

## POLICY AND PRACTICE PAPER

Participatory learning approaches for resilience: Bringing conflict sensitivity, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation together



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**Authors:** Maggie Ibrahim and Tim Midgley, World Vision UK

**Cover image:** Community Leaders during training on use of PLA tools for work in ADP Maya (Copan Ruinas), Honduras © 2013 Alejandro Arias/World Vision

For more information contact  
Maggie Ibrahim, Resilience Manager, World Vision UK  
maggie.ibrahim@worldvision.org.uk  
www.worldvision.org.uk/

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## World Vision UK

World Vision House, Opal Drive,  
Fox Milne, Milton Keynes, MK15 0ZR  
www.worldvision.org.uk

## World Vision UK – London office

11 Belgrave Road,  
London, SW1V 1RB

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# Acronyms

ADP	Area Development Programme
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CoP	Community of Practice
CS	Conflict Sensitivity
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
GIS	Geographic Information System
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
VCA	Vulnerability and capacity assessment

# Executive summary

World Vision UK is promoting resilience by ensuring that development programme designs, implementation and monitoring and evaluations systems are informed by holistic vulnerability and capacity assessments. World Vision UK's approach to resilience is based on bringing together three well established development approaches: Conflict Sensitivity, Disaster Risk Reduction, and Climate Change Adaptation. Underpinning this approach is ensuring that development programming is based on participatory assessments that reflect and make sense of the complexity of the programme context and identify drivers of vulnerability across a wide stakeholder group. This resource highlights the importance of Participatory Learning Action and the specific tools used in conflict sensitivity disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation. Unpacking the tools used by the three communities of practice - peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation - presents an opportunity for practitioners to combine their approaches during programme assessment and to be more holistic in facilitating community resilience.

To support holistic vulnerability and capacity assessments for resilience programming, a range of commonly used processes and toolkits from the three communities of practice were reviewed and the specific tools within each identified. The tools are organised into six categories: hazards and trends, livelihood, power, root causes, scenario and action planning. Guiding questions from the conflict sensitivity, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation approaches are provided. Using a range of tools, communities and development practitioners can develop a holistic understanding of the key drivers of conflict, risks and vulnerability with this streamlined approach. Examples from World Vision Honduras using such tools in redesigning its development programmes are shared.

This resource also introduces two further tools - systems mapping and scenario planning - which are not yet commonly used in vulnerability and capacity assessments and planning but can add significant value to the programme design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes.

**Conclusions and recommendations are provided based on the implementation of holistic vulnerability and capacity assessments in Honduras and include:**

1. Conducting power analysis, systems analysis, and scenario planning with a range of stakeholders alongside more traditional tools for livelihoods and hazard analysis requires discrete capacity building in using these tools.
2. Scaling up holistic vulnerability and capacity assessment requires a shift in development practice with significant investment at the design stage in an open and participatory manner. Coming into an assessment and design process with preconceived ideas of interventions dismisses a community's needs, capacities and visions for their empowerment and for the transformation of drivers of vulnerability.

**Recommendations include the need to:**

- Conduct holistic and participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments, drawing upon learning and experience from conflict sensitivity, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation approaches; and apply tools to deal with uncertainty and complexity, such as power analysis, systems analysis and scenario planning.
- Invest in capacity building of field staff and communities so that they can apply a range of tools (across livelihoods, governance, hazards and trends, action planning) and analyse findings from different perspectives.
- Work in close partnership, and in co-ordination, with government, international non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, private enterprises, research institutions and community based organisations for district level holistic vulnerability and capacity assessments to ensure local level assessments feed into district and national policies and resource allocation.
- Ensure indigenous knowledge is complemented with external sources of knowledge during assessment and design processes.



Noi (age 11) points to a school house he drew on the dream map. Children who participated in the PLA drew dream maps where they illustrated their needs and hopes for their village in Laos.  
©2008 Albert Yu/World Vision

# The current development challenge

Poor and marginalised communities face multiple risks: from economic shocks, to natural hazards and man-made conflicts. Rising food prices and changing weather patterns happening as a result of climate change are compounding people's vulnerability to changing risks. People living in areas affected by conflict are twice as likely to be undernourished as those in other developing countries, three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school, and twice as likely to see their children die before the age of five<sup>1</sup>. Given the context of risk, uncertainty and fragility, development actors face a major challenge in promoting resilience.

## The aim of this resource

World Vision aims to provide a resource on Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) for resilience building – the latest thinking on principles and approaches of resilience programming. This is followed by a description of the PLA tools used by three different communities of practice (CoPs): peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA). The tools can be used to conduct holistic vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCAs) and to inform resilience programming. The summary of the tools are accompanied by suggested guiding questions drawn from approaches in Conflict Sensitivity (CS), DRR and CCA. In addition, a case study describes how training in PLA tools from the three approaches has been used to inform the redesign of two development programmes in Honduras. The final section presents conclusions and recommendations for development practitioners and policy makers.

## Promoting a resilience approach to development programming

To improve the wellbeing of children and their communities, World Vision focuses on incorporating holistic risk reduction into its development programming. In doing this, World Vision believes that development programming can become more efficient, effective and empowering. In practice, this means combining three well established development approaches: Conflict Sensitivity<sup>2</sup>, Disaster Risk Reduction<sup>3</sup>, and Climate Change Adaptation<sup>4</sup> into our assessments, design, and monitoring and evaluation. By reviewing and analysing learning from World Vision's programme work, several principles and approaches that can operationalise a resilience approach have been developed. This is detailed on the next page alongside the project cycle<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank (2011). World Development Report 2011: *Conflict, Security and Development*.

<sup>2</sup> A conflict-sensitive approach involves a sound understanding of the two-way interaction between activities and context and acting to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the positive impacts of intervention in conflict areas (The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012, How to Guide for Conflict Sensitivity)

<sup>3</sup> Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is a policy goal and the strategic and instrumental measures used to anticipate future disaster risk; reduce existing exposure, hazard, or vulnerability; and improve resilience (IPCC, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Climate Change Adaptation refers to adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts. It refers to changes in processes, practices, and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change. Adaptation activities span five general components: observation; assessment of climate impacts and vulnerability; planning; implementation; and monitoring and evaluation of adaptation actions (UNFCCC, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Folkema, J., Ibrahim, M. and Wilkinson, E. (2013) *World Vision's Resilience Programming: Adding Value for Development*. Overseas Development Institute.

