickens. For the first time after your flood, you went hungry for long stretches at a time, if not for food assistance.</p> |
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| <p>Village male – pastoralist</p> <p>Relatively rich</p> | <p>You are well off. You own the biggest herd of cows in your community as well as a few goats. Money is not really an issue: your family eats well, you have a motorbike, a good brick house, a radio, mobile phone. You are well connected within your community, are part of the village council and men’s club. Besides a few minor ailments you are in peak physical condition. The last flood was for you personally more of an inconvenience than a disaster. Your cattle were safe, as was your house. But you still realize the bitter impact the flood had on other parts of your community.</p> |
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| <p>Village female</p> <p>Moderately poor</p> | <p>You and your husband live in a simple house close to the river. You have a bit of land on which you cultivate a few plants and crops for yourselves. Besides that, you earn some extra money by sewing and repairing clothes. You know the village and its immediate surrounding very well. You are part of a Self-Help Group with whom you meet once every week to save money together, learn new skills, and are well connect and liked within the group. During the last flood you lost almost everything you had: crops, house, belongings. Unfortunately, one of your children died, too. You noticed that the drinking water seemed to have infected many people after the flood: quite a few got sick.</p> |
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| <p>Male – shop owner</p> <p>Relatively rich</p> | <p>You are one of the few people in the village who has lived for a longer period in the city. You still know and are in contact with a few people in the capital. You own a store in your community where you sell everything that might be needed: pots, dishes, snacks, toilet paper, tools, etc. Your store and house are located close to the school. You have a motorbike, mobile phone, radio, and a house in the middle of the village and because of your contacts in the city you have access to a bank and a loan. You do not have any cattle, but your family still cultivates a small piece of land. The last flood impacted your business heavily: you did not get any supplies. But your stores ware save an you sold more than you normally do, as people need supplies, essentials and more and you were the only one that could offer what they needed.</p> |
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| <p>Village male poor</p> | <p>You, your wife and your four children live in a simple house along the riverbank. You cultivate a plot of land which yields enough to sell some crops in the market. While you know a lot about farming and would like to do more, you miss the funds to invest in tools, seeds, and input. Unfortunately, you can only send 2 of your children to school, the others help at home and in the field. You seem to notice that the riverbanks have less vegetation and trees than they had when you were a boy. The last flood was devastating for you: you almost lost your house for good; it needed a lot of repairing after. Most of your belongings, stores and crops were destroyed. You did not have any food left to eat. You and your family went hungry for a while.</p> |
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| <p>Nurse – female</p> | <p>You are the village nurse, but only part time when someone needs you. If you are not looking after patients, you work on your field. Unfortunately, you only have basic nurse equipment and access to drugs, band aids, and the like is difficult. With this you can only treat minor ailments and common diseases. Anything out of the ordinary would need to be referred to a doctor and well-equipped healthy facility but there is none in the village, so you do what you can.</p> <p>You know that after the last flood many people got sick with stomach aches, diarrhea, and similar diseases. That did not only bring a lot of suffering to the sick, but also prevented them from helping the rebuilding of the village and their livelihoods. The people probably got sick because the wells were contaminated during the flood.</p> <p>You also counted 7 people dying during the flood.</p> <p>You are part of a SHG.</p> |
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| <p>Male – Farmer poor</p> | <p>You are struggling to get by. Your field barely yields enough to feed you and your family. Should a flood come this year, you are sure to lose all your crops, maybe your house, too, and you would be totally dependent on outside assistance.</p> <p>You are still trying to recover from the last flood, basically, which took one of your children from you. You believe your son might still live if he were able to swim, but like most people in the village he could not. After the flood you and your family went hungry for a while, and you would again during the next flood.</p> |
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| <p>Village elder – female</p> | <p>You are one of the oldest residents of the village. In the last year you noticed how your health declined considerably. You are not as fast or strong as you used to. You live with some of your family along the river, they are farmers. You used to help on the field, but you really are told now for this kind of jobs. You are afraid the next flood will come to suddenly for you get out of harm's way.</p> <p>Part of a SHG.</p> <p>You noticed that the shop owner made had good business after the last flood, selling more items than usually.</p> |
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| <p>Village male poor</p> | <p>You are sick and dependent on assistance for many things: you cannot work, lift heavy, or walk long. You are mostly bedridden. Due to your sickness your family must take care of you and pick up everything you would do if you could. Your wife works extra hard, causing her exhaustion and concerns how to get on. While you had a decent income, the situation is becoming increasingly dramatic the longer you are sick. You want to help but you just cannot. Maybe a real doctor could help you, but you cannot get to the nearest health facility yourself and besides the village nurse no doctor ever comes here.</p> <p>You are afraid that you and your family would go hungry during and after the next flood.</p> |
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