

A2 ACTIVITIES TO REVEAL HIDDEN ISSUES

Vulnerability and capacity assessment



Why use this activity?

Once a group has identified the hazards facing their community, and the impacts of these hazards (using **Tool A2: Identifying potential hazards**), this activity can help a community to see who is most vulnerable to these hazards and why. It also helps a community to assess its capacities - the resources it has to reduce its vulnerabilities.

A group needs to have carried out **Tool A2: Getting to know our community mapping**, **Tool A2: Identifying potential hazards** and **Tool A2: Understanding vulnerability and capacity** before starting this activity.



A brief description

This tool has two parts. In Part 1, a group assesses their community's vulnerabilities. In Part 2, the group assesses their community's capacities. This needs to be followed by **Tool A2: Prioritising which actions to take**.



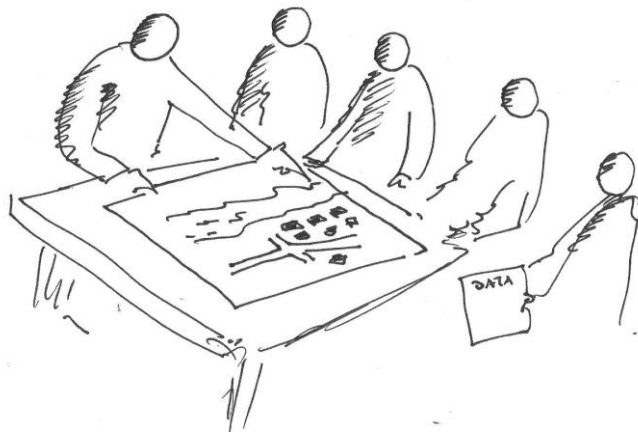
You will need

- A community map already drawn by the group
- Small stones or bottle tops (6 for each participant)



Timeline

This activity will take up to 4 hours.



Understanding the words we use

- **Hazard** – an extreme event which could injure people or damage property and the environment
- **Vulnerability** – how likely people are to suffer serious loss, damage, injury or death as a result of a hazard
- **Disaster** – a disaster occurs when a hazard affects vulnerable people who are unable to cope with its effects

For example: A flood represents a **hazard**. **Vulnerability** may be high for people who live in the floodplain and are elderly or very young. If they are unable to get out of the way of the flood, then a **disaster** may result, the effects of which may be injury, loss of possessions or even death.



What to do

Part 1

The aim of this activity is to identify who within the community is most vulnerable to the hazards facing the community, and to identify the factors that are driving their vulnerability.

- Remind the group of the maps they have drawn previously, and the discussions they have already had about hazards and impacts.
- Ask the group to look at the maps they have drawn, and to identify the most vulnerable households or most vulnerable places to the hazards they have identified. Mark these on the map. If there are many, you may need to identify the three most likely and impactful hazards, or just focus on the main hazard.
- Ask the group to discuss the following questions:
 - Which households are most vulnerable to each hazard?
 - Which people within each household would be most impacted by the hazard?
 - How would they be impacted? (eg health, livelihood, possessions, housing, life)
 - What are the reasons why these people are vulnerable to the impacts of the hazards (ie what are the underlying causes of their vulnerabilities)? Why would they be impacted in the ways we have just discussed? Write these down as people say them. Encourage discussion around why these people are *exposed* to the hazard (ie why they are 'in the path of' the hazard') and why they would be *sensitive* to the hazard (ie unable to resist it, or to adapt to reduce the impact).