TABLE I Resilience programming – Approaches and principles in the project cycle

<b>The design phase</b>
Conduct <b>holistic and participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments</b> across livelihoods, hazards, governance and trends including climate change <sup>6</sup> . Use Geographic Information System (GIS) to analyse multiple sources of data (social, economic, governance, environmental) spatially and map vulnerability.
Undertake <b>systems and power dynamics analysis</b> to understand a complex nature and interactions of actors, assets and activities. Analysis works through the power dynamics and vested interests as part of defining critical vulnerabilities and how to address them.
<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>
Include a <b>range of stakeholders</b> in analysis to improve the appropriateness, effectiveness and accountability of interventions (marginalised groups, private sector, public sector, research institutions, civil society) <sup>7</sup> . Governance challenges are therefore overcome as different groups find ways to act collectively in their own best interests <sup>8</sup> .
<b>Identifying solutions</b>
Use <b>scenario planning</b> with different stakeholders to provide new understanding of the complexity of systems that support the development of different potential situations, which are then tested to understand the potential changes in the economic, political and natural environment <sup>9</sup> . This provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to agree on interventions and to broaden their scope beyond the micro level and consider national and sub-national policy making. Participants discuss scenarios and options for intervention and anticipate how these might impact the overall system in positive or negative ways.
<b>Implementation phase</b>
Focus logistical frameworks (log frames) on the <b>outcomes</b> , allowing adaptive management rather than activities and outputs during project implementation. This allows for different possible pathways for implementation.
Include <b>crisis modifiers</b> (identified in the scenario planning) so that alternative responses can be implemented to shocks and stresses and reduce delays in action.
Conduct stakeholder 'steering committee' meetings to promote dialogue, to review progress and prevent barriers from emerging across all governance levels – micro to macro.
<b>Monitoring and evaluation</b>
Organise <b>multi-stakeholder reviews</b> of data results throughout implementation and make use of innovations in GIS and mobile technologies for real-time data entry and monitoring to manage evolving scenarios effectively.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• GIS allows you to monitor changes geographically/spatially and to react through flexible adaptive management scenarios if results are not being achieved</li><li>• Mobile technologies increase transparency and empower local communities to contribute more effectively to evidence gathering.</li></ul>
<b>Document and review systems maps</b> to see which interventions were successful and which were not. System mapping should be an iterative process in understanding how best to achieve the desired outcomes.
<b>Capture learning</b> through case studies, action research, participatory videos to share and influence policy and practice.

In order to conduct a holistic vulnerability and capacity assessment, as highlighted in the above table, further guidance is provided on the next page.

<sup>6</sup> Holistic Vulnerability and Capacity assessments include livelihoods, hazards, governance, and trends. Resources from World Vision include: Participatory Learning Approaches for Resilience; Landscape, Engagement, Spatial and Systems (LENSS).

<sup>7</sup> The Development Programme Approach by World Vision is a process of engaging a range of stakeholder for programme development which includes a critical path. See: World Vision International (2011). The Handbook for Development Programmes. [http://wvi.org/sites/default/files/Handbook\\_for\\_Development\\_Programmes.pdf](http://wvi.org/sites/default/files/Handbook_for_Development_Programmes.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Bergh, G., M. Foresti, A. Rocha Menocal, L. Wild (2012). 'Building Governance into a Post-2015 Framework: Exploring Transparency and Accountability as an Entry Point'. ODI Research Report, London: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>9</sup> Addison and Ibrahim (2013), *Participatory Scenario Planning for Community Resilience*, World Vision UK.



# Participatory Learning and Action in development and resilience

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) is an approach for learning about and engaging with communities. It combines an ever-growing toolkit of participatory and visual methods, for use with interviewing techniques, and is intended to facilitate a process of collective analysis and learning. PLA evolved from Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), popular with development agencies in the late 1970s and 1980s. RRA aimed to extract information to inform programme design for communities in rural areas using specific tools. However, it often resulted in local people being excluded from analysis and decision-making processes.

PLA uses many of the same tools, but the underlying philosophy and purpose is different: the emphasis is on interactive mutual learning for development agencies and local people. PLA tools are intended to help development agencies tap into the unique perspectives of community members, to help them unlock their ideas concerning the issues they face, and to find realistic solutions. PLA tools combine sharing insights with analysis, and provide a catalyst for the community to act on what is uncovered.

PLA tools are widely used in CS, DRR, CCA approaches. Each community of practice often uses the same or similar PLAs to gather information with the communities they aim to support. However, to date there has been little learning across and between CS, DRR, CCA, and as a result project design and implementation often results in sectoral siloes. Despite the similarities, there is little cross-over between the different approaches. In recent years, there has been increased sharing of ideas between DDR and CCA approaches and to a lesser extent between CS and DDR and CCA.

PLAs commonly used across each approach include focus group discussions, key informant interviews, historical analysis tools (e.g. timelines), geographical mapping (e.g. community maps), livelihood analysis tools, and root cause analysis tools (e.g. problem trees). CCA methodologies often include seasonal calendars which are generally not included in conflict analysis toolkits, despite being able to produce important information and understanding about wider risk factors (whether conflicts are associated with seasonal factors, and how these are impacted by changing trends, for example).

In order to develop a holistic VCA approach for resilience programming, a range of commonly used processes and toolkits from CS, DDR, and CCA were reviewed, and the specific tools within each identified. These have been clustered together into five categories: hazards and trends, livelihood, power, root causes, and scenario and action planning. Guiding questions that could be applied are available to help community facilitators develop a solid understanding of the key drivers of conflict, risk and vulnerability without having to repeat the same or similar tools with the same communities several times.

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas, S. (undated) *What is Participatory Learning and Action (PLA): An Introduction*. <http://idpkeyresources.infocollections.org/index/assoc/0000/d04267/000.pdf>; Chambers (1997). *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the first last*. ITDG Publishing; World Bank (2007). *CDD in the Context of Conflict-Affected Countries: Challenges and Opportunities*. Report No. 36425-GLB. Washington D.C., USA.

