VFL 2011 Methodology

‘Views from the Frontline’ (VFL) is a local level study which is complementary to the Global Assessment Review; which focuses at the national level. Data and case studies from both are considered in order to build a more detailed understanding of how bridge the gap between national and local levels of action.

This section of the report describes the research approach, analytical framework and how the data was used in the ‘Views from the Frontline’ project. The methodology and approach presented here originated from the methodology developed for the VFL 2009 project. The learning review from the VFL 2009 project incorporated consultation with many of the project participants. This review formed the basis of a ‘Global Workshop’ at which many participants were present and at which the learning from the last process was drawn together into recommendations for the VFL 2011 process.

Goal

The main goal of ‘Views from the Frontline’ is to support the effective implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) to build the resilience of vulnerable people and communities at-risk to disasters.

1 Approach

A small working group of disaster reduction practitioners and academics developed and refined a set of indicators and questions based on them. In next, a working group at a VFL regional coordinators meeting revised the text of the questions using less technical language and shortened the questions. Their goal was to ensure that the questions could be understood by non-specialists and the general public. A common framework of 20 indicators formed the basis for the quantitative questionnaire and the qualitative case studies. Two key informant groups were surveyed: local government officials and people from local communities.

The main elements of the project are:-

Survey Data

Respondents to the quantitative survey gave an assessment of their perceptions of progress in local governance functions including those that relate to risk management and public safety.

The respondents followed a five point scale which provided an indication of progress as defined below:-
1= No, not at all
2= to a very limited extent
3=some activity but significant scope for improvements
4= Yes, but with some limitations in capacities and resources
5= Yes, with satisfactory, sustainable and effective measures in place.
X= don’t know.

Copy for Box suggested by Ben (Ben’s comment - INCLUDE BOX: on how revolutionary the use of electronic media is in this regard and how GNDR is experimenting with social networking in its use of the data for advocacy etc. This would explain why SMS etc is being used but would also position GNDR well in terms of future donor/grant maker interest – include costs and benefits here).

Unlike in 2009, the survey this year has been conducted via SMS as well as by face to face interview. The Global Network for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) secretariat has worked with the telecommunications company ‘txteagle’ to create an innovative way of surveying people by text using their mobile phones. This new way of using electronic media to conduct the VFL survey has extended its reach across 48 countries, in both urban and rural communities.

The initial phase of this survey highlighted resistance to using SMS due to the cost of texts (although remuneration in terms of airtime was offered to respondents) and possible resistance to the length of the survey. A further phase therefore used an alternative ‘protocol’ for sending messages which is free to the user, and reduced the question set in the survey substantially. The data from this survey has been analysed separately, and further information on the methodology is provided on the GNDR website.

Qualitative data

Qualitative data was gathered in the form of examples and case studies called ‘Actions at the Frontline’ which illustrate the picture created by the quantitative survey data. These case studies relate to the governance indicators and provide a deeper understanding of ‘how’ progress is being supported or challenged. Conclusions and recommendations were drawn based on looking at how the qualitative data related to the quantitative data.

Regions

Views from the Frontline is organised through a regional structure. There are currently 11 operational regions:

- South America
- Central America
- West Africa
- East Africa
• Southern Africa
• North Africa and Middle East
• South Caucasus
• Central Asia and Eastern Europe
• South Asia
• South East Asia
• Pacific

The regions are supported by a small central Secretariat, currently based in the UK.

**Roles**

The implementation of Views from the Frontline is undertaken by network members fulfilling a range of roles, which are outlined below:

**Regional Coordinator (RC)**

Each of the eleven regions listed above is led by a Regional Coordinator. Typically this would be a national NGO based in the region, who takes responsibility for coordinating the work across the different countries within the region, including training, management and monitoring of progress.

**National Coordinating Organisation (NCO)**

In each participating country a civil society organisation (normally a national or international NGO) takes responsibility for implementing Views from the Frontline in that country. They collaborate with the RC, establish a team, identify a number of 'Participating Organisations' (see below) and coordinate the gathering of survey data and case studies. They submit the data to the Secretariat and coordinate local consultations and activities.

**Participating Organisations (PO)**

Each NCO identifies a number of Participating Organisations (typically between 6 and 12, but depending on the size of the country and other factors). These organisations receive training and support from the NCO and are primarily responsible for conducting the survey through face to face meetings and focus group discussions with the key informant groups. POs are also responsible for gathering examples and case studies in their programme area, and collaborate with these stakeholders to initiate consultations.