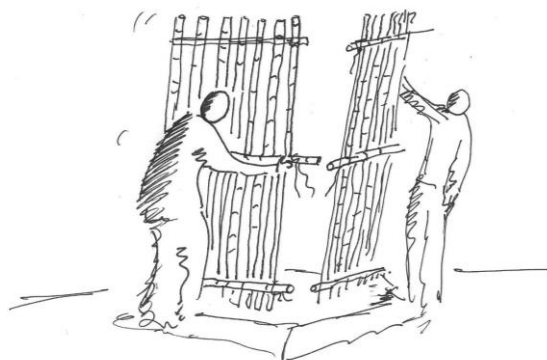
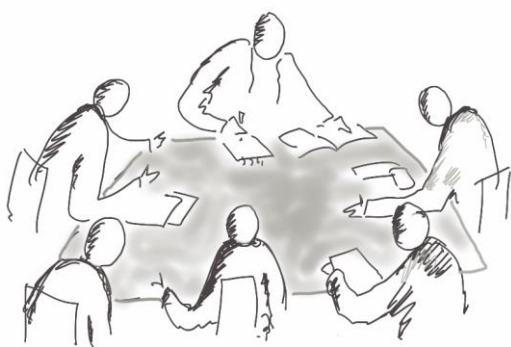
- If a large number of causes of vulnerability have been identified, ask the group to rank them according to how significant they are. One way of doing this is to draw the different options in areas on the ground and ask people to put small stones, seeds or bottle tops in the areas they perceive as most important. Give them six stones/seeds/bottle tops and ask them to use three for the most significant, two for the second-most significant, then one for the third-most significant. Keep a record of the scores.
- Once you have established what the main **causes** of the impacts are, encourage the group to discuss the underlying **drivers** behind those causes. Keep asking the question 'why?' to try to identify what is driving the vulnerability. Write these things down. You could break up into smaller groups at this point and ask each group to draw a 'problem tree' for a main cause, to draw out the roots (underlying drivers) of each cause. You could use voting again to identify the most significant factors. Keep a record of the scores.

Part 2

This stage involves identifying the things that will help the community to anticipate, prepare for, cope with and recover from a disaster. Explain to the group that having explored the hazards and vulnerabilities facing the community, we are now going to think about **capacities**. These are things the community has to help them cope with risk, problems and change. Ask the following questions:

Human capacities

- What skills, abilities or knowledge are within the community that are particularly useful during disaster? These are called human capacities. Skilled people might include nurses, builders, drivers and electricians. It's important to remember that elderly people may be weaker, but they have a wealth of knowledge of disasters in the past and what has worked, or not worked to reduce disaster risk. Mark these capacities onto the map.



Social capacities

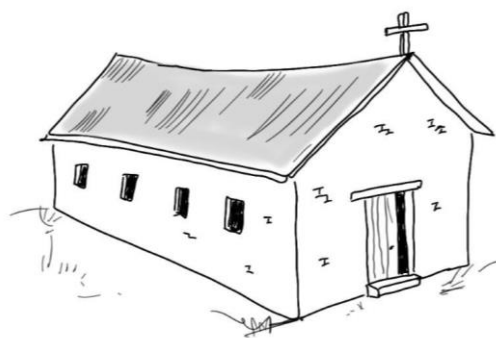
- What social groupings and leadership structures exist that are helpful during disaster? This includes networks and connectedness, membership of formalised groups, and trust and exchange between families and networks. Social capacities include support from formal institutions such as mosques/churches, village development committees etc, as well as informal community groups and local organisations. Think

also about motivation and attitude - a community's view of its ability to create change. Mark these capacities onto the map.

Constructed capacities

- What buildings, tools, equipment, shelter, infrastructure, resources, assets or structures are useful during a disaster?

Look at the map and identify large buildings, such as a church, school, mosque, office building or grain store that could be used as a community shelter should disaster strike. Consider additional resources, such as vehicles that could be hired to collect provisions or move people to safe areas. Mark these capacities onto the map.



Natural capacities

- What natural resources could be drawn upon during/after a disaster?

Highlight on the map the high land and the natural resources (water sources, forest etc) which will aid survival. Natural capacities also include the use of alternative crops or livelihoods.

Economic capacities

- What financial coping mechanisms are there (eg alternative livelihoods, sale of assets, availability of loans and saving)?

Again, mark these capacities onto the map.



Facilitators note: often, each of these capacities may have a reverse side that is in some way a vulnerability. For example, the church built on a hill below a bare slope may be a capacity when facing floods but may also be vulnerable to landslides. It may therefore be useful to list vulnerabilities and capacities side by side in a recording grid.

Next steps: Please follow this tool with **Tool A2: Prioritising which actions to take**



Notes

This activity is adapted from Tearfund (2011) *Roots 9: Reducing risk of disaster in our communities* https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/roots/reducing_risk_of_disaster_in_our_communities/