<sup>11</sup> Berg et al. (1997) 'The History of Participatory Approaches', in FAO (2003) *Participatory Processes towards Co-Management of Natural Resources in Pastoral Areas of the Middle East: A Training of Trainers Source Book Based on the Principles of Participatory Methods and Approaches*, <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/006/ad424e/ad424e00.pdf>


<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

**The process and toolkits reviewed include:**

- Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (CARE International)
- Participatory Scenario Planning (CARE International)
- VCA Tool box (International Federation of the Red Cross)
- Vulnerability to Resilience Handbook (Practical Action)
- Systems Thinking in Conflict Assessment (USAID)
- Asia Disaster Risk Reduction Toolkit (World Vision)
- Community Owned Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (World Vision)
- Community Owned Disaster Risk Management (World Vision)
- Environmental Scorecard (World Vision)
- Integrating Peace building and Conflict Sensitivity (World Vision)
- Landscape, Engagement, Spatial and Systems (World Vision)
- Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts (World Vision)
- Participatory Scenario Planning (World Vision).

The table below summarises the key PLA tools selected, briefly outlines the objective of each and synthesises suggested guiding questions. Detailed guidance on leading the facilitation of these tools can be found in the resources listed above.

**TABLE 2** Participatory learning approaches: tools and guiding questions

 <b>HAZARDS AND TRENDS ANALYSIS</b>		
TOOLS	OBJECTIVES OF TOOLS	SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS <sup>13</sup>
Historical analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List of shocks</li> <li>• Historical timeline</li> <li>• Trend analysis</li> <li>• Disaster timeline</li> <li>• Important changes</li> </ul>	Explore types of shocks that have affected the community in the past; identify patterns or trends.  Assess level of preparedness for future hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What major (political, social, disaster etc) events have affected the community in the past?</li> <li>• Are there any trends or patterns between events (are they becoming more frequent)?</li> <li>• How is the current weather pattern changing and what is a likely trend in temperature and rainfall for your area?</li> <li>• Do different types of events occur at similar times?</li> <li>• Are different types of events related (local, national, international)?</li> <li>• How does the community cope with difficult events?</li> <li>• How have these coping strategies changed over time?</li> <li>• What events do you expect to happen in the future?</li> <li>• How do you plan for these events?</li> <li>• What changes have happened to make your life harder?</li> <li>• How has your environment changed?</li> <li>• What is different today compared to 20 years ago?</li> <li>• Is your community more or less peaceful than 5, 10 or 20 years ago?</li> </ul>
Assessing magnitude and impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ranking exercises</li> <li>• Who is affected</li> </ul>	Identify shocks or events with biggest impact on the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What shocks or events have had the greatest impact on the community?</li> <li>• Do certain shocks or events have a greater impact on certain groups within the community? Which groups and why?</li> <li>• Of those people affected, is it mostly men, women, children, disabled, any other groups?</li> </ul>

<sup>13</sup> These questions should not be taken as an exhaustive list, but as an indication of key questions that could be asked when using these tools.



## LIVELIHOOD ANALYSIS

TOOLS	OBJECTIVES OF TOOLS	SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS
<p>Geographical mapping tools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village mapping</li> <li>• Resource mapping</li> <li>• Social mapping</li> <li>• Hazard mapping</li> </ul>	<p>Explore spatial dimensions of people's realities based on their own perceptions. They help us to understand the social dynamics of the community, and how and which people are able to access resources and are vulnerable to a range of hazards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the approximate boundaries of the village or community? How many households are found in the community and where are they located? Is the number of households growing or shrinking?</li> <li>• Where are the main landmarks, important buildings, natural features (churches, mosques, rivers, government buildings, water pumps etc.)?</li> <li>• What (religious, ethnic, social) groups are found in the community? Where in the community are the different groups living?</li> <li>• Outside of the house, are community members regularly exposed to dust, smoke or other air pollution?</li> <li>• Is there enough water to drink, wash and grow food? Is the water good to drink, wash and grow food?</li> <li>• What resources are abundant? What resources are scarce? Does everyone have equal access to resources? Do women, poor people and other groups etc) have access? Who makes decisions on resource allocation?</li> <li>• Where do people go to access resources (collect water, firewood, graze livestock etc)?</li> <li>• What kind of development activities do you carry out as a community? Where?</li> <li>• Which areas have been affected by different types of hazards? (natural hazards, conflict, malaria etc.)</li> <li>• Where are NGO project sites, community meeting places, important common spaces? Are these places accessible to all groups? Is there anyone who feels uncomfortable in these places? If so, why?</li> </ul>
<p>Transect walk</p>	<p>To gather information about the geography of the community and complement findings from mapping exercises.</p>	<p>Ask questions about the geographic features, natural resources, infrastructure, livelihood activities, flora and fauna that you observe during the transect walk. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the number of trees changes in the past 5, 10, 20, 30 years? Are there trees on most hill tops and slopes? Are there trees along most water banks?</li> <li>• What is the state of the soil? Is soil consistently kept covered?</li> <li>• Has the number of birds and insects changed in the past 5, 10, 15, 20 years?</li> <li>• Is there rubbish lying around or in waterways?</li> </ul>

