

**Views from the Frontline 2019: Local level Monitoring of Progress of the
Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction and Related Frameworks
Snapshot of VFL 2019 Pilot results in Tonga and the Philippines**

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Introduction

In order to ensure that policies, plans and activities that are aimed at building resilience are effective, it is important that they are informed by the priorities of those most at risk. Local people have critical knowledge on the risks they face and only when this is utilised will policies, plans and actions to build resilience be effective. It is with this belief that the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) started its *Views from the Frontline* (VFL) programme in 2009 to highlight the views of the most vulnerable and marginalised populations. (GNDR 2018). VFL is the largest independent global monitoring process at the local level which has insofar reached 89,000 stakeholders across 129 countries. VFL was conducted in 2009, 2011 and 2013, and is currently in its 2019 iteration. The pilot of VFL 2019, which was implemented in Philippines and Tonga, has recently concluded and this paper presents the key findings of this pilot. In doing so, the paper revisits some of the key findings of previous VFLs, most of which are still relevant in current contexts of planning, implementing and monitoring resilience at the local level, while also providing a preview of VFL 2019 data and findings.

Official monitoring efforts focus on measuring reduction in losses and managing existing risk for large-scale events, thinking in terms of mortality and economic loss (Birkmann 2007; Mitchell et al. 2014; Fakhruddin et al. n.d.; UNISDR 2018; Zaidi 2018), whereas VFL 2019 covers forward-looking actions focused on strengthening resilience capabilities. VFL 2019 is to be implemented in 50 countries across Asia, Central Europe, the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. It aims to establish a local baseline and a local monitoring process to measure progress towards achieving an inclusive, “people-centred” approach to risk reduction and resilience, as promoted by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals), and associated frameworks. Local risk information collected at the community level not only informs progress towards resilience, but is also used by the communities in the development of action plans to improve community wellbeing and resilience. A global reflection on the results of VFL 2019 will inform the design and development of collaborative actions to improve risk reduction and resilience policies and practice at the local, national and international levels.

Throughout its various iterations, VFL has found that most disasters are small-scale and localised. Losses due to recurrent small-scale “*everyday*” disasters have a significant impact on the lives, livelihoods and assets of low-income households in developing countries. Such everyday disasters include the effects of slow onset events such as drought and coastal erosion, along with living in areas that are prone to flooding (van Voorst et al. 2015). As official disaster databases “only include earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, fires, industrial or transport accidents and other

events where 10 or more people are killed, 100 or more are seriously injured, or where the damage is sufficient for international agencies to be called in” (Bull-Kamanga et al. 2003), these small-scale disasters are largely unreported and uninsured, do not receive national or international assistance and have to be dealt with by local actors and affected populations using locally available resources. Some local communities have even started to accept disasters as part of their everyday life (van Voorst et al. 2015). Significantly, when left unaddressed, risks associated with small localised disasters can over time accumulate, concentrate and intensify, making it more difficult and expensive to reduce these risks. This points to their increasingly high impact on development and the poverty cycle (UNISDR n.d.). Thus, there is a need to shift the focus away from just the large disasters that attract media attention, towards including the smaller-scale, everyday hazards that constitute the daily realities of many of the world’s most vulnerable (van Voorst et al. 2015). One of the most effective ways to reduce the steady rise in disaster losses lies in addressing the causes of high-frequency, low-intensity disasters, notably through **strengthening local risk governance capabilities**. This requires increased levels of inclusion, participation and collaboration between at-risk people and local state and non-state actors – principles which lie at the heart of a *people-centred* preventative approach to disaster risk reduction and resilience and form the primary focus of VFL 2019.

Encouragingly, good governance principles of ***inclusion, participation, collaboration, and people empowerment*** have been incorporated across the SFDRR, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Paris Agreement and other related frameworks. The challenges now lie in converting these global commitments into national policies and legislation through local action. Raising public awareness and engagement with these commitments, together with strengthening transparency and accountability mechanisms (including local monitoring), are critical to making this happen.

Views from the Frontline through the years

VFL 2009

In May 2008, GNDR launched the first *Views from the Frontline* to gather the perspectives of at-risk people, local authorities and civil society on local progress towards reducing disaster risk. A survey was designed to capture local actors’ opinions on the indicators of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Local civil society organisations conducted these with community members, local civil society groups and local government. Responses were recorded on paper and then inputted later into an online survey software. VFL was conducted across Africa, Asia and the Americas, and resulted in a global report, “***Clouds but little rain***”, providing evidence that progress in establishing national policies

and legislation was not generating widespread systemic changes in local practices. This was also seen in a study conducted in Ladakh, India by Virginie Le Masson in 2015, which found that the majority of practitioners still viewed DRR through a hazard-focused lens rather than with a more holistic approach to resilience. Furthermore, where historically relief-centred approaches have shifted towards more proactive approaches to DRR, implementation remains technocratic with a focus on hazards and exposure rather than addressing root causes of vulnerability and drawing on local knowledge and capacities (Le Masson 2015).

VFL 2009 identified inadequate means of implementation, together with weak local risk governance capabilities as the main constraints to progress, although it found considerable local resources that were under-utilised. Furthermore, as UNISDR (2018) found, there has been little effort to strengthen local capacities. This is, in part, due to a lack of political will, which is essential for implementing DRR at the local level (Amaratunga et al. 2018). Therefore, there is a need for all societies (particularly when resources are scarce) to capitalise on existing resources and leverage collaboration between different stakeholders for effective mobilisation of these resources.

