

Case study
Enhancing
Livelihoods in
Emergencies
Response Capacity

Viet Nam Red Cross Society

Pilot: Enhancing capacities to deliver livelihoods in humanitarian responses



Viet Nam Red Cross, livelihoods recovery support to disaster affected communities in the Mekong Delta.

Introduction

Viet Nam is one of the top ten countries most affected by climate change. Each year, the country suffers from an average of 10 to 15 hurricanes, storms and floods. In 2013 alone, the number of floods and storms in the country hit the record of 14 and over 4 million people were severely affected.

The Viet Nam Red Cross Society (VNRC) is auxiliary to the government in disaster management (DM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Working closely with the disaster management government structures at national, provincial and community level.

The VNRC uses a community-based approach to humanitarian activities. It focuses on seven areas of activities: emergency relief and humanitarian assistance; healthcare, first aid, voluntary donation of blood, organs, tissues and body parts, reuniting families separated by war, natural disasters and emergencies; promoting humanitarian values; and disaster preparedness and response.

This pilot is part of a IFRC Livelihoods Resource Centre (LRC) global initiative, funded by ECHO, consisted of eight pilots implemented in different countries. The VNRC implemented this pilot aiming at strengthen its livelihoods in emergencies capacity and operational readiness with support from IFRC.

The learning and recommendations from these pilots informed the development of a step by step guidance on how to strengthen livelihoods in emergencies response capacity. This guidance document is available on the LRC website.

Livelihoods experience of the VNRC

The VNRC livelihoods experience was mainly linked to recovery and development programs. The VNRC often includes livelihoods activities in different programmes like disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, social inclusion, and others. Some experiences include:

- **Livelihoods recovery programs:** Typhoon Ketsana (2009), Typhoon Wutip (2013) recovery plans included livelihoods restoration and support for agriculture, fishing and other income generating activities. Response modalities ranged between distribution of agricultural or livelihoods inputs (seeds, tools, etc.), cash based responses and by providing training and technical support to improve productivity and access to income.
- **Economic and Social inclusion development programme** facilitating the social and labour integration of vulnerable population and persons with disabilities. The programme activities included knowledge and skills development and labour market analysis and linkages.
- **Cow Bank programme**, providing a cow and support to vulnerable families, aiming at improving income generating opportunities.



Humanitarian Aid
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Viet Nam Red Cross, livelihoods project, building skills and capacity

Planning stage

Once the VNRC institutional leadership gave its support to this pilot, a livelihoods capacity self-assessment workshop was conducted to analyse the actual status of the livelihoods capacities within the National Society.

This workshop, facilitated by a LRC technical expert deployed to the country to guide this process, had a high number of participants from the national HQ and from the field branches. Including members of the executive committees, and staff from Disaster Management and different departments.

This enabled the VNRC to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the main capacities and gaps from a variety of perspectives. The main outputs of the workshop were the VNRC baseline of livelihoods capacities and the key priority actions to overcome the existing gaps and strengthen the VNRC livelihoods operational capacity.

The livelihoods self-diagnosis and baseline tool was especially designed by the LRC for this process and included in the LRC livelihoods toolkit available on the LRC website.

Implementation

The recommendations and priority actions identified in the workshop informed the development of the pilot plan of action. Its main outcomes were:

- Raised awareness of livelihoods approach and emergency livelihoods programming
- Improved capacity and operational readiness to plan and implement timely relief and recovery livelihoods responses

The main activities of the pilot:

- Appointment of a **livelihoods in emergency focal point** and set up the **Livelihoods working group** to manage and guide the pilot.
- **Adaptation and translation** of the livelihoods advocacy and training packages and the IFRC Livelihoods guidelines.
- Delivery of **livelihoods training** and the **training of trainers** (T.o.T.).
- **Livelihoods and cash transfer programming sensitisation and advocacy sessions** at NHQ and three selected branches.
- **Introduction to livelihoods trainings** in three selected branches. Training sessions led by recently certified trainers, that put into practice their newly acquired knowledge and training skills.
- **Peer to peer support approach** was used in the field training. Experienced staff from HQ and other provinces were at hand, supporting and helping build the confidence of the new trainers; they also supervised the quality of the training delivery at the field level.
- **Promotion of livelihoods in emergencies** during internal and Red Cross Movement coordination meetings. Advocacy in external coordination meetings was limited and needs to be improved in the future.
- **Application of livelihoods learning and improved capacity** in ongoing livelihoods programmes.
- **Livelihoods in emergencies assessment workshop** to develop a range of livelihoods questions that can be used in rapid and detailed emergency assessments.
- **A Lessons learned workshop conducted in Hanoi** to evaluate and document progress, challenges, and learning from this experience. Also covered future plans for this initiative to continue and identification of potential funding sources.