TOOLS	OBJECTIVES OF TOOLS	SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS
Seasonal timeline	To gather information on changes in seasonal activity. This can help identify perceptions of long term changes to the climate and the degree to which climate data is used in community planning. It can identify regular events associated with conflicts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the most important livelihood strategies employed at different times of the year?</li> <li>• What strategies do you currently use to deal with difficult times? Are they working?</li> <li>• Are there differences in timings of wet or dry seasons now compared to 5, 10, or 20 years ago? Have livelihood coping strategies changed as a result?</li> <li>• How are decisions made on timing of livelihood strategies?</li> <li>• When are the major festivals and celebrations? Does the community celebrate together, or only certain groups?</li> <li>• Are there certain events that cause tension between different groups? Does this ever result in violence? When are these? How have these tensions been dealt with in the past?</li> </ul>
Food calendar	To map out the production and availability of foods over a 12-month period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What food types are available at different times in the year? (including native and wild foods)</li> <li>• What do you eat when your gardens are not producing enough food?</li> <li>• How have these patterns changed over the years?</li> <li>• Are there links between food production, food availability, the price of food and tensions within the community? For example, have there been any riots or unrest during times of food scarcity? Who was involved? What happened?</li> </ul>
Identify impacts and vulnerabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts and vulnerabilities</li> <li>• Vulnerability ranking</li> <li>• Vulnerability analysis</li> <li>• Vulnerabilities and capacities</li> <li>• Vulnerability matrix</li> </ul>	Identify the most vulnerable groups within the community, and understand how they might be affected by shocks or events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What events or changes over time are the biggest threats to the community? Why?</li> <li>• What will be the impact on the community (infrastructure, livelihoods, people, animals, relations between different groups and availability of food etc)? Are there any practises that make communities more or less vulnerable to the impacts of these hazards?</li> <li>• What are the most important livelihood resources, and the greatest hazards the community faces?</li> <li>• How prepared is the community if this event were to happen tomorrow?</li> <li>• What practices generally make community members more vulnerable to shocks and hazards? What practices make different groups (women, children, elderly etc) particularly vulnerable?</li> <li>• What will the physical, environmental, social, and economic impacts of the shocks be on the community? How will different groups experience these impacts?</li> <li>• Are there systems or structures that exclude groups of people or make them suffer? Who benefits from these structures?</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TOOLS</b></p> <p>Identifying coping mechanisms, capacities and resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coping mechanisms and capacities</li> <li>• Capacities, resources</li> <li>• Vulnerability ranking</li> <li>• Capacity analysis</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OBJECTIVES OF TOOLS</b></p> <p>Understand mechanisms and strategies that have been employed in the past to mitigate against the impacts of shocks.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who and which groups are most affected by the threat, and how are they affected? Are certain groups more vulnerable to the impacts of the threat, based on location, livelihood, age etc?</li> <li>• How do different groups cope with these threats? How do they change the way they live in order to survive?</li> <li>• What could they do differently to ensure that they have a better future?</li> <li>• What happened the last time this event happened? How did the community cope?</li> <li>• What coping strategies are currently used to deal with hazards? How well do they work?</li> <li>• Are there different coping strategies that could be used to adapt to these hazards? What resources would you need to adopt them? What prevents you from adopting them?</li> <li>• What resources do the community and different groups have access to in order to help them cope with threat?</li> <li>• Who can the community seek help from? (resources can be tangible - something that people can hold, or community groups that exist within the community)</li> <li>• How did the community resolve conflicts in the past? Are there certain groups, institutions, events that help bring groups in conflict together? Are there individuals or structures that have had a traditional peacemaking role?</li> </ul>
<p>Identification of existing resources and socio-economic characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Livelihood analysis</li> <li>• Political economy of instability analysis</li> </ul>	<p>Understand who controls resources and who has access to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main livelihood activities undertaken by the community?</li> <li>• What resources (natural, physical, financial, human, social etc) are used or needed for these livelihoods?</li> <li>• What are the most valuable natural resources in the area? Are they movable or fixed? Who controls access to them? Who benefits from exploitation of them?</li> <li>• Who owns or controls access to these resources? Are they communal or privately owned? Are certain groups excluded from the benefits of accessing these resources?</li> <li>• Have there been instances where people could not access these resources? Why? What happened as a result?</li> </ul>



## POWER ANALYSIS

### TOOLS

Relationship mapping tools

- Power mapping
- Conflict mapping
- Venn diagrammes

### OBJECTIVES OF TOOLS

To identify the most influential actors and power brokers in the community and how they relate to one another and the community.

### SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Who are the most influential groups, organisations and institutions within the community? Which ones from outside the community have the greatest influence on the community? Which of these have the closest relationship with the community?
- How do these groups relate to one another? Is there any conflict or alliance between them? If so which ones?
- Which ones stand to gain from conflict in the community? Which have the most to lose?
- Are there any that are excluded from service or engagement with these groups, organisations, institutions? For example, are any open to only men or women?
- Which groups, organisations, institutions offer support in times of crisis? Do any of these help bring people from groups in conflict together to interact peacefully? (e.g. through sports, cultural activities or markets?) How do you access information about these groups?
- What level of community participation exists in NGO projects in the community? Who in the community supports the projects? Does anyone dislike them? Why?
- How would you describe NGO staff working with the community (ethnicity, age, gender etc)? What is their relationship like with the community?



## ROOT CAUSES

TOOLS	OBJECTIVES OF TOOLS	SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS
Root cause analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem tree</li> <li>• ABC triangle</li> <li>• Causes</li> <li>• Symptoms of instability analysis</li> </ul>	To identify the causes of key threats, and why a threat impacts the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why does this impact occur?</li> <li>• Why is an event a threat to the community? Why does (this particular event) affect the community?</li> <li>• What could the community do to stop it from occurring? What then is the reason the impact occurs?</li> </ul>
Systems Mapping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World Vision LENSS methodology</li> <li>• USAID Systems mapping in conflict analysis</li> </ul>	To identify how multiple factors interact with each other to form a system. It is useful for understanding how different factors relate to key vulnerability factors, and for identifying strategic entry points for influence over an entire system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the main factors that impact on the key vulnerabilities for this community? (To test how important each factor is, you can ask 'what would be the impact on community vulnerabilities if this factor were to disappear or change radically?')</li> <li>• How are these factors related to one another? How does a change in one factor impact others?</li> <li>• Are there mutually reinforcing feedback loops within this system? (For example an increase in levels of arms in group A will lead to group B feeling less secure. As a result, group B seeks more arms, making group A feel more insecure, thereby creating a vicious cycle). How can these cycles be broken and virtuous circles be supported?</li> <li>• Are there some factors that are more or less influential over the whole system (leverage points)? What are they? How could they be influenced? Which actors have a high degree of influence over them?</li> <li>• Are there certain factors where development agencies can have a high influence? What are they? How will influencing these factors affect the wider system and the key vulnerability factors?</li> </ul>



