

Review of Secondary Sources

What it is

A review of secondary sources means collecting information that already exists, usually in the form of written reports, documents or data from other organizations, local government authorities and social institutions. This exercise enables you to gain an overall picture of the community.

The secondary sources should not be restricted to documents only about the community itself but should include all external sources of information that may be useful to the EVCA. This may include risk maps and information on climate change and changes in land use that may affect river runoff, infrastructure plans, maps of a river basin etc.




















Variable



Computer with Internet, books and other publications.

Resilience aspects covered:

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

Use it to...

- **Get** an overview of the situation based on the work already done by others.
- **Cross-check information** gathered by other means.
- **Get** a broad perspective of the challenges facing the community and a history of what has been done so far to address them, including information that cannot be gathered at the community level (e.g. about infrequent hazards or evolving risks such as climate change).
- **Contribute** to the community baseline data.
- **Collecting** information on a wider geographical scale to review the physical environment and landscape in which the community is situated and understand how external factors like upstream dams, uphill deforestation, flat coastal plains or slow flowing rivers through valleys or cities may be part of the general 'risk landscape' to consider in the EVCA and subsequent risk reduction planning.

Skills needed

Secondary sources mostly take the form of written material (printed or on the internet). Therefore, an ability to read and pick out relevant bits of information from complex materials is a requirement. The facilitator also needs to be able to provide very clear instructions to the

rest of the team and keep it focused on the objectives to avoid ending up with too much information of marginal relevance.

How to

Step 1. Determine what information you want to collect.

Usually, a wide range of information is available and is needed to provide an adequate picture of the situation in a community. In order not to get overwhelmed, it is important to remain focused only on the information necessary and relevant to the VCA and the kind of project that will stem from it. Focus in the data collection as much as possible on information which is relevant and related to [the resilience characteristics](#).



In many circumstances, primary documents are written by men about men. Keep this in mind when consulting secondary sources. Look also for sources that have been written by women or about women.

Step 2. Make a list of potential sources of information.

Potential sources of information

1. Internet

- UN organizations (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, WHO)
- World Bank
- Government sites
- Foundations
- Educational institutions and universities
- Summary reports
- Data and statistics
- Access to online libraries
- Maps (aerial, GIS, topographical, satellite imagery)

Links to related websites:

- [UNISDR Country Profiles](#)
- [GFDRR ThinkHazard!](#)
- [Inform Index](#)
- [World Bank Country Data](#)
- [World Bank Climate Country Adaptation Profiles](#)
- [IFRC-IRI MapRoom](#)
- [Google Earth](#),
- [Open Street Maps](#) (see community surroundings in 3D)
- [IFRC GO](#)

2. Resource persons

- Government officials
- Local authorities (police, health-care workers, fire fighters, social workers, etc.)
- National Society colleagues
- (I)NGO workers
- Expert opinions from key individuals

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FEWSNET • WFP – GEONODE Maps • GIEWS - Global Information and Early Warning System 	
<p>3. Other organizations active in the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other National Societies • IFRC and its reference centres • IFRC DREFs & Appeals. • International non-governmental organizations (e.g. Oxfam, World Vision, CARE) • Networks and coalitions • Local, regional and state government ministries • Specialized government institutes (e.g. National Disaster Management Office, Met Office) • Private sector or local businesses • Info from other risk and needs assessments • Reports (situation reports, project reports, annual reports) 	<p>4. Libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local library • University library • Local, regional and state government libraries • Related organizations • Journals, magazines, newspapers • Books



Incorporate climate change information¹:

First you need to check what is already known about the current climate and any possible changes; so:

- Check if your National Society has worked on a climate change background document as part of the 'Preparedness for Climate Change' programme (over 60 countries had participated by the end of 2011) – this may contain useful information.
- Find out if someone in your National Society is in contact with the national meteorological office and/or environment department. If not, you could make an effort to establish the relevant collaboration.
- These offices will be able to provide an overview of historical changes (eg. rainfall patterns for a given town) that are already occurring, plus projected climate for the coming decades (eg. increasing drought for a given country). This might take the form of 'National Communications'. The historical trends information could be available for specific locations. However, it is important to note that projections for the future are not available accurately at local scale (downscaled models don't agree with each other) and therefore can't be used for guiding site selection or to help identify site-specific adaptation measures to include in community risk reduction plans resulting from the VCA process.

¹ [Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre. How can climate change be considered in Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments? 2012.](#)

Information collected at this stage may provide good guidance on what questions to ask communities. If for example changes in rainfall patterns are evident, then having a discussion with communities on how this might impact their lives now and into the future could assist in developing longer-term strategies to deal with it. Knowing what is changing and likely to get worse may even be a way of choosing which parts of the country to focus your efforts. You may even be able to get someone with knowledge of climate change to give you and other VCA facilitators a briefing.