There were differences in perceived progress across the Hyogo Framework for Action's Priority Focus Areas (PFA) and cross-cutting issues. At the local level, the least progress was reported towards PFA 1 (Governance), PFA 2 (Risk Assessment and Monitoring) and PFA 3 (Knowledge and Education). Within PFA 4 (Underlying Risk Factors), low levels of progress were reported by community respondents in food security, poverty alleviation and social protection. A number of VFL country reports highlighted climate change to be one of many interrelated problems perceived to interact at the household level with security, poverty and wellbeing. Under PFA 5 (Preparedness and Response), the review found opportunities were being missed to "build back better" in post-disaster recovery. One of the lowest scoring indicators overall was community participation in decision-making processes. Quantitative and qualitative data showed that the most commonly cited constraints to progress are a lack of human, financial, training and technical resources. Critically, the progress scores from local people through VFL 2009 differed from the scores given in the self-assessment by national governments through the HFA Monitor. For PFA 1, governments nationally reported a score of 3.3 out of 5, whilst local actors through VFL scored 2.35; for PFA 2, the difference was 3.1 among national governments vs 2.35 for local actors; for PFA 3, the scoring was 2.9 vs 2.35; for PFA 4, 2.9 vs 2.4; and for PFA 5, 3.25 vs 2.4.

As a direct result of the VFL research, thousands of structured conversations have taken place between government bodies, communities and civil society. One of the objectives of VFL was to create a space for different

actors at the local level to talk about DRR. In feedback from participants; this was seen as an important benefit of the process.

VFL 2011

Building on the insights and success of VFL 2009, VFL 2011 (“***If we do not join hands...***”) had a specific focus on the critical role of *local risk governance*. 20,000 people across 69 countries were surveyed. 57% of people surveyed felt disaster losses had increased over the previous 5 years, leading GNDR to conclude that without a large scaling-up of action at the local level, the HFA would struggle to achieve a substantial reduction in disaster losses by 2015. None of the 69 countries reported “substantial” progress at the local level, with the average score being 2.4 out of 5 (“very limited/some activity but significant scope for improvement”). This was extremely similar to the VFL 2009 score for the same question (2009 score: 2.36), highlighting that the VFL 2009 conclusion remained valid: “Clouds but little rain”, and that a future DRR framework needed to focus on closing this implementation gap.

Again, a lack of access to resources was identified as a significant barrier to the implementation of national policies and plans. The central message of VFL 2011 was that an inclusive, competent and accountable government administration, open and supportive to collaboration and partnerships between local state/non-state actors, was the single most important factor for reducing disaster risk at the community-level.

Learning from the process of VFL 2009, simpler data inputting processes were established to minimise workload of lead organisations.

VFL 2013

Due to VFL 2011’s identification of the continued lack of progress in achieving the HFA targets at the local level and the important role of the new post-2015 DRR agenda in ensuring impact at the local level is reached, VFL 2013, “***Beyond 2015***”, was created as a forward-looking review designed to contribute to the inter-governmental negotiations for a post-2015 DRR framework. Similar to earlier iterations, VFL 2013 included a participatory survey involving 21,500 local respondents from low and middle-income countries. Nearly 60% of respondents reported that losses were continuing to increase; respondents identified small-scale localised disasters and conflict as the most common risks impacting people’s lives, livelihoods and assets. The survey also showed that the poorer you are, the worse it gets, making a strong case for risk reduction strategies to pay special attention to the perspectives, needs and priorities of people disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest.

In situations where people live and work in a complex, uncertain risk landscape (often in the context of informality, fragility and insecurity), it is difficult to predict how individual risks will manifest. Poor people cannot

afford to address specific risk types (e.g. natural hazards) in isolation from each other. They tend to deal with interconnected risks in a more comprehensive holistic manner, whereas governments and other development agencies take a compartmentalised (and fragmented) approach that treat disasters, conflict, climate change and development separately, as observed by Le Masson (2015). Bringing at-risk people closer to decision-making processes can serve to make actions more relevant and strengthen coherence across fragmented and separate policy domains, particularly in relation to tackling underlying causes of risk. In fact, Chirenje et al. (2013) found that community empowerment is essential for effective implementation of policies and plans at the local level. These findings provided the evidence for GNDR and its members to develop concrete recommendations for what needed to be included in the Sendai Framework for DRR in order to help ensure progress at the local level.

From monitoring to action: the “*Frontline*” Methodology

Following consultations and evaluations of the previous iterations of VFL, it was clear that monitoring and reporting progress was not enough, but there was also a need to leverage the wealth of information collected through the surveys for action planning at the local and national levels. A new methodology (*Frontline*) was then created, based on open-ended conversations with local residents that elicit their perceptions of priority **threats**, the **consequences** of these threats, **actions** that can be taken to avoid or reduce threats and consequences, and **barriers** encountered in attempting these actions. VFL 2013 made it clear that people at the frontline deal with a variety of threats that include risks in the traditional DRR sense, but that also span across different sectors. As a result, *Frontline* was implemented in 2015 with 14,000 respondents across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, with results confirming that people view and deal with threats in a holistic manner. These results were used at the local level to input into action plans that address priority needs (identified by community members themselves) coherently through various sectors.

VFL 2019 incorporates lessons learnt from the previous iterations of VFL and *Frontline* to ensure that the process is beneficial to different actors and different levels, and does no harm to the communities at risk. It adopts *Frontline*'s open-ended conversational approach to questions so that participants can raise a full range of issues and ideas, and not be restricted to talk about the scope of just one framework (e.g. disasters, poverty, climate change). This supports the increasingly recognised agenda to ensure coherence in implementation of the post-2015 frameworks. It also invests even more into reflection and action, following the collection of the data. Communities are provided with seed funds to implement local action plans, and organisations are provided with technical and

financial support to organise multi-stakeholder meetings at the national level. The data collection process remains simple to ensure local organisations can lead the work and replicate the process outside of the project timeline, and the data inputting process now allows for online and offline inputting of responses to accommodate the limited internet connection in some VFL countries. VFL 2019 has also been designed to fill current policy monitoring gaps. All the post-2015 frameworks refer to the need for inclusion of local actors in the design and implementation of resilience-building actions; however, none explicitly monitor this inclusion in their respective targets and indicators. VFL 2019 therefore fills this gap by surveying local actors about their inclusion in different stages of the policy and planning processes. It also asks questions about coherence at the local level, due to the finding in 2015 in *Frontline* that communities identify and address issues together. It also disaggregates resilience data by a wide range of factors (location, gender, age, disability), which is required for UN framework reporting, essential for ensuring tailored and effective actions, and yet remains difficult for states to achieve. By filling these gaps and adopting effective approaches learnt over time, VFL 2019 will provide locally-sourced information that is vital in the design, development and implementation of local and national DRR and resilience strategies. Not only does it bring to the table the perceptions of people at the frontline, but it also addresses the need for a holistic and coherent approach that aims to develop strategies in support of risk-informed development efforts.