## SCENARIO AND ACTION PLANNING

TOOLS	OBJECTIVES OF TOOLS	SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS
<p>Scenario planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• World Vision scenario planning</li><li>• Participatory scenario planning</li><li>• Conflict triggers and scenario analysis</li></ul>	<p>To explore potential future changes and the associated impacts and develop locally relevant action plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What possible future trends or events would have the biggest impact on the vulnerability factors in the communities? How likely are they to happen? <i>(After selecting trends or events likely to have a major impact on vulnerability and creating specific scenarios)</i></li><li>• Which areas and sectors are viewed as most vulnerable? What are the key drivers contributing to that vulnerability?</li><li>• Where in the region are the impacts most likely to be felt? Who are the vulnerable groups?</li><li>• What impact would these scenarios have on the relationships between different groups, on the relative influence of different groups, on access and control of groups over resources, on the underlying causes of conflict and symptoms of instability?</li><li>• What current mitigation or adaptation strategies and actions do the community currently use; on an ongoing basis and at different times of the year?</li><li>• Are these strategies working? Are there any lessons learnt that could be incorporated?</li><li>• Are any sectors of the community negatively impacted by the current strategies in place?</li></ul>
<p>Early warning signs</p>	<p>To identify early warning signs that a hazard, shock or stress is approaching, and find ways to strengthen community responses to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What signs or indicators do you receive before a threat arrives? What proxy indicators do you use to forecast weather patterns?</li><li>• How much time is there between getting the signal and the threat arriving?</li><li>• What do you do when you see the sign? What do you do in response to the sign? What do you do to protect yourself? Or use the information to benefit your livelihood? How do you share this information with others?</li><li>• What can you do to improve the signals or responses?</li></ul>





## GENERAL

### TOOLS

Key informant interviews and focus group discussions

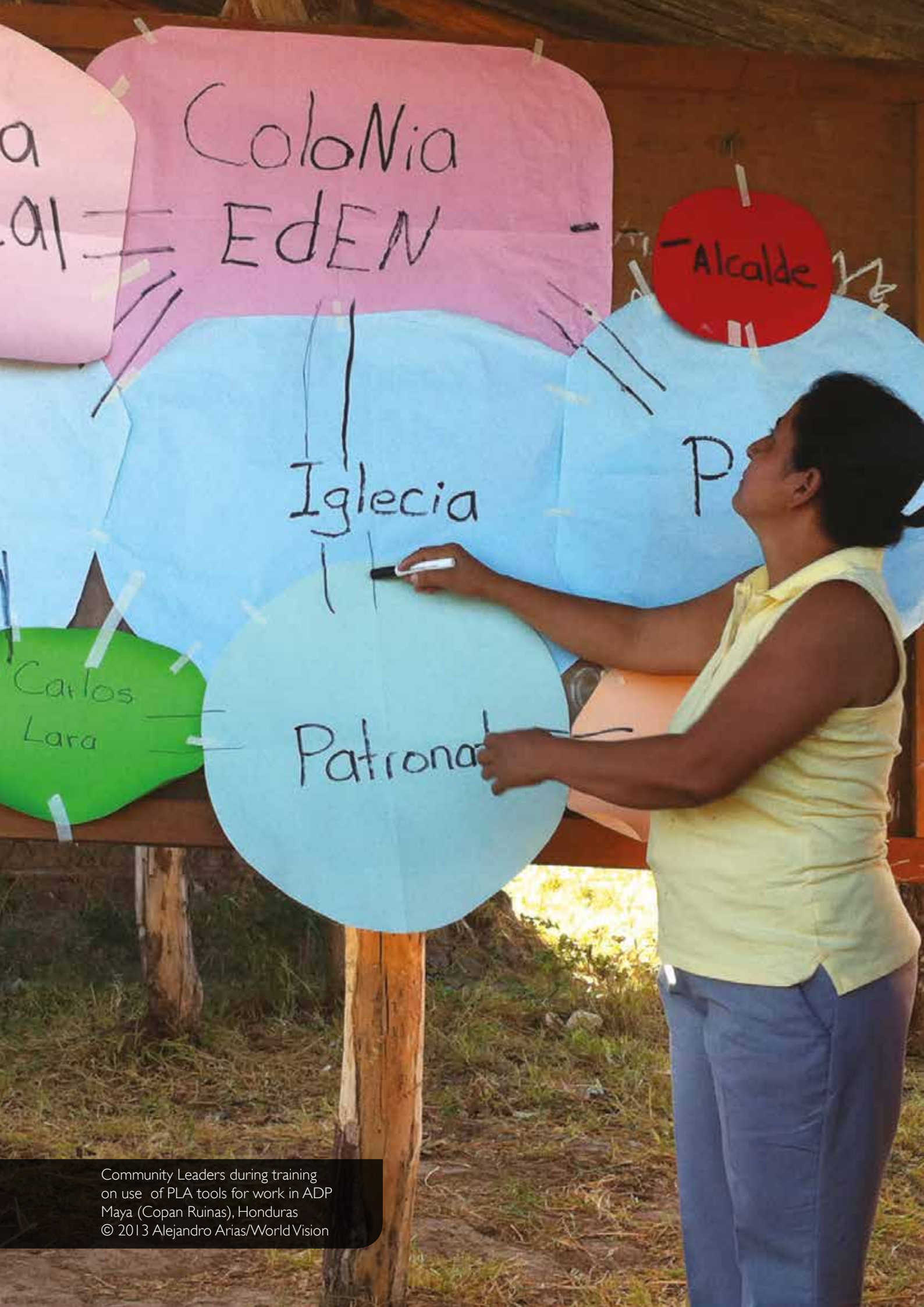
### OBJECTIVES OF TOOLS

Key informant interviews are an opportunity to discuss key issues in depth with individuals with particular knowledge or key perspective on certain issues.

Focus group discussions bring a small group of individuals together to discuss particular topics. Conversation should be guided but natural. The facilitator may choose to include specific tools, or simply introduce key questions or topics for discussion.

