

History of VCA and the Enhancement Process

For over two decades, VCA has been our primary methodology for assessing the risk of an adverse event or threat or hazard occurring and having a negative impact on the communities we work with. The first VCA guide was created in 1999 at the request of National Societies. From 2005 to 2014, five VCA guidelines were developed in order to support its use within communities: What is a VCA (2006), VCA lessons learned and recommendations (2006), How to do a VCA (2007), VCA Toolbox (2007), VCA Training guide (2008), Integrating climate change and urban risk into VCA (2014).

VCA has been adapted constantly over the years. For example, in 2011, a global review was conducted to explore how the VCA could adapt to communities' needs around climate change and urban risk. This led to the development of a guide requested by National Societies titled, "Integrating Climate Change and Urban Risks into the VCA (2014)" in 2014.

The VCA enhancement process

Experience of VCA around the world has generated many important lessons. In 2015, a VCA enhancement study was conducted, the results of which confirmed that the VCA is still considered a relevant and effective process, with 60 per cent of National Societies reporting that they used the VCA between 2013-2015. Yet the study also revealed that there are areas where improvement on the VCA is required for consistency and improved quality, and to maintain relevance to the developmental and humanitarian challenges we are facing. 12 weaknesses or gaps were identified by the study.

These concerns have led to the VCA enhancement process, launched in 2016, to improve understanding, quality and capacity building, information sharing and coordination around the VCA. It includes workstreams relating to improving the marketing of the VCA within the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, enhancing the quality of the VCA guidance; and making better use of Information Management & Technology.

The EVCA guidance is the first step in the enhancement of the VCA, it brings together all the previously published VCA guidelines and toolbox, has an improved analysis process, is integrated with the Roadmap to Community Resilience and includes a climate change lens, as well as gender and diversity considerations.

12 Gaps of VCA identified in the enhancement study

1. VCA Analysis not sufficiently strong
2. VCA wrongly perceived as a once-off product, not a process for community empowerment
3. VCA results inadequately standardized to help inform national programming
4. VCA M&E system inconsistent
5. Urban VCA is problematic
6. VCA do not capitalize enough on secondary data
7. Sequencing of VCA process may be challenging
8. VCA quality is inconsistent
9. VCA not perceived as an entry-point for general RCRC community work
10. Climate change not adequately reflected
11. Incomplete contextualization / adaptation of tools to local conditions
12. VCA-produced knowledge and products often get separated from communities.