You will find a general Red Cross/Red Crescent basic climate change presentation at: <http://www.climatecentre.org/site/presentations>

Note: If you need climate information explained in a way that makes it relevant to your work and in less scientific or technical language, or if you have difficulty understanding the information you are given, you can send it to the IFRC climate helpdesk and ask their assistance at: ifrc@iri.columbia.edu.

Step 3. Collect the information.

Some types of information you might want to consider collecting:

- Location and geography of community – including general landscape and land use of the community and surroundings.
- Main economic activities and income breakdown (livelihoods groups)
- Literacy rates, if relevant. Language skills (for refugees)
- Access to community (road infrastructure and transportation methods).
- Population (total, births, deaths, distribution, age, occupations, migration, minority groups?).
- Gender and diversity composition in the community – male, female, age (including children and elderly), ethnic or religious groups, LGBTI persons, nationalities, migrants.
- Number of people with disabilities (male, female, children & elderly), number of people with each type of impairment (adult and children), number of people with disabilities enrolled in school, total number of people with disabilities living alone, number of households having more than one person with disabilities.
- Community resources (services available to community members, incl. health facilities).
- Social norms and their implications on gender relations – Family codes, cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage, discrimination/stigmatisation of lower castes, ethnic minority groups.
- Roles and responsibilities of women, girls, boys and men of different ages and of diverse groups, in the home and communities.
- Community organizations – formal or informal.
- History of risks in the community, including health risks such as Ebola or malaria outbreaks or disaster risks such as earthquakes.





- Vulnerable areas, such as hazard-prone areas or densely populated areas where there are many vulnerable people, e.g. a low-income area.
- Changes in hazards (climate change, changing river runoff due to deforestation, etc.) and changes in vulnerability (e.g. migration, economic developments, emergence of 'slum areas' in risk zones etc.).
- Weather trends/extremes recorded at the nearest weather station possible.
- National level climate change projections.
- Location of emergency shelters and environmental hazards.
- Political parties or social movements active over the past number of years.
- Security issues in the region.

For a more detailed list of the information to collect see [Community Factsheet](#).

Step 4. Analyse the information.

The information gathered will provide a first impression and overview of the community in question, the problems it is facing and the capacities it has to address them.

Look for any information gaps that remain after you have reviewed the secondary sources.

These gaps will be the basis for further investigation using other tools.

After the VCA has been conducted, the information from secondary sources can also help to interpret the information gathered through the other tools.

Constraints and pitfalls

There can be volumes of information available on a topic or no information at all. If there is an overwhelming amount of information, being clear about the objectives of your research will assist in narrowing down the focus and ensuring that the most effective sources of information are used. Focus on relevant sources rather than collect every possible bit of information or known source. When no specific information is available about the community, find out what you can find about the wider region. Information can become quickly outdated or can be influenced by political opinion. It is important to know when the source was authored and the original purpose for which it was written.

TIP!

- If the data being examined have been collected by an official body such as the National Statistics Office, it is reasonable to assume that the information is reliable. However, it is advisable to examine other sources of information as well. This will enable you to triangulate the data available. If that is not possible, find out what data-collection methods were used (the tools, people surveyed, timing, etc.).
- When getting information from special agencies (e.g. on population, health and weather/climate), ask for analysed and summarized 'information', not 'raw data' which might overwhelm you.
- Proceed with caution when researching the Internet, as information on web sites can be presented to look very authentic. Assuming false information is true because it is deemed to be from a reliable source is a major pitfall. You will need to verify the authenticity of the source and cross-check the information with other sources or tools such as semi-structured interviews.

Next steps

To assist in analysing the information collected, ask yourself the following questions:

- What new learning has come of this?
- What priorities have others identified?
- What major trends did you identify?
- What conflicting information exists (including information that contradicts other sources such as semi-structured interviews)?

Use the answers to these questions to guide the selection of other tools, such as semi-structured interview livelihoods analysis or community meeting, to cross-check the information gathered during the review of secondary sources.

Information from secondary sources can be very useful to have in hand before doing a EVCA. It is important that team members have access to the information before they go into the community. In some cases, it will be quite clear how the information should be used in the context of the EVCA. In other cases, the information might be relevant but sensitive, for example a new government measure that is contributing to vulnerability, or difficult to explain, for instance a new risk is emerging owing to climate change. Team members need to think in advance how to broach such issues, prepare a common approach and seek advice if they are in doubt.

Synthesize and summarize the information and share it with the community members. What are their views on it? Does it accurately reflect the reality in their community? If not, information needs to be adjusted, updated.