For a full list of the 511 participating organisations involved please see the annex to the core report

**Secretariat**

A small central secretariat coordinates the overall project, manages finances, and oversees international level advocacy and campaigning. The secretariat is supported by a professional and academic advisory group and a steering
group. It also contracts specialist consultants when required for example, to manage the mobile phone-based survey.

Key Informant Groups (DRR Actors):
1) Local government officials
2) Community representatives
Project Timeline

The overall timeline and components of the VFL 2011 project are laid out in chart 1 below:

Chart 1: VFL 2011 timeline
Training, Resources and Mobilisation

Training resources including a workbook, background resource pack, videos, presentations and documentation were available at the 'Views from the Frontline Central' area online, which was accessible to all registered members at www.globalnetwork-dr.org/members.html

For Regional Coordinators (RCs)

Regional Coordinators met for a two day workshop at which they worked on finalising the methodology and survey for VFL 2011, facilitated by the secretariat. This workshop also formed a template for delivery of training to NCOs.

For National Coordinating Organisations (NCOs)

Regional training workshops were conducted in all regions. They brought together people from all the NCOs who were going to be involved in the project as Coordinators and deputies. The workshops had the following goals:-

• Work through resources based on the workbook to plan the work for each country
• Identify ways that the approach should be adapted locally and regionally to take account of culture, language and other issues
• Plan to work collaboratively as a regional grouping within GNDR
• Consider ways of developing national and regional funding

For Participating Organisations (POs)

NCOs briefed all the POs at sessions held in their countries where they covered the following points:-

• How to work through the project workbook to plan the work for each country
• Identify ways that the approach should be adapted locally and regionally to take account of culture, language and other issues
• Identify the localities that POs will work in and methods for making contact with and consulting respondents.
• Develop approaches for gathering 'Action at the Frontline' case studies
• Plan for community and national consultations

All survey interviewers received training and resources from participating organisations to carry out the survey.
2 Analytical Framework Used

Selection of At-risk Communities

NCOs and POs worked together to map the regions of their country and to identify at-risk areas. Data collection depended on the resources and geographical access that the participating organisations had. Nevertheless the POs covered a wide range of at-risk communities in urban and rural settings. Within each locality POs selected key informants from government officials and community representatives to interview.

Survey questionnaire

The quantitative survey is based on a questionnaire with questions derived from twenty indicators designed to capture key aspects of "local governance." See Appendix XXX.

Development of Indicators and Questions

At the centre of the VFL 2011 review process are a set of twenty indicators that form the basis of the questionnaire (see annex ...). They cover the fundamental characteristics of good local governance that are considered to be important for enabling disaster risk reduction at the local level. To help with analysis and understanding, the indicators have been grouped under the headings of participation, capability and accountability – three different but interconnected dimensions of governance.

It is important to note that the indicators are not intended to be a complete list of all of the different aspects of governance. They have been designed to be quite general to suit different contexts, although in practice, they apply at the point of interaction between local authorities and affected communities.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire was comprised of two separate parts. In the first part, introductory questions identified the location, gender and age of respondents. They also asked for their overall view of the level of risk in their location and of the progress in reducing disaster losses during the five year period during which the Hyogo Framework for Action has been active. In the second part survey participants were asked to rank progress in disaster reduction made against the twenty indicators. They also provided more reflective comments and examples of good practice or barriers to progress, that formed part of the qualitative data collected.

Local governance refers to a range of factors that enable Disaster Risk Reduction measures to be implemented effectively. Whilst Local Government
is a key actor in this, ‘governance’ refers to all of those who have a role in local management, implementation and decision-making.

The survey questionnaire and accompanying explanatory material are available in an annex to the core report.

In the second part of the survey, respondents to the survey were asked to assess progress towards the various indicators according to a five-point scale. Guidance was provided for the interviewers. The scale is shown below, with a typical question.

### Ranking:
For quantitative questions please use the following scores to respond:

1. No
2. To a very limited extent
3. Some activity but significant scope for improvement
4. Yes, but with some limitations in capacities and resources
5. Yes, with satisfactory, sustainable and effective measures in place
X. Don’t know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref No</th>
<th>Indicator Subject</th>
<th>Indicator Question</th>
<th>Ranking 1-5 or X for don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Does the local government involve all people, especially vulnerable and marginalized groups, in disaster prevention decision-making and implementation?</td>
<td></td>
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**Face-to-face interviews and Focus Group Discussions**

The surveys were conducted through a mix of face to face interviews and focus group discussions. Where a focus group was used Participating Organisations used score cards for participants so that individual, rather than group scores could be recorded.