Initiatives taken by stakeholders to build nexus between Local Government Units, CSOs and communities

There are several initiatives carried out by CSOs, Local Government Units (LGUs) and communities together across the world to ensure that resilience is built upon the principles of strategic collaboration, inclusion and participation. *Views from the Frontline* takes into account some of these good practices and builds on them by providing substantial evidence of the gaps between policies and practices, especially related to local resilience-building. These include:

1. Initiatives by the local government:

Initiated by the Government of the State of Delhi, India, the People Partnership Project “Bhagidari” aimed to promote broad-based civic participation in local governance (indiagovernance.gov.in n.d.). The government-stated goal was to create “greater transparency and accountability in administration” in order to improve “the quality, efficiency and delivery of public services”.

As a system to promote citizen-government partnership, the project trained specific community groups such as market and industrial associations, bureaucrats across the municipal, state and central government departments and Resident Welfare Associations. The project won the 2005 UN Public Service Award.

2. Initiatives by the local citizens' councils/ forums in Latin America:

There are several initiatives in Latin America where citizens have acted as “Watchdogs” to ensure that the government policies have been implemented and reached the target recipients (ELLA n.d.). For example, In Brazil, 5500 local citizen groups have been created since 2005 to monitor the functioning of the Bolsa Familia (Family Allowance) CCT programme at the local level (ELLA n.d.). These groups are composed of civil society and local government representatives and work to make sure that there are no mistakes regarding the inclusion or exclusion of beneficiaries and that there are sufficient and appropriate health and education services available to meet the additional incentivised demand.

3. Initiatives by CSOs:

“**Citizen Report Card**” - **CRC** is a participatory social audit tool developed by a CSO called the Civil Society Academy, which engages with the community members to assess the quality of public services such as health, education, public transportation and other public distribution systems (Lakshmisha 2018). It is a collective reflection of citizens’ feedback on the performance of a service provider formed by their experience of actually having used a particular service for a period of time.

Views for the Frontline 2019

The 2019 iteration of VFL aims to strengthen the inclusion and systematic collaboration between governments, at-risk people and civil society in the design and implementation of DRR and resilience policies and practices. By amplifying the voices of communities, it encourages inclusive and participatory governance to help bridge the gap between policies and practices. Its all-of-society approach hopes to encourage collaboration among different stakeholders and empower communities at the local level to build their own resilience.

The main objectives of VFL 2019 are:

1. To establish a citizen-based process to measure local progress in inclusive risk governance

2. To strengthen in-country civil society monitoring, DRR and advocacy capacities
3. To support establishment of local-level baselines and generate local risk information to inform policy and local plans.

National partners implementing VFL in their country select a diverse range of at-risk communities, covering different risk areas across the country and, with the support of local partners, engage in conversations with representatives of vulnerable and marginalised groups at the community level, local leaders, CSO representatives, and local government officials.

Drawing on a strong bottom-up approach, some of the outcomes of VFL 2019 are centred around increased capacities of local actors to collect, access and utilise local evidence for building resilience, partnerships and advocacy at the local and national levels.

VFL 2019 Methodology

The VFL 2019 methodology revolves around four types of surveys/structured conversations with a similar format: 1) community consultations; 2) random surveys; 3) in-depth interviews with local government representatives; and 4) in-depth interviews with CSO representatives. Random surveys are structured in the same way as community consultations, but are written in simpler language and translated into local dialects for easier accessibility. This methodology aims to increase credibility and depth of results, and to provide triangulation of information. Each method is laid out as follows:

1. *Community consultation*: 5 focus group discussions with vulnerable groups (men, women, children and youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly) in the community. Information collected includes:
 - Context
 - Local Risk Profile: impact and frequency of risks/threats
 - Frontline Assessment: a) priority threats, consequences, actions, barriers; b) loss trends; c) forecasting of future threats
 - Inclusive Risk Governance and Enabling Environment: inclusion by local government in risk reduction and resilience building processes of a) assessment; b) planning; c) implementation; d) monitoring; e) access to information; f) access to resources; g) factors impacting inclusion

2. *In-depth interviews with local government and CSO representatives*: These are 2 separate surveys with a similar structure to the community consultation but for different actors as duty-bearers in the risk reduction and resilience-strengthening processes. Information collected through these interviews includes:

- Context
- Frontline Assessment: a) priority threats, consequences, actions, barriers; b) loss trends; c) forecasting of future threats
- Inclusive Risk Governance and Enabling Environment: inclusion of communities in ecosystem-based risk reduction and coherent resilience-building processes

For local government representatives

a) assessment; b) planning; c) implementation; d) monitoring; e) commitment of political leadership; f) supportive policies and legislation; g) access to information; h) resources; i) technical assistance/training; j) accountability & compliance; k) participation; l) advocacy & partnership development; m) factors impacting inclusion

For CSO representatives

a) assessment; b) planning; c) implementation; d) capacities; e) access to resources; f) participation; g) knowledge sharing; h) commitment of political leadership; f) supportive policies and legislation; g) advocacy & partnership development; h) factors impacting inclusion

3. *Survey of Randomly Selected Households*: the random survey is shorter and questions are stated in simpler language compared to other VFL surveys for community respondents. Information collected includes:

- Context: has more questions than the other surveys to profile vulnerability in the community
- Experiences with risks/threats
- Inclusive Risk Governance and Enabling Environment: inclusion by local government in risk reduction and resilience building processes of a) assessment; b) planning; c) implementation; d) monitoring; e) access to information; f) access to resources; g) factors impacting inclusion.