All these activities contributed to strengthen the capacity of the Viet Nam Red Cross Society to respond in a more efficient, sustainable and dignified manner to the livelihoods needs of populations affected by disasters.

During this pilot the VNRCS focused its efforts mainly on building its own livelihoods capacity at national and field levels but it plans to expand its livelihoods advocacy in the future to the government structures.

As result of its auxiliary role, the VNRCS works closely with the Government structures responsible for disaster management coordination at national, provincial and community level. It is possible that some level of influencing has occurred already but cannot be measured effectively at the end of the pilot.



Viet Nam Red Cross, Participants of the Cow bank programme.

Main successes

- **Significant institutional shift and increased support** for the livelihoods in emergencies approach at national and field level among leadership and operational teams thanks to the advocacy and training received.
- **Strengthened institutional capacity and operational readiness** at national and field level to provide timely, pertinent and scaled up livelihoods interventions as part of the emergency response
- **Human and material livelihoods resources developed** (trained staff, advocacy and training packages created or adapted, tools, etc.) to continue livelihoods advocacy and capacity building across the organization.

- **Use of improved livelihoods knowledge** to improve existing livelihoods programmes.

Thanks to the livelihoods training the teams participating in the *Cow Bank Support Review workshop*, felt better prepared to analyse some of the critical challenges and weaknesses of this project. Changes and recommendations made to enhance the project impact and effectiveness (livestock diversification, reduction of beneficiary contributions, linking beneficiaries to veterinary and animal health services, etc.). Best practices documented are to be used in future replicas of the Cow Bank interventions nationwide.

Weaknesses and challenges

- **Senior leadership and decision makers had diverse understanding of the livelihoods approach.** Several discussions and livelihoods advocacy sessions, robust knowledge, arguments and evidence were needed to gain their support.
- To **ensure the sustainability of this initiative** after the pilot activities end including funding and technical support.
- The **high turnover of staff and members of the disaster response teams**, make quite difficult to keep the livelihoods trained staff and volunteers within the organization.
- **Limited resources** to respond to the increased demand and interest among the field branches that request the development of its livelihoods in emergencies capacities.
- **A longer timeframe needed** to ensure the adequate institutionalisation and mainstreaming of livelihoods and cash transfer approaches into the VNRCS.



Viet Nam Red Cross, Livelihoods Preparedness pilot, lessons learned workshop, Hanoi, December 2015.



Viet Nam Red Cross, A VNRC facilitator (right) explains livelihoods vulnerabilities to a village member. Mekong Adaptation and Resilience to Climate Change project.

Recommendations and lessons learned

1. Critical to **ensure the support of the organizational leadership**. Robust arguments and evidence are needed to get leadership support for this initiative. Prepare these well in advance of meetings and request external *livelihoods in emergencies* expert support if needed.
2. **Keep the plan of action simple and aligned to the livelihoods capacity building priorities, resources and capacities** available in the organization. Outcomes and outputs should be achievable within the established timeframe. Check other department's plans to avoid conflicting agendas, delays or disruptions.
3. **Work closely with all the National Society departments** (DM, development, climate change, DRR, organisational development, resource mobilisation, etc.), to include livelihoods capacity building and activities in other proposals and funding allocations. Also important to ensure coherent and harmonised livelihoods approaches between relief, recovery and development programmes.
4. **Develop a capacity building and training strategy** at the beginning of the pilot. Ensure proposed candidates for key capacity building roles and activities comply with the required criteria to ensure people with the right profile and competencies are targeted.
5. **Invest in the training of trainers** of national HQ and field staff. This support the sustainability and multiplier effects of the capacity building initiative, reducing costs and dependency on external sources.
6. **Plan ahead and identify needs for external technical support** of the project for critical activities of the pilot and request it well in advance (i.e. leadership advocacy support the pilot, self-assessment workshop, trainings, lessons learned workshop).
7. The project implementation should last for **at least 12 months** to ensure certain degree of integration and institutionalisation of livelihoods in emergencies.
8. **Do not underestimate the time needed to adapt, contextualise and translate technical documents and training packages**. A glossary of the most important livelihoods concepts in Vietnamese should be created as reference. Test train materials with the group before the actual training. Ensure revisions, corrections and modifications are documented after each training.
9. **Document and share learning and good practices** derived from the implementation of livelihoods preparedness and response activities. Using a range of print, audio-visual and social media (news, case studies, videos, Facebook and twitter, etc.). Keep a library of livelihoods and CTP resources and translate videos into Vietnamese when possible.
10. **Continue supporting this capacity building and preparedness process to strengthen** and consolidate the mainstreaming of livelihoods preparedness and operational readiness across all provinces.



