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Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis: Benefits, Lessons Learnt & Recommendations

Overview

CARE's experience with [Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis \(CVCA\)](#) started in 2009. The CVCA tool helps to gather and analyse information on community-level vulnerabilities to and capacities for climate change. It informs the identification of actions, at the community level or more broadly, that support communities in increasing their resilience to climate change. Over the years it has been adapted by different teams to fit their context and improve its usefulness. In 2019, CARE published a second edition of their handbook - [CVCA 2.0](#) - to incorporate all the lessons learnt over the past 10 years.

This paper is a case study on the use, benefits, challenges and lessons learnt of CVCA 2.0, conducted by CARE Climate and Resilience Platform ([CCRP](#)) and CARE UK and funded by People's Postcode Lottery. CCRP conducted a survey¹ among CARE CVCA-users, held in depth semi-structured interviews with three experienced CVCA practitioners from Niger and Peru and conversed via e-mail with a CVCA practitioner in Guatemala.

CVCA 'is one of the best tools we have on climate change adaptation and resilience. It allows us to go into depth with the community in their context'
(Sanoussi Mahamane Ababale)

¹ 14 CVCA-users replied to the survey, of which 7 had experience with the CVCA 2.0 handbook.

Evolution of the CVCA Handbook

CARE's CVCA handbook was first published in 2009, when humanitarian and development actors increasingly became aware of the impact of climate change on their efforts to save lives and reduce poverty. Recognizing the context-specificity of climate impacts, as well as the socioeconomic dimensions of climate change adaptation, CARE developed the CVCA Handbook.² The CVCA helps communities and facilitating organisations understand the implications of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of people. The process combines local knowledge with scientific data, to build people's understanding of climate risks and adaptation strategies.³ It provides a starting point for dialogue within communities, as well as between communities and other stakeholders. CVCA prioritises local knowledge on climate risks and adaptation strategies in the data gathering and analysis process, allowing local actors to drive their own future.⁴ Since its first publication, the CVCA handbook has been used by CARE and its partners, as well as other NGOs, governments and researchers.

Acknowledging the need for a gender-focused approach, the **Gender-sensitive Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (GCVCA) was developed in 2014** to integrate gender into the CVCA process.⁵ The context evolved and various lessons were learnt over time and a **second version of the handbook (CVCA 2.0) was published in 2019.**⁶ This updated handbook aims to integrate these learnings with a particular focus on gender, ecosystems and governance to be specifically considered in all steps of CVCA. By including these cross-cutting issues, the CVCA process becomes an integrated approach, focusing on the potential negative impacts of climate change on gender equality, ecosystems and governance while simultaneously focusing on how these cross-cutting issues influence people's resilience to climate change.



Photo credit © CARE Niger, 2016

² <https://careclimatechange.org/cvca/>

³ https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Adem-et-al--CARE-and-CVCA-in-Ethiopia_20171.pdf

⁴ https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Adem-et-al--CARE-and-CVCA-in-Ethiopia_20171.pdf

⁵ <https://careclimatechange.org/gender-sensitive-climate-vulnerability-and-capacity-analysis/>

⁶ <https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CARE-CVCA-Handbook-EN-v0.8-web.pdf>

How the CVCA has been used?

Climate-related shocks

Droughts (including increases in dry spells), floods and unpredictable rainfall/rainfall patterns were the most common climate-related shocks CVCA-practitioners dealt with (See figure 1).⁷ The development actors interviewed explained their experience from Niger and Peru, describing projects addressing the needs of various groups ranging from pastoralists and farmers to indigenous groups and Artisanal fishers in the Pacific Ocean.