VFL 2019 Implementation Process

VFL 2019 is a three-year project structured around three components:

- **Collection:** Local civil society organisations are mobilised to conduct surveys and consultations with local communities, local civil society organisations and the local government authorities to record their perspectives on risk and resilience. The responses collected through these surveys are aggregated in an open-source database which can be disaggregated by country, community, age, gender, disability and other factors.
- **Reflection:** The data collected through the surveys are analysed to reveal trends that are reflected on to draw out key findings about local risk and resilience.
- **Action:** Trends and key findings about local risk and resilience are used to inform local, national and global actors and decision-makers in an attempt to influence change for improved resilience-building.

The project is being implemented in 50 countries across Asia, Central Europe, the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, Arab States and Africa. A two-tier structure from project implementation has been put in place in each of the countries. At the national level a nationally registered non-government organisation has been selected as the National Coordinating Organisation (NCO) to lead project implementation and advocacy efforts. At the community level, Partner Organisations (POs) with experience of working in the communities have been selected to conduct the surveys and lead in community-level action planning processes. Each NCO has also formed a National Advisory Committee (NAC) comprising of members from multi-disciplinary groups (i.e. civil society organisations, networks, academia, private stakeholders and government officials) in order to provide ongoing guidance for implementing VFL in their respective countries.

Each country has selected between one and four of their most at-risk areas depending on their country size and risk profile. Within these risk areas, 15 communities (half urban and half rural) have been selected within which random sampling methods will be applied to conduct the surveys. Data collected from the surveys will be fed into the open-source database *SurveyGizmo* from where data analysis will be conducted. The emerging trends and key findings from this will be: (i) taken back to the communities to develop community action plans; and (ii) used to develop national, regional and global reports to influence actors and decision-makers to improve resilience-building policies, plans and activities (GNDR 2018).

Snapshots of VFL Pilot Findings¹

The VFL Pilot was implemented from January to September 2018 in Tonga and the Philippines to test the methodology to be used in the VFL 2019 roll-out to an additional 48 countries. After regional, national and local trainings, community facilitators and enumerators conducted the VFL surveys and structured conversations with community members, vulnerable groups, local government and CSO representatives. The VFL Pilot engaged 3,400 (900 in Tonga and 2,500 in the Philippines) respondents and focus group discussion (FGD) participants from:

- 10 communities (5 urban, 5 rural) in 5 diverse risk areas per country
- 30 community members representing vulnerable groups in 3-4 community consultations and FGDs per community
- 10 representatives of local government interviewed per community
- 10 representatives of civil society organisations interviewed per community
- 240 (40 in Tonga and 200 in the Philippines) households (HH) in random surveys per community

Note that the target for the random survey in Tonga was lower due to the smaller size of its communities. Disaggregation of data by gender, age, economic standing, disability and other vulnerability and capacity factors for deeper analysis has been considered and further improvements to the quality of this disaggregated data has been done to the methodology for the VFL 2019 roll-out. The national implementing partner in the Philippines has already been able to present the VFL survey results in various workshops: 10 community multi-stakeholder workshops were conducted from 17-31 July 2018 for validation, reflection and use in local action planning, and a national multi-stakeholder workshop was conducted on August 14, 2018. Communities identified priority actions based on the action plan developed, following the results of the survey/consultations. To jumpstart the implementation of this action plan, the communities involved in the project received some seed funding to be used for undertaking the priority actions identified. Aside from involvement in the action planning, local CSOs have been

¹ This contribution to GAR 2019 is being submitted at the time when the VFL Pilot is in the final phases of data analysis and presentation of findings in community and national multi-stakeholder workshops. The findings presented here include results from the two pilot countries, the Philippines and Tonga.

included in monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms. At the national level, the actors involved in VFL have identified pathways for the uptake of the VFL findings in official monitoring mechanisms, and with key stakeholders who have the capacities to improve policies and practices at the local level. These will be pursued as the national report and infographics are produced and disseminated.

The random survey results have provided community profiles of key vulnerability and capacity factors. Figure 1: “Profile of Community Respondents”, with data collected in the communities covered by the VFL Pilot in both Tonga and the Philippines, shows how most respondents have average economic standing, are long-time residents and feel well-integrated in the community. For the VFL 2019 roll-out, disaggregation of these responses by age, gender, disability, economic standing, urban vs. rural setting, should be possible. Disaggregated information provides valuable inputs for improving sectoral and multi-sectoral inclusive programming and service delivery at the local and national level, strengthening resilience capabilities.