### SUGGESTED GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Which are the different groups in your community (ethnic, religious, lifestyle, political affiliation, class, status and so on)? Are some groups excluded, ignored, hurt or suffering? If so, which are they?
- Are there tensions between these groups? What causes these tensions? Do groups compete over resources, economic benefits, political power etc.? How can tensions and conflicts be resolved?
- What activities/ institutions/ interests/ events bring groups together? What helps some people avoid violence or resolve conflicts without violence?
- Are there weapons in the community? Who controls them? Where do they come from?
- Can you tell me about the NGO in the community? What do they do? Do you know what their goals are? How do people describe the NGO?
- Are you familiar with the NGO project? Does this project affected people's security? Does it make the community safer or less safe? Why? What could the NGO do to make the community more secure?
- Does the project affect social relations? Does it help promote harmony? Or tension? Why? How could it help promote harmony?
- Who benefits most from the NGO projects? How are participants selected? Which community members do the staff spend most time with?



Colonia  
EDEN

Alcalde

Iglecia

P

Carlos  
Lara

Patronato

Community Leaders during training on use of PLA tools for work in ADP Maya (Copan Ruinas), Honduras © 2013 Alejandro Arias/World Vision

# Applying Participatory Learning and Action in World Vision Honduras development programming

World Vision Honduras selected seven PLA tools based on the table presented above to inform the redesign process of two 15-year long Area Development Programmes (ADP). The two ADPs were chosen as they represent both urban (Choluteca, ADP Shalom) and rural (Copan Ruinas, ADP Maya) contexts. The PLA tools were selected by World Vision Honduras' Humanitarian Coordinator based on their current context and experience in applying PLA tools. Systems analysis, scenario planning and power analysis were new tools for World Vision Honduras. World Vision UK and the Overseas Development Institute<sup>14</sup> provided support to World Vision Honduras to run a 'training of trainers' workshop for community leaders and World Vision staff on how to use the new tools, as well as the more familiar ones that uncover livelihoods and natural hazards. The tools selected included historical timeline, risk mapping, capacity assessments, power relationship analysis, and food calendar. In addition, the Systems Mapping and Scenario Planning tools were introduced by World Vision UK and used in the redesign process.

## 1. Historical timeline

This is used to explore events in the history of the community that have had a major impact on the people, their livelihoods, the economy and infrastructure. It can be used to identify critical moments when the community is impacted by a major shock or stress factor, such as an environmental hazard, violent conflict, or economic crisis. It can remind communities of the importance of certain events, and facilitate analysis of how different events might be related. For example, discussion about the timeline might include analysis of whether certain types of event occur at about the same time, or one after the other. The timeline can also help identify the frequency of certain events and whether they are becoming more or less frequent. It can prompt discussion about long term changes, including on issues related to climate change. It is a useful tool to begin a risk analysis, as it helps to identify the most important, and frequent shocks and stresses for that community.

In Copan Ruinas and Choluteca - Shalom and Maya Area Development Programmes (ADP), local communities used the historical timeline to identify a wide range of shocks and stresses that had impacted them in recent years. In Shalom, these were primarily weather-related, while in Maya the main shocks were crop disease (fungi on coffee plants), water pollution and conflict related to drug trafficking. All communities reported finding the historical timeline easy to understand and useful for identifying recurrent events.

## 2. Risk mapping

Risk mapping can help identify which resources are available in the community, who is able to access them and how. It can also help determine whether certain groups are particularly vulnerable to a range of hazards. Participants create a geographical map of the community, locating key features such as infrastructure, natural resources, NGO project sites etc; they must also indicate the social make up of the community (e.g. where certain groups live). This can be used to identify areas that are particularly vulnerable to environmental hazards (e.g. low lying areas) or that have experienced high levels of conflict. The tool can be used to facilitate discussion about the social and physical aspects that increase vulnerability, by asking questions about why certain areas are more insecure than others for example, or whether the location of key resources or infrastructure hinders equitable access within the community. These maps can also be used to inform intervention planning, by discussing the potential impacts of future climate change trends on key resources, such as water access points, for example.

<sup>14</sup> ODI Research Fellow, Emily Wilkinson, provided training for World Vision Honduras staff. This chapter is adapted from her publication World Vision Honduras: scoping study on integration of risk management in the re-design process in ADPs Shalom and Maya, commissioned by World Vision UK.

In Shalom and Maya ADPs in Honduras, communities found the risk map a very useful tool for identifying the most vulnerable areas within the community to key shocks and stresses. Discussion around why certain areas were vulnerable to different risks prompted insights into important capacities like employment that were hard to map, but critical for understanding vulnerability. Communities felt that the maps should be used to inform proposal development, to identify risk reduction components needed for each project and also to avoid risk creation in project implementation, for example. Social conflict was not easily captured in these maps and highlights the very different (spatial) nature of these social risks.



**ABOVE:** Community leaders use power analysis tool of actors key actors in Maya ADP (Copan Ruinas, Honduras). © 2013 Alejandro Arias/World Vision

### 3. Capacity assessments

This is used to identify the capacities (including resources and assets) that the community already have that can be used to help mitigate against the impact of shocks and stresses. Participants are asked to identify and prioritise the main hazards, impacts of each (on infrastructure, people, livelihoods and food security), and resources available to help them. They discuss their ideas and write them on cards, which are then attached to the community risk map.

In Shalom and Maya ADPs in Honduras, the main resources available to help communities deal with the environmental and social risks identified were: human and physical resources such as the church and school, which can also be used as shelters; and external resources such as the fire brigade, the Red Cross, the water board, and NGOs. The communities did not identify the municipal government as a resource or capacity. Participants felt that the findings from this analysis could be used to inform programming priorities, by identifying existing resources that can be build upon to improve risk management approaches, for example.

### 4. Power relations analysis

Power relations analysis helps identify the most influential actors and power brokers in a community and develop an understanding of how they relate to one another and the community. Participants are asked to identify different groups or organisations with power. They map out how they relate to the community using large coloured circles with lines representing an excellent relationship, a good relationship and a conflictive relationship. The tool can help communities to identify the actor groups with the greatest capacity to help prepare for, mitigate against or respond to shocks and stresses, including with problems associated with the impact of climate change on a range of assets. Power relations analysis is important for identifying the relative influence or power of different groups for the community. It can help identify groups and institutions that can act as connectors between conflicting groups in the community, as well as groups that tend to divide communities. This information is important for designing conflict sensitive interventions. In Shalom and Maya ADPs in Honduras, communities identified actors from both within and outside the community. These included local government officials, service providers and companies, as well as the church and local criminal gangs. In some cases participants were reluctant to talk openly about some of these actor groups. They did however identify the relationships that they felt were most important for managing the impacts of shocks and stresses. Participants in both communities reported that the tool was easy to use, and it helped them understand power relations in the community. However, they felt that

more support was needed to analyse and understand higher level power dynamics and assess how local level issues relate to the national level. They also requested further capacity building to help them better understand local level conflict dynamics, and strategies for how to address these.