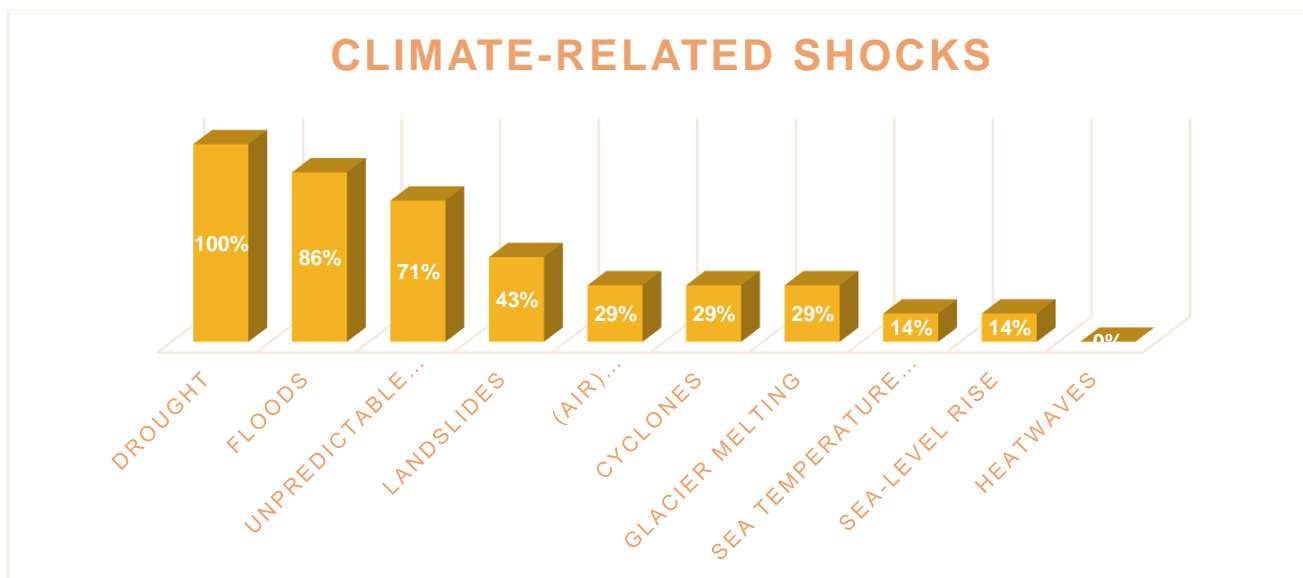


Figure 1

Main uses of CVCA 2.0

The CVCA has been mostly used to inform community adaptation plans and actions (100% of respondents having used the CVCA with this objective). It was also used – though in a more limited way - to inform project and program design (57%) and awareness and advocacy campaign (29%) (See figure 2).

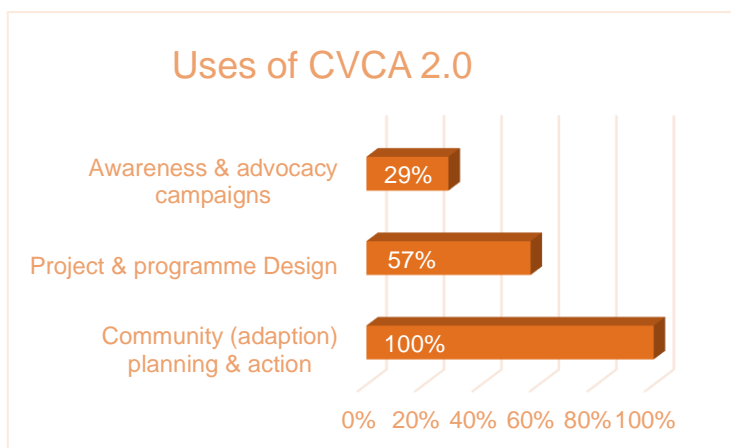


Figure 2

In Niger and Peru⁸, they used the CVCA 2.0 to facilitate community action planning and to assist in project design.

In Maradi, Tahoua and Tillaberi regions in Niger, CARE supported farmers and pastoralists to better handle droughts, floods, crop pests and animal diseases. They set up innovation platforms gathering farmers, researchers and local government stakeholders. They used the CVCA 2.0 in a workshop for these stakeholders

⁷ Survey

⁸ In Niger, CVCA 2.0 was used in the project REDSAAC. In Peru, CVCA 2.0 was used in the projects *Fisheries Governance for artisanal marine fisheries*, *Strengthening ECA Amarakaeri*, *Madre de Dios* and *Glaciares and Project Gestión del Riesgo y Uso Productivo del Agua procedentes de Glaciares*.

to identify the needs of farmers dealing with climate-related hazards and to jointly identify and disseminate the best adaptation techniques.⁹ In the Peruvian Pacific coast, CARE engaged with artisanal fishermen who dealt with the changing sea temperatures that led to the migration of the fish.¹⁰ The CVCA 2.0 was used to decide on fishing areas in the event of El Niño and to support fishermen to diversify their livelihoods. In Madre de Dios department, CARE Peru used the CVCA 2.0 to work with Amazonian indigenous people to transform forest products into profitable value chains. It showed them how climate change impacted the seasonal and interannual variations in the forest that influences which products they could commercialize and increase the awareness about the increased risk of fires.