Viet Nam Red Cross, Participants of the Cow bank programme.



Viet Nam Red Cross, Participants of the Economic and Social Inclusion for people with disabilities program.

Future plans and sustainability of this initiative in the Vietnamese Red Cross

- Continue **mainstreaming livelihoods** and **cash transfers** into existing emergency response and preparedness plans.
- **Review and improve** systems, mechanisms, tools after each response.
- **Include livelihood awareness and training** into the capacity building packages for national, regional and provincial disaster response teams.
- **Seek diversified funding opportunities** while continuing implementing actions with little/no cost (i.e. advocacy, tools adaptation)
- Continue working and advocating for the inclusion of the **livelihoods in emergencies** approach in the **next VNRC Strategic Plan**.
- Work with the National Committee for Disaster Prevention and Control to include **livelihoods into national and provincial response plans and tools** (assessments, etc.).
- **Use the lessons learned and recommendations** from this experience to inform future replicas of capacity building projects. Document and share the experience widely internally and externally.

Good practices

- ✓ Follow training of trainers with field *introduction to livelihoods* training sessions led by new trainers, that put into practice the newly acquired training skills.
- ✓ Use of peer to peer support approaches, facilitating knowledge, learning exchanges. Strengthening and promoting livelihoods activities in different contexts while building their confidence and expertise.
- ✓ Inclusion of livelihoods activities in different department programmes support sustainability and new opportunities.

Table 1. Main achievements of the Vietnamese Red Cross pilot

Areas of preparedness	Achievements
Enabling systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods was already included in their Viet Nam National Red Cross strategy. Ongoing work to ensure the next revision makes specific reference to livelihoods in humanitarian responses • Senior leadership and management increased support to mainstreaming of livelihoods into disaster management and preparedness plans and mechanisms • Participation of senior leadership and management from national HQ and provincial branches in the capacity self-assessment workshop, in livelihoods advocacy sessions and trainings
Programme tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft livelihoods questionnaire that can be adapted and used in rapid and multi-sector emergency assessments. • Livelihoods training packages adapted and translated into Vietnamese • IFRC Livelihoods guidelines translated into Vietnamese and widely disseminated across all branches
Capacities and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods in emergencies focal point: A person appointed at the national level, and seven others at provincial level • Livelihoods capacity self-assessment with 41 participants that included: senior leadership, managers and decision makers, disaster management team members, representatives from several departments including social welfare, climate change, communication from the National HQ and provinces • Five-day training on livelihoods and trainer of trainers (T.o.T.) with participation of 28 staff, from the provincial branches (22) and the national HQ (4), German Red Cross (1) and Spanish Red Cross (1) • Three livelihoods trainings conducted in 3 provinces, with participation of 60 staff. • 19 members of National and Provincial Emergency Response Teams (NDRTs, PDRTs) trained in livelihoods and livelihoods assessments in emergencies. and seven PNSs staff, including American, Spanish and German Red Cross) trained in livelihoods and livelihoods assessment in emergencies • Lessons learned workshop in December 2015, with 32 participants, including the provincial branches, national HQ, Partner National Societies and the Livelihoods Resource Centre
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and livelihoods advocacy in VNRC internal and partners' coordination meetings at national, regional and provincial level