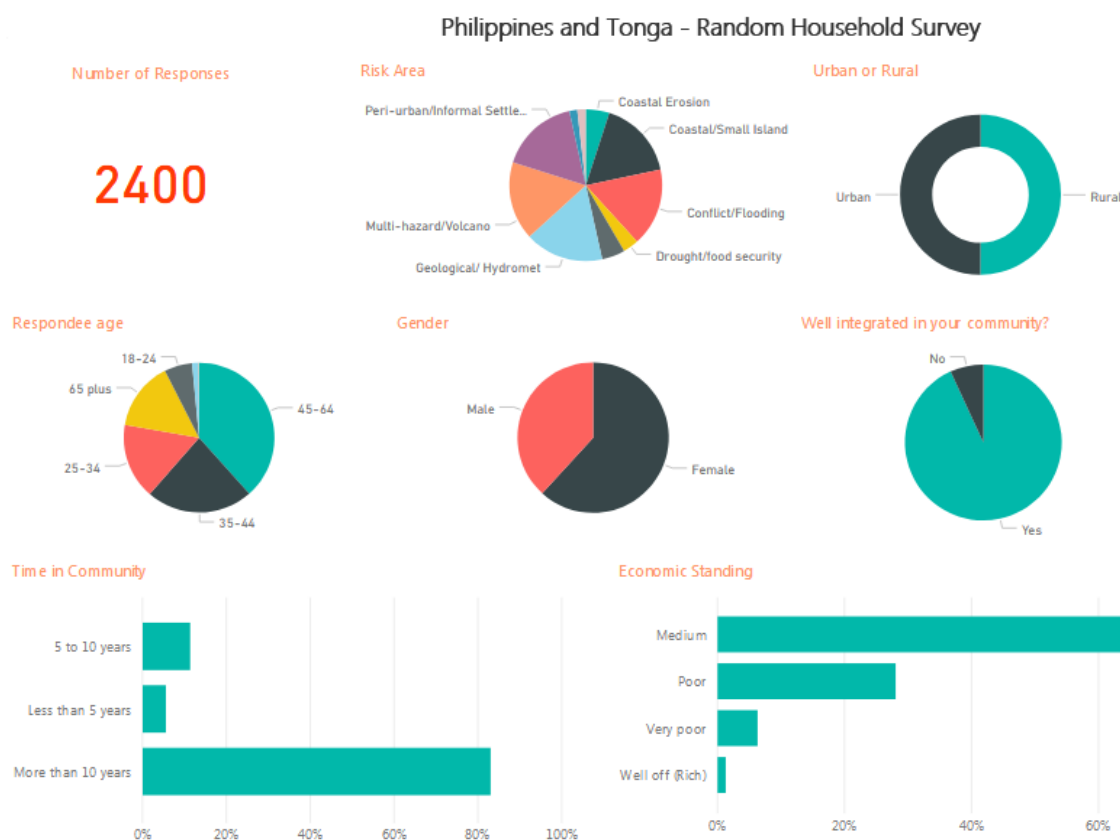


Figure 1: Profile of Community Respondents from Random Survey

The results of the Frontline Assessment are presented in Figure 2: “Frontline Assessment”, and present data from composite results of the community consultations and the in-depth interviews with local government and community representatives. The data visualisation shows that most of the priority threats identified in Tonga and the Philippines were hydro-meteorological hazards, but other social, economic and political threats emerged, such drug addiction, unemployment, alcoholism, and crimes. As both Tonga and the Philippines are island countries, many of the communities consulted during the VFL Pilot had recent experiences of major typhoons and flooding, and associated damages. Even those natural hazards have a variety of social and economic consequences, such as rising crime, in addition to loss of life and damage to property. Priority actions to reduce threats and consequences cover strengthening coordination with government authorities, actions for poverty reduction and employment, food security and health promotion, in addition to the more “traditional” disaster preparedness and response measures. Reducing identified threats and consequences and addressing barriers to actions were reference points in the community local action planning workshops.

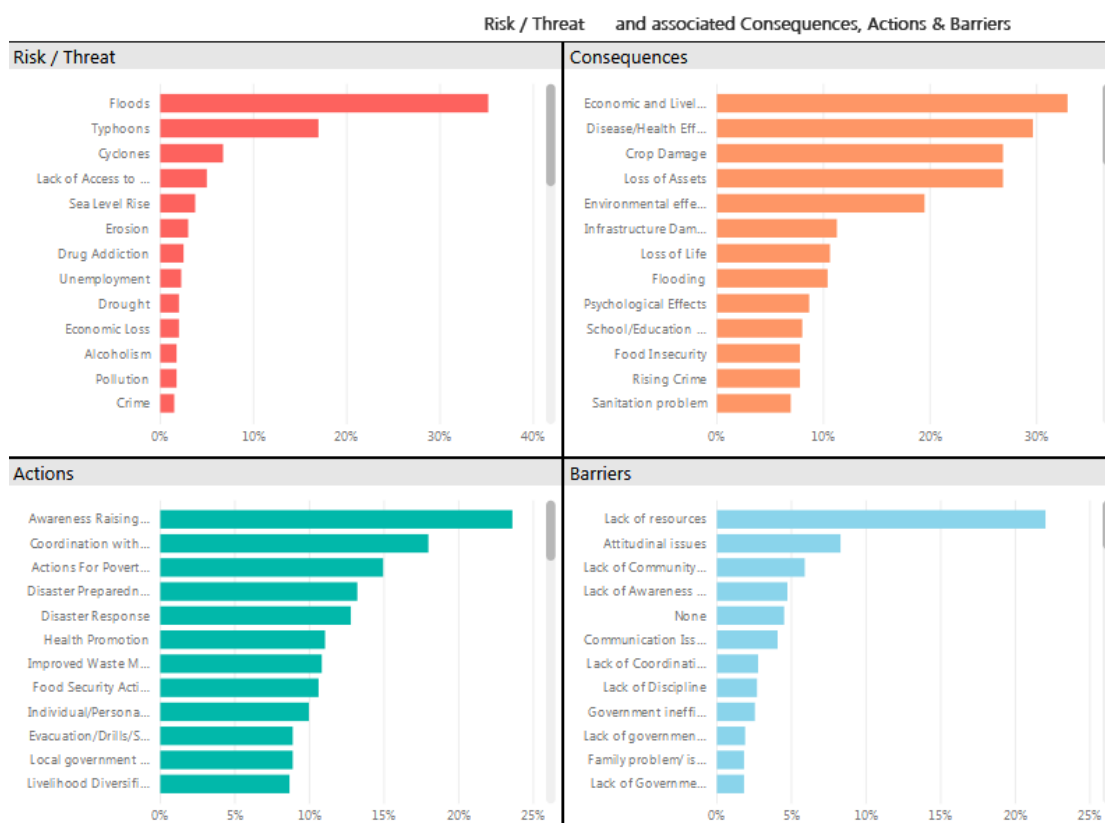


Figure 2: Frontline Assessment of Threats, Consequences, Actions, and Barriers

The top 3 threats prioritised through the Frontline Assessment in both Tonga and the Philippines are typhoons, flooding and drug abuse. These are also the future threats identified by vulnerable groups, local government and civil society respondents (see Figure 3: “Forecasting of Future Threats”) which are projected to negatively impact their communities, with climate change being cited as separate from other hydro-meteorological hazards. Contextual conditions, such as the impact of tropical cyclone Gita in Tongatapu and concurrence of typhoons and monsoon rains in the Philippines, may have played a role in the identification of the most relevant threats.

Forecasting of Future Threats

What are the most significant risks/threats you think the younger generations will face when they grow up?