**3 Data**

Completed surveys were returned by the Participating Organisation to the NCO for collation and subsequent analysis. A data entry tool was provided which enabled NCOs to input the data into a structured database for analysis.
Data was analysed by a secretariat team at the global level, using 'Statistical Package for Social Sciences', at tool to assist with analysis. A range of analyses were developed and performed by NCOs, assisted by the secretariat, conducted analyses at country and sub-national level to support local consultations and country reports.

The overall framework for analysis relates people’s perceptions of risk and their perceptions of progress in governance to their perception of increase or decrease in disaster losses.

For the overall framework for analysis, questions were asked on:

- Age
- Gender
- Local Government involvement
- Rural/urban context
- Country

While the survey data focussed on perceptions of change the analysis team also used EM-DAT indicators of disaster loss, and looked at the local risk governance practices that influenced actual reduction disaster loss.

It should also be noted that the data is in non-parametric form, based on a 'Likert scale', which is a commonly used scoring or scaling process used to evaluate responses in survey research.
Quality control

The GNDR secretariat, RCOs and NCOs had primary responsibility for data quality control. The data quality was managed through training, orientation and support for the research process, and by checking data for 'outliers' and anomalies in the submitted data. In unusual cases, NCOs were contacted for further information.

SMS survey

The face to face and focus group survey methodology is labour and cost intensive and the VFL 2011 project investigated a new method of data gathering. This was based on evidence from the International Telecommunications Union (the UN agency for information and communication technology) that mobile phone access is very high in the developing world. A pilot project was developed with simplified versions of the questionnaire so that they could be delivered via SMS. In collaboration with a specialist and innovative commercial company the survey was rolled out in 48 countries.

In each country invitations were issued to subscribers to participate in the survey. Participants were offered compensation and paid in airtime to cover the costs of the texts they would send. They were given the choice to respond via the web, also in return for compensation via their mobile phones.

The SMS survey has generated a substantial volume of data, although as the results section indicates there are systematic differences between the data gathered by the two methods. These differences are explored in the analysis.

Another difference is that administering the survey in this remote way by text rather than face-to-face contact removes the element of dialogue and relationship-building between different actors which has been seen to be a valuable aspect of the process.

Set against these points, the SMS survey offers a direct communication channel to the respondent without any influence of the interviewer. It also offers a very cost effective method of gathering 'views' from a wide subscriber base, as the cost per respondent is approximately 1% of that of gathering surveys by the face to face method.

Gender focused perspective

The Huairou Commission, a global coalition of women’s’ networks and partners working to empower grassroots groups, was also involved in the VFL project. They conducted a programme of gender-focused surveys in over 10 countries, based on workshops and consultations to generate primarily
qualitative material which formed the subject of a separate report, as well as contributing to the overall VFL report.

**Children and Young People**

Plan International collaborated with the main VFL study, as well as providing specific support for NCOs and POs in a number of countries to gather material reflecting the views of children and young people. The overall survey included questions to identify the ages of respondents so the full face to face and SMS data was able to show the contrasts between views of different age groups.

**Qualitative survey**

One learning point from the VFL 2009 project was that case study information would be invaluable in providing a narrative relating to drivers of change and constraints to change to support the results of the quantitative analysis. A specific programme, 'Action at the Frontline' was developed to support gathering of local case studies. The programme provided detailed guidance and a 'template' to participants for gathering case study material. A web gallery was provided to allow members to browse, 'rate' and comment on case studies in order to promote dialogue and learning.

**4 Project Sustainability**

**Consultations**

Making use of the information and perceptions gathered in VFL at local level is an integral part of the project and has a number of benefits:-

- Using findings for discussion, to draw conclusions and discuss ways forward.
- Stimulating action within at-risk communities.
- Stimulating debate and building relationships between stakeholder groups.
- Improving understanding and networking among participants at the community level.
- The findings, discussion and conclusions of these consultations can be included in the final version of the country report.

At the local level consultations are being organised between affected communities and local authorities by POs with the assistance of the NCO. At the national level multi-stakeholder consultations with civil society and national government officials are being organised by the NCOs. These are ongoing processes.
**Country reports**

Country reports are using the first phase of the global VFL 2011 report in combination with country level data, case studies and experience. They also draw on the national and community consultation process to include the perspectives and inputs of a range of stakeholders.

**Ongoing activities**

The Views from the Frontline project doesn't end when consultations and reports have been completed. The information and discussion resulting from VFL forms a valuable starting point for continued activity to improve local level disaster reduction. Several key activities are being undertaken at the country level:

- Mobilising local level partnerships
- Local learning and planning
- Collaboration to advocate and campaign for more effective implementation of Disaster reduction.