## 5. Food calendar (optional tool, for rural contexts where community members own land)

The food calendar maps the production and availability of basic nutritional needs over a 12-month period and how hazards can affect this. It can help communities to assess changes in food availability during different seasons in recent years and anticipated changes in the future, accounting for projected climate change trends. Table 3 below maps key food crops produced over the calendar year in Copan Ruinas. It can also be a useful tool for identifying and discussing the impact of food price spikes or periods of food scarcity on social conditions, including conflict dynamics.

**TABLE 3:** Food Calendar: Copan Ruinas, Honduras

Food	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Corn				XX	XX	X				XX	XX	X
Kidney bean	X			XX		X			XX			

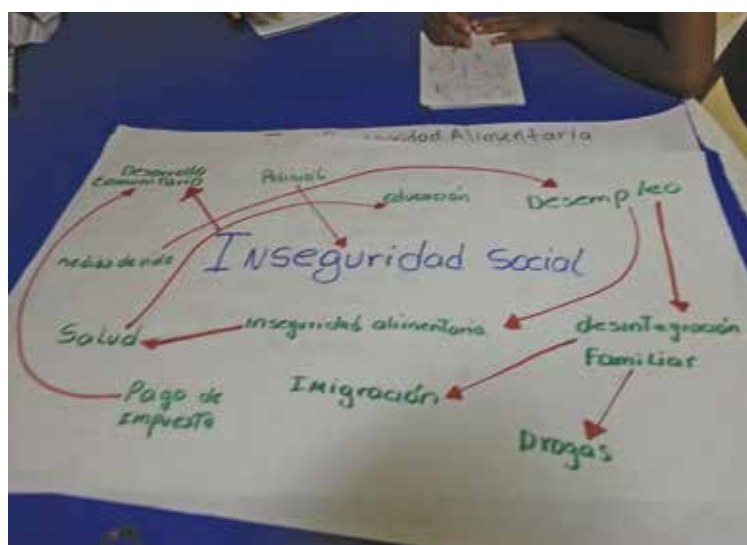
In ADP Maya (Copan Ruinas) in Honduras, the food calendar tool was used because it is a rural area and food is produced locally. However, community leaders did not think it was effective as many people work for coffee producers and do not have their own plots of land. It would be more appropriate in communities where people have their own land to grow produce.

In addition to the PLA tools outlined above, staff in Honduras also made use of the Systems Mapping and Scenario Planning tools as part of the ADP redesign process. Whereas the PLA tools outlined above are well established and widely understood, Systems Mapping and Scenario Planning have not yet been widely adopted by development practitioners.

## 6. Systems mapping

Systems mapping draws upon systems thinking to help participants and facilitators understand how a range of different factors interact with each other to form a system. Systems thinking is a way to understand a context that emphasises the relationships between a system's parts rather than simply the parts themselves. Systems thinking contends that the ability to see a phenomenon in its broader context will provide new insights from looking at each of its component parts individually<sup>15</sup>.

To create a systems map, participants are asked to identify a number of key characteristics or vulnerability factors in their community. They then identify those factors that contribute to these characteristics or vulnerabilities. They discuss these, and draw links between the different factors. For example, a recently conducted systems map of turbulence in South Sudan indicated that decreases in perceived state legitimacy can result in unbalanced economic growth, leading to the increased political exclusion of certain groups, thereby reinforcing the lack of state legitimacy<sup>16</sup>. Actor groups, policy frameworks, time delays and 'mental models' (underlying assumptions about how people



**ABOVE:** System map on social insecurity in ADP Maya (Copan Ruinas) developed by community leaders. © 2013 Alejandro Arias/World Vision

<sup>15</sup> Ricigliano and Chigas (2011). *Systems Thinking in Conflict Assessment: Concepts and Application*. USAID, USA

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

think) can also be added to the maps to make them more or less detailed. Participants thus create a map that outlines how different factors contribute to vulnerability within the community and they inter-related.

This tool helps participants understand how different (often seemingly unrelated) factors are in fact closely connected within a system. It can be used to identify particular areas of intervention, or leverage points, that can have both a direct and indirect impact upon vulnerability in the community. It can help participants to understand how interventions in one area can have an impact across a whole system.

**In ADP Maya (Copan Ruinas), participants created a systems map focusing on social conflict within the community. The subsequent community analysis identified a number of key issues:**

- Insecurity is undermining education directly (as it is harder for children and teachers to access the school buildings) and indirectly. Participants identified food insecurity as a consequence of social conflicts, resulting in a cycle of deteriorating health, contributing to more children dropping out of school (due to illness, having to look after sick parents or entering the labour market to provide for the family).
- The presence of gangs in the community creates a cycle of violence. Gangs collect 'war taxes', which in turn depress the local economy, creating the conditions for more young people to join gangs, perpetuating insecurity.
- Decreased livelihood opportunities lead to higher unemployment, increasing levels of immigration, family break down, and drug use amongst young people. The growing gang membership is leading to increased insecurity and further unemployment, food insecurity and poor education.
- Community members identified the need for better community organisation, community police or better links with local police forces to help address social insecurity.

## 7. Scenario planning

This is a process that enables communities to explore potential future changes, their associated impacts and develop locally relevant action plans. The process allows communities to manage both the opportunities and risks of change more effectively, thereby increasing their resilience. It does not predict or forecast the future but provides a process which gives the community a shared understanding of the possible future risk factors, vulnerabilities and potential impacts enabling so that they can plan better for the future.