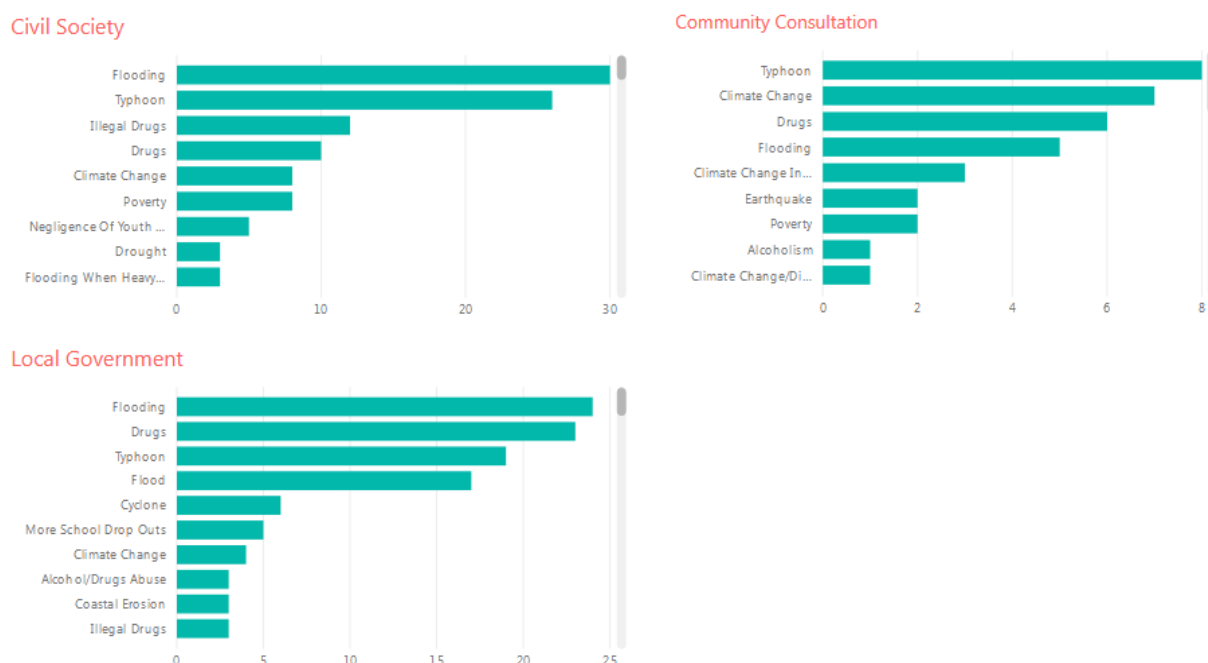


Figure 3: Forecasting of Future Threats

A comparison of perceptions of key stakeholders on trends on disaster losses over the last 5-10 years is captured in Figure 4: “Trends in Disaster Losses”. Responses to many of the VFL Pilot questions showed similarities between local government respondents and civil society respondents. Local government and civil society responses that disaster losses have increased significantly may be also a result of increased access to information on disaster losses and trends. Household responses show that trends in disaster losses have remained the same – they continue to experience loss and damages to their lives, livelihoods and other assets.

Trends in Disaster Losses

In this community, how have disaster losses changed in the last 5-10 years?

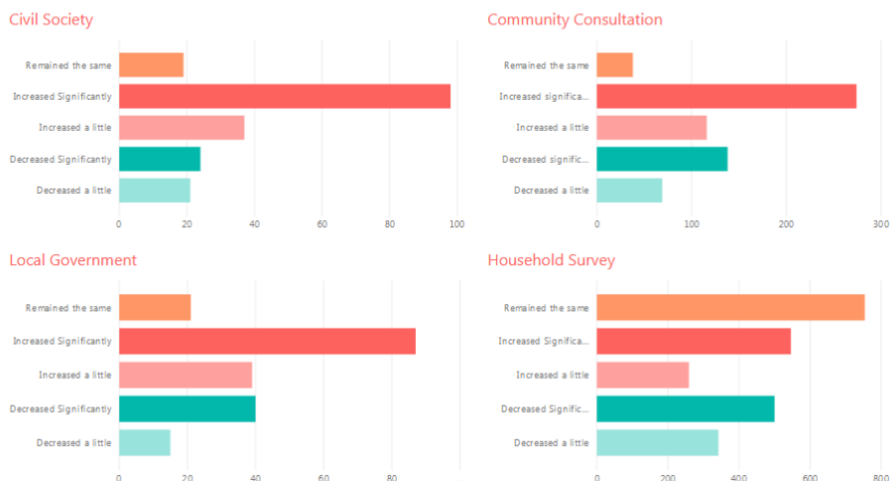


Figure 4: Trends in Disaster Losses

Half of the community respondents in the communities covered by the VFL Pilot who had experienced adverse events including disasters, recovered within a year, while 36% recovered in more than a year, and the rest assessed they would not be able to recover at all (Figure 5: “Source of Supports in Recovery”). Extended families ranked highest in delivering support to community residents recovering from disasters in Tonga and the Philippines. Governments ranked second as a partner in recovery, followed by CSOs (in the Philippines; this order is reversed for Tonga).