Photo credit © CARE Peru, 2019

Benefits of CVCA 2.0

CVCA 2.0 proved to be very useful amongst the three CVCA practitioners interviewed – one practitioner mentioned how: ‘CVCA 2.0 allows us to conduct a deep analysis of the vulnerabilities and barriers and it allows us to identify how we can counter these barriers.’ In addition, CVCA 2.0 also led to the following benefits for the communities and the facilitation team:

Communities

- Climate change awareness & climate adaptation plans: The benefit for communities was that it ‘strengthened their knowledge on climate change and ability to identify the impact of climate change’¹¹ on their daily lives. ‘It helped them to know their ecosystems, their vulnerabilities, the most important hazards and the resources exposed to the hazards’.¹² Furthermore, it helped communities ‘to develop climate adaptation plan[s]’¹³ to strengthen their resilience and face climate changes.
- Sustainability of results: Because CVCA focuses on a community’s awareness of the climate-related shocks in their context and their options to strengthen their own resilience, it builds their own agency and focuses on community-led actions. It helps enhance the sustainability of the results achieved.
- The integration of cross-cutting issues: The integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender, ecosystems and inclusive governance were very beneficial, because it allows practitioners and communities to gain some understanding of the different layers of vulnerability and showed them different options for resilience building that they previously did not envisage.

⁹ Interview

¹⁰ Interview

¹¹ Interview

¹² Interview

¹³ Survey

Facilitation Team

- Understanding local reality: Using CVCA 2.0, the facilitation team can develop and strengthen their understanding of the local reality, the climate-related problems communities face and their capacities and how this relates to governance, gender and ecosystems.
- Relationships with communities & development of community-led adaption plans: This understanding of local realities, allows facilitation teams to strengthen their relationships with communities and are therefore well positioned to facilitate the development of participatory community-led community adaptation plans. A CVCA practitioner mentioned: 'It is easy for us to use CVCA to show that all these problems [mentioned by the communities] are related to climate change and to see that we can work with communities in a participatory manner to design activities and implement them'.¹⁴ Another CVCA practitioner mentioned that 'it brought a lot of positivity to the team and helped in the communication with communities' as relations were strengthened.¹⁵



Photo credit © CARE Peru, 2018

¹⁴ Interview

¹⁵ Interview

Gender, Ecosystems & Governance

The integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender, ecosystems and governance proved to be very important and ‘vital for CVCA implementation’.¹⁶ It allows practitioners and communities to identify different levels of vulnerability and multiple options for resilience-building, that previously remained hidden. And therefore CVCA-practitioners were very positive about the focus on the integration of these cross-cutting elements.

- **Gender:** More attention to the gender dimensions within CVCA 2.0, contributed to an awareness of the different gender roles in communities; it showed communities how different gender roles lead to different exposure levels, different capacities, options and barriers to resilience. CVCA ‘is very important for the [gender] equality in households’, as it can lead to a discussion within communities and households and finally to a transformation of the distribution of tasks between genders.¹⁷ However, respondents of the survey also mentioned that a specific gender analysis could complement the process.¹⁸
- **Inclusive governance:** The focus on inclusive governance in CVCA, ensures an enabling environment for community-level adaptation and increased resilience. It focuses on the decision-level in groups by paying attention to the existing spaces for negotiation between community and powerholders. It ensures participatory and inclusive decision making.¹⁹ For example, the communities participated in municipal dialogues,²⁰ which can help them connect with relevant institutions for the implementation of their climate change adaptation plans or reduce their vulnerability by advocating for changes in policies or governance.
- **Ecosystems:** The integration of an ecosystem’s considerations gave communities the opportunity to understand climate change in relation to ecosystems. It broadened the focus from being solely on communities to the broader landscape-level implications of climate change.



Photo credit © CARE Peru, 2019

¹⁶ Survey

¹⁷ Interview

¹⁸ Survey

¹⁹ Interview

²⁰ Survey

Lessons Learnt

There are various challenges that practitioners encountered in the use of CVCA 2.0 and tips they provided:

Challenges	Tips
<p>1 A proper integration of the cross-cutting topics – gender, inclusive governance and ecosystem – requires specific knowledge, skills and expertise (especially during the data collection, analysis, validation and documenting phase).²¹</p> <p>For example, in some communities in Peru, communities did not want to work with female members of the facilitation team or ‘didn’t take them seriously’.²²</p>	<p>a. Explaining the importance of these cross-cutting issues to communities proves to be important, as with this understanding they can provide you with new insights relevant for climate change adaptation and resilience strengthening. You can for example, plan specific sessions on the cross-cutting issues before the start of the CVCA process. Strengthening communities’ understanding of cross-cutting issues, will also ensure that it will be incorporated in communities’ decision-making processes and management instruments.²³</p> <p>b. Ensure that your facilitation team has sufficient expertise on the cross-cutting topics. A training for the facilitation team may strengthen their knowledge and capacities on the 3 cross-cutting issues.</p>
<p>2 The analysis, validation and documentation of CVCA was found difficult by some practitioners, due to time constraints and lack of secondary data, specific knowledge and skills required for the cross-cutting issues.²⁴ Furthermore, some mentioned that CVCA 2.0 needed to be complemented by additional tools, such as CRISTAL tool.²⁵</p>	<p>a. Plan enough time for analysis and documentation.</p> <p>b. Ensure your team has all the necessary skills for the analysis (especially the cross-cutting issues).</p> <p>c. Consider and use supplementary tools.</p>

²¹ Interview and e-mail-conversations

²² Interview

²³ Interview

²⁴ Survey

²⁵ Interview

Challenges	Tips
<p>3 The low level of literacy of some communities' members was a hurdle that practitioners struggled with, as some of the participatory methods required a certain amount of literacy of communities and understanding of the climate change related concepts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Be creative and adjust the CVCA toolbox to ensure its relevance and appropriateness for those that cannot read and write.²⁶ For example, you can use drawings, print images of key resources, key tasks, etc. before engaging in a participatory tool. Furthermore, you could also encourage the communities to draw what is needed. b. Agree on simple definitions/translations of the key concepts in local languages. c. Eventually plan for an introduction session to discuss key climate change related concepts with community members. d. Facilitate the participatory tools in local languages.
<p>4 Intercultural understanding was another problem that practitioners had to overcome working with groups from a different culture.</p> <p>For example, the indigenous people, CARE Peru worked with, believed that climate change was caused by the anger of the spirits, and was not human induced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Build a relationship with the target group. b. Get a full understanding of their beliefs, their ceremonies²⁷ and adapt the CVCA process to respect those ceremonies and beliefs. The seasonal calendar can be used towards that purpose.
<p>5 Ensuring the participation of representatives from the communities. If they have been part of various projects before, they sometimes expect financial contributions before starting.²⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Build from existing work that has been done by others (by gathering already collected data). b. Be clear on the objectives of the CVCA, what is the added value for the participants and for the community and the fact that no financial contribution is planned.
<p>6 Training and strengthening the capacity of field teams on CVCA 2.0 requires a great deal of time and effort.²⁹</p>	<p>Train your facilitation team. At the CARE Climate and Resilience Academy, you can find various online courses and learning journeys to strengthen CVCA knowledge and capacities.</p>

²⁶ Interview

²⁷ Interview

²⁸ Interview

²⁹ Interview

	Challenges	Tips
7	CVCA is often used to develop an adaptation plan. However, communities do not always have the financial means required to implement the adaptation plan.	If the CVCA is being used to develop an adaptation plan, it is recommended to think early on about the potential financial mechanisms that do exist to help implement those plans beyond the project level especially from local authorities and institutions. It will help with the sustainability of the adaptation plan.



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Recommendations

CVCA Handbook 2.0

1. Provide **two different versions of CVCA 2.0** – a simplified and quick version for short term projects and a long and detailed version for long-term projects. This will allow CVCA 2.0 to be used in different contexts that require a different level of analysis.
2. Produce **more case-studies on CVCA 2.0 in various languages** to show how to use and document CVCA 2.0.
3. Include additional guiding questions to ensure **the identification of adaptation options at different levels:** individual, households/livelihoods, productive systems, community organizations, landscape, regional or national level.
4. Provide workshops for **country focal points** to ensure understanding and correct use of the manual.³⁰

CVCA 2.0 Implementation

1. It is best to start the process with **strengthening the capacities of the communities**, in this way the adaptation measures can be incorporated into the communities decision-making processes and management instruments.³¹ Working with **an active community coordinator** can ensure that the appropriate participants are included in the CVCA process and that a well-structured community committee is formed to facilitate the efficient and effective implementation of a potential community adaptation project.³²
2. It is important to spend at least **a day in the community** to understand the context and the information provided by the participants of the CVCA process. Bringing a **satellite picture** that visualizes the threats and potential adaption opportunities is useful.³³
3. The **involvement of governmental stakeholders and technical personnel** often proved to be very helpful.³⁴



Photo credit © CARE Peru, 2019

³⁰ E-mail conversations

³¹ Interview

³² Climate & Resilience Academy, factors of success and failures.

³³ E-mail conversations

³⁴ E-mail conversations