

ActionAid's Disaster Risk Reduction through Schools (DRRS) project highlighted the importance of community participation in, and leadership of, DRR initiatives. In order to facilitate genuinely inclusive community analysis of hazards, the project used Participatory Vulnerability Analysis (PVA).

The PVA process facilitates:

- In depth **analysis** of vulnerabilities and root causes of disaster – as well as an appreciation of past action and opportunities for future intervention – enabling communities to develop action **plans** and **demands**;
- Engagement of a variety of key **stakeholders** in the process (keeping the vulnerable communities at the centre), thus facilitating effective, transparent and accountable decision-making on disaster prevention and response;
- The tackling of vulnerabilities at **different levels**, from the local to the national to the global, always rooting risks and interventions in the needs, demands and knowledge of the most vulnerable people.



Communities engaged in the DRRS project mentioned that they already used some PVA tools, but said that PVA was different “because it led to a plan of action.” PVA gave rise to enthusiasm in communities when linking analysis to planning and fostering real participation.
Photo Silva Ferretti/ActionAid

The PVA approach proved to be a valuable approach to address gaps and challenges identified by the **Hyogo Framework for Action**:

- **Governance:** PVA focuses on bottom-up, decentralized, transparent and participatory decision-making; it brings together key stakeholders at different levels in the planning process; it links effective high-level advocacy with ground-level analysis; it stresses the importance of accountability in the process; and it helps to create awareness of laws and institutions relevant to DRR and to propose and lobby for improvements to these.
- **Risk identification:** analysis of the root causes of vulnerability is central to the process. PVA helps to harvest accurate information on disaster at the local level, based on the experience of different stakeholders. Increased awareness of risk has also an obvious impact on the capacity of the community to monitor it, and to set up locally-driven early warning and response systems.
- **Knowledge:** PVA also creates a common understanding of risk and disasters. It creates opportunities for information on risk and disasters to be reviewed, aggregated across communities and shared with multiple stakeholders. PVA is intended as a first step in building awareness and a culture of safety and resilience.
- **Reducing underlying risk factors:** PVA links analysis to action, and generates plans tackling vulnerability by addressing its root causes, be they local or global.
- **Preparedness for effective response and recovery:** in addition to creating plans for action, the PVA process – by bringing the community together and by linking with other stakeholders – increases their capacity to organize and mobilize around disasters.