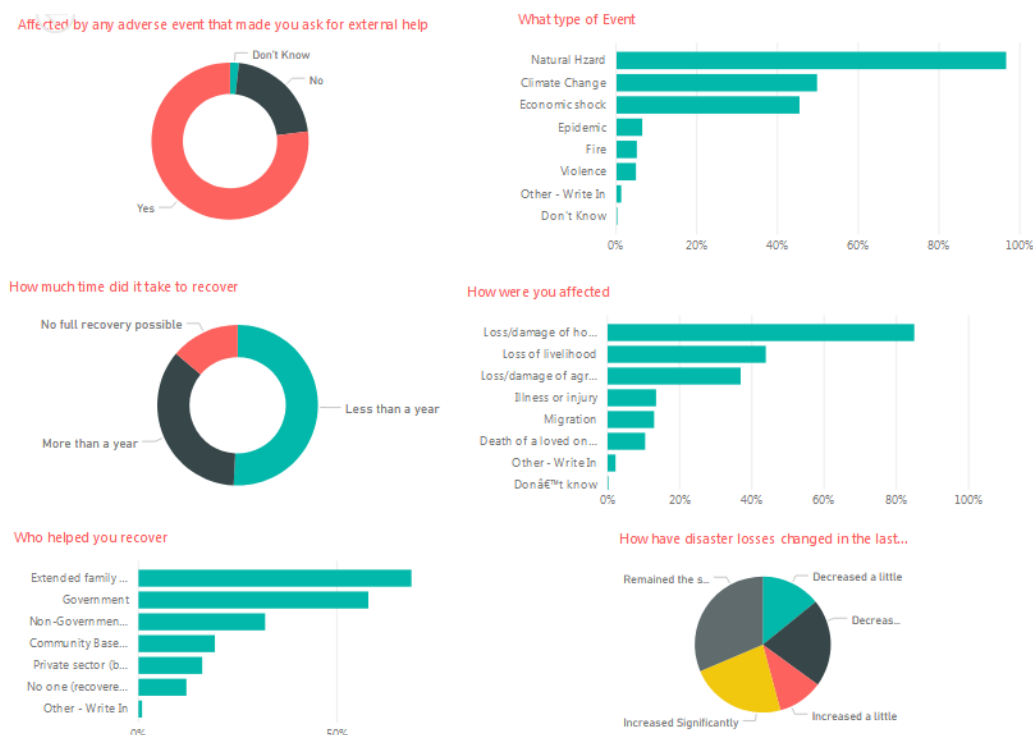


Figure 5: Source of Supports in Recovery

Snapshots of VFL Pilot Results on Inclusive Risk Governance²

The section on inclusive risk governance is the section in the VFL surveys/structured conversations most relevant to monitoring progress of risk reduction and strengthening resilience at the country level in relation to the SFDRR, SDGs, Paris Agreement and other associated frameworks. Areas in inclusive governance covered in VFL 2019 include 12 indicators – a) assessment; b) planning; c) implementation; d) monitoring; e) commitment of political leadership; f) supportive policies and legislation; g) access to information; h) resources; i) technical

² At the time of writing this paper full analysis of results on the Inclusive Risk Governance section of the VFL Pilot was available for the Philippines only. Hence, most parts of this analysis will specifically refer to the Philippines context: this will be clearly specified whenever is the case throughout the text. Data shown in graphs are representative of both Tonga and Philippines, unless otherwise specified.

assistance/training; j) accountability & compliance; k) participation; and l) advocacy & partnership development. Any of these indicators can be analysed across surveys – community inclusion in planning, assessment and monitoring can also be linked to other indicators, such as monitoring, accountability and access to information. The VFL Pilot was implemented under the understanding that the local CSOs and the government are the main duty bearers in risk reduction and resilience-building.

For indicators of assessment, planning and implementation, local CSOs' perceptions seem to be similar to those of local government with regards to involving the communities, especially the most vulnerable groups, in periodic review and updating of risk information, in preparing plans and actions to address risks/threats, and in implementation. Local governments are making efforts to involve communities in assessment, planning and implementation, but further efforts in ensuring inclusion are recommended. Mostly, the community voices collected through the random survey and community consultations highlight that there is only occasional involvement of communities in the assessment, planning and implementation phases (see Figure 6: "Assessment, Planning & Implementation"). Out of all the phases, implementation is the one in which communities are the most involved.

A further analysis of the VFL results in the Philippines provides interesting insights on risk perceptions at the level of the so-called *barangay* (the administrative denomination of villages in the Philippines). It was noted that, while there is willingness among community members to be involved, opportunities to participate are usually limited only to *barangay* officials and staff, and only during *barangay* assemblies. It is usually the *barangay* chairperson who represents the community in external engagements, while zone leaders represent other members in engagements within the *barangay*. Vulnerable groups are excluded and are only approached when the local government units (LGUs) need specific information from them. Some youth groups feel that planning processes are only for adults. Persons with disabilities have encountered issues in mobility when attempting to join events and meetings. Some are uninformed and excluded because of party politics.

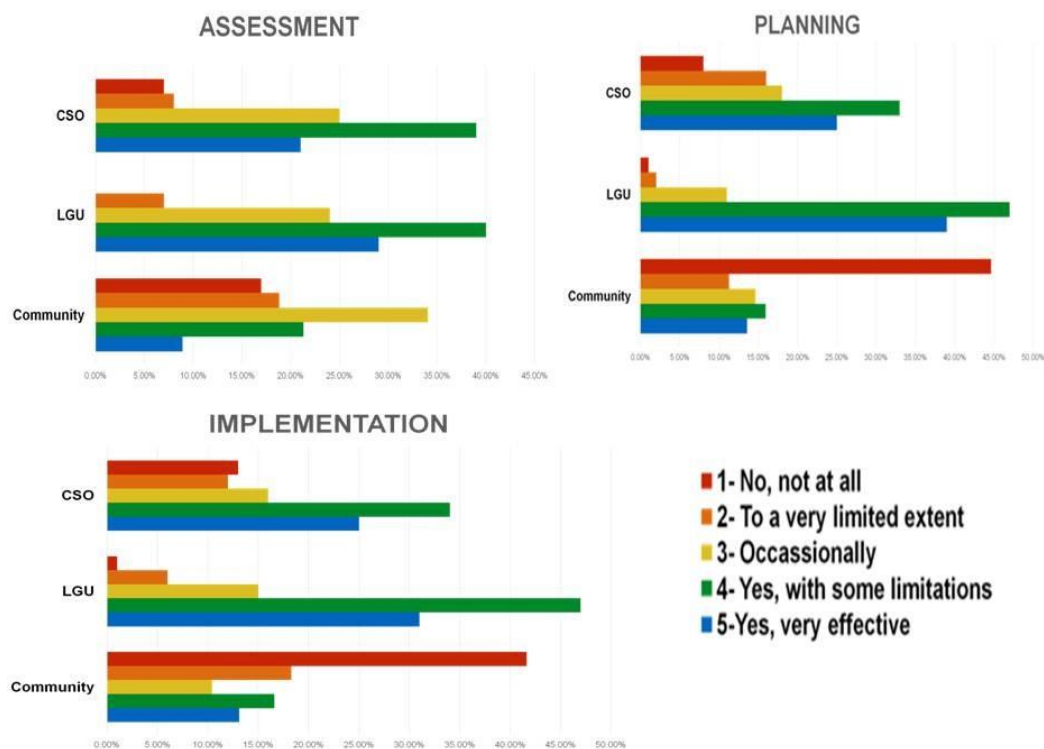


Figure 6: Perceived levels of inclusion of communities in assessment, planning and implementation

Responses from CSO representatives suggest that opportunities for communities to participate in resilience processes are created through community assemblies, dialogue and fora. Women, youth, farmers' groups, and older persons are able to participate in these activities. There is a need to encourage more participation from communities, especially among vulnerable groups. The challenges cited included lack of time and cooperation, party politics and hesitance/shyness to participate.

Indicators for the presence of a structure and strategy (Figure 7: "Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and Structure") to address the identified threats relate to commitment of political leadership, on which local government representatives had the highest scores.

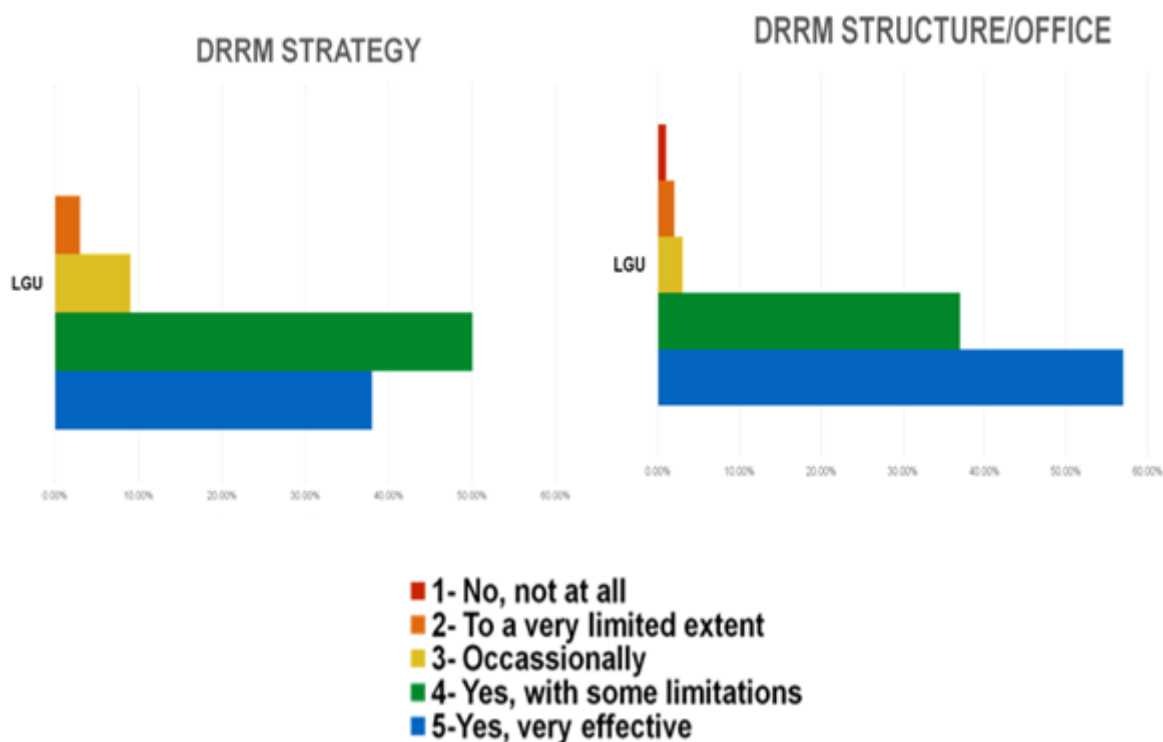


Figure 7: Left: Is there a Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy in place? (answers from LGUs only). Right: Is there a mechanism to engage communities in building resilience? (answers from LGUs only).

In the Philippines, most of the LGU representatives interviewed cited having a *Barangay* Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Committee/Officer, responsible for assessing and addressing the main threats in the community. Other government representatives mentioned having contributed to this process through Community Anti-Drug Councils, Peace and Order Councils, municipal/city environment and natural resources planning, social welfare and development and engineering offices. Zone leaders and *barangay* councillors support the *Barangay* DRRM Committee/Officer in reaching out to the rest of the community for this function. Responses from community representatives in the Philippines suggest that some of the DRR strategies employed to address risks/threats include actions such as conducting DRR trainings, implementing DRR projects involving the development of early warning systems, conducting simulation exercises, running information education campaigns (IECs), procuring response equipment, organising emergency teams, and other mitigation activities. However, once again, participation in the implementation of DRR strategies was found to be often limited to government officials and staff. Trainings, IEC campaigns, and public awareness-raising activities need to be done in such a way as to involve more people in the community, particularly the most vulnerable.

For monitoring and accountability (see Figure 8: “Monitoring, Accountability & Access to Information”), local government representatives in the Philippines context cite the implementation of several activities at the *barangay* level as some mechanisms to hold governments to account or raise concerns/complaints. These activities include village assemblies, regular and emergency meetings, the presence of help and information desks (e.g. Violence against Women and their Children), grievance desks/officers, referral systems, regular reporting of cases/blotter, and use of media and communications tools such as the use of formal letters, Facebook, Twitter, radio and hotline numbers. While efforts are made to include the community in monitoring progress towards resilience, this role remains mostly limited to *barangay* officials, zone leaders, and some trained volunteers. Lack of adequate monitoring tools is also cited as a problem. Responses from community representatives suggest that they can access information from their local government about actions to reduce threats through general assemblies, regular meetings, house-to-house visits, text brigades, notices/advisories posted in the vicinity of the *barangay* hall, radio, TV, and information relayed by parent and zone leaders, but information campaigns are not done regularly. Some said that they do not get any information from the local government at all, and that information only reaches those who live nearest the *barangay* halls. Remote areas also encounter difficulty in communication, further limiting their access to information.