Participants work together to identify a number of plausible scenarios utilising local and scientific information and evidence. The impacts of the developed scenarios are assessed and the community's vulnerability is analysed highlighting impacts on specific socio-economic groups, geographical areas and livelihoods. As these discussions combine a wide range of data the interaction of differing factors is taken into account and impacts are not addressed in isolation. The output of these discussions is the production of a coordinated action plan agreed by all stakeholders which is relevant to local priorities.

The actions agreed are non prescriptive as they are developed by its users, 'bottom up', and include mitigation and adaption strategies, policy actions, and a range of hard and soft measures. The process aims to overcome 'predictive' mindsets and engage stakeholders in analysing wide ranging potential futures. Communities are empowered, through an increased understanding, to implement the action plan which can alleviate some or all of the impact of the potential risks, both current and in the medium to long term .

In Shalom and Maya ADPs, participants created scenarios focusing on the impacts of a changing climate, leaf rust on coffee production, education and youth participation in the ADPs. As a result, the community felt able to grasp the complex concepts and assess their impacts. Alliances were also created with a range of government representatives and the Honduran Institute of Coffee to enable further support and cross working on the crop fungus, a serious problem. The process was seen as useful and it was felt that incorporating it into action planning within programmes would ensure that development planning was based on reality and real vulnerabilities rather than ideal scenarios. However, it was a challenge to incorporate social issues effectively into the scenarios and action planning. More training is required in actor analysis, power analysis and options for programming to deal with social violence.

The impact of leading training with community leaders on PLA tools from across livelihoods, governance, hazard and trends, and action planning has resulted in a better understanding of their development



**ABOVE:** Children from Bolivia contributing to hazard and capacity assessment as part of World Vision's Community Resilience Programme. © 2013 World Vision

challenges and has guided the next five-year phase of the ADP to meet these. Issues such as social violence, gangs, leaf rust on coffee production and fewer opportunities for wage labour have all been considered and are reflected in Area Development Programmes for Maya and Shalom. Furthermore, capacity building for conflict sensitivity and power analysis will be taken up at the National Office level for World Vision Honduras and will influence strategy and programming options.

As a result of this pilot, World Vision Honduras will be seeking to roll out the use of a holistic Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment into its design and re-design processes for its Area Development Programmes in urban and rural areas.

<sup>17</sup> Addison, A. and Ibrahim, M. (2013). *Participatory Scenario Planning for Community Resilience*, World Vision UK [www.worldvision.org.uk](http://www.worldvision.org.uk)

<sup>18</sup> Based on 'Making Sense of Turbulent Contexts,' a 3.5 day workshop with World Vision staff and partners. The goal is to equip participants to analyse the actors involved, the symptoms, political economy issues, trends and triggers of ongoing, and sometimes, chronic political and economic instability and to articulate this. The analysis informs national development strategies of participating NGOs.

# Conclusions and recommendations

By undertaking holistic Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments, World Vision has enabled community members, development staff and partner organisations to guide redesigns of 15-year Area Development Programmes through a risk sensitive and participatory process. The result of taking up the holistic VCA for World Vision Honduras has been: considering the impact of social violence in programming; leaf rust on coffee production and wage labourers and deepening partnerships. In addition, the need for capacity building has been identified to understand the power dynamics and the dividers and connectors of conflict. Future programming by World Vision Honduras will need to address issues of gang violence and social insecurity. The challenges of achieving a holistic VCA based on Conflict Sensitivity, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation approaches must also be recognised. Development practitioners and community members' capacity to conduct power analysis, systems analysis and scenario planning is limited. As VCAs have developed from the humanitarian practices and are currently focused on natural hazards and livelihoods, uncovering the power dynamics is a challenge. To move towards a holistic VCA that gathers information from across hazards and trends, livelihood, power, roots causes, and that promotes participatory action planning, further training in power analysis, scenario planning and systems analysis is needed for staff, community leaders and partners.

Related to this is that holistic VCA is time intensive and difficult to scale up without investing in design, monitoring and evaluation systems and staff. Unless development designs include participatory assessments across livelihoods, trends, governance issues and planning and are informed by systems analysis and scenario planning, they are less likely to lead to cross sectoral, flexible and risk smart programming. Current monitoring and evaluation discussions for resilience<sup>19</sup> will also need to identify what is required for the process and outcomes indicators. Beginning with holistic and participatory assessments can lead to monitoring and evaluation processes that promote equity, transformation and accountability.

## **Several recommendations are offered based on World Vision's experience:**

- Programme designs and implementation strategies should be informed by holistic and participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments, drawing upon learning and experience from Conflict Sensitivity, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation approaches. The specific PLA tools used to inform such analysis should be applied from across five categories: hazards and trends, livelihood, power, root causes, and scenario and action planning. The tools used should be selected based on the needs, context and experience of the development practitioners, community leaders and members.
  - Systems mapping and scenario planning tools should also be included in assessments for programme design and implementation. This can help communities and programme staff articulate and analyse complexity within their context, allowing programmes to identify leverage points and assess the potential unintended consequences of interventions.
  - Scenario planning can help community members and staff to account for and actively build in contingency plans in programme designs and implementation strategies.
- Development agencies should invest in building the capacity of field staff and communities to use key PLA tools and analyse findings from different perspectives, specifically drawing upon approaches to Conflict Sensitivity, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation.
- Development agencies should work in close partnership and in co-ordination with government, international NGOs, UN agencies, private enterprises, research institutions and community based organisations for district level holistic VCAs. This is the key to ensure that findings from local level holistic VCAs are linked to sub-national and national analysis and policy and resource allocation.
- Indigenous knowledge should be complemented with external sources of knowledge during programme assessment and design processes. Communities must be empowered to access external sources of knowledge, by facilitating links between communities and relevant actors such as government departments, meteorological departments and others.

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<sup>19</sup> Hughes, K. (2013). *A Multidimensional Approach for Measuring Resilience*. Oxfam: GB Working Paper Oxford



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World Vision UK  
World Vision House, Opal Drive,  
Fox Milne, Milton Keynes, MK15 0ZR

World Vision UK – London office  
11 Belgrave Road,  
London, SW1V 1RB

[www.worldvision.org.uk](http://www.worldvision.org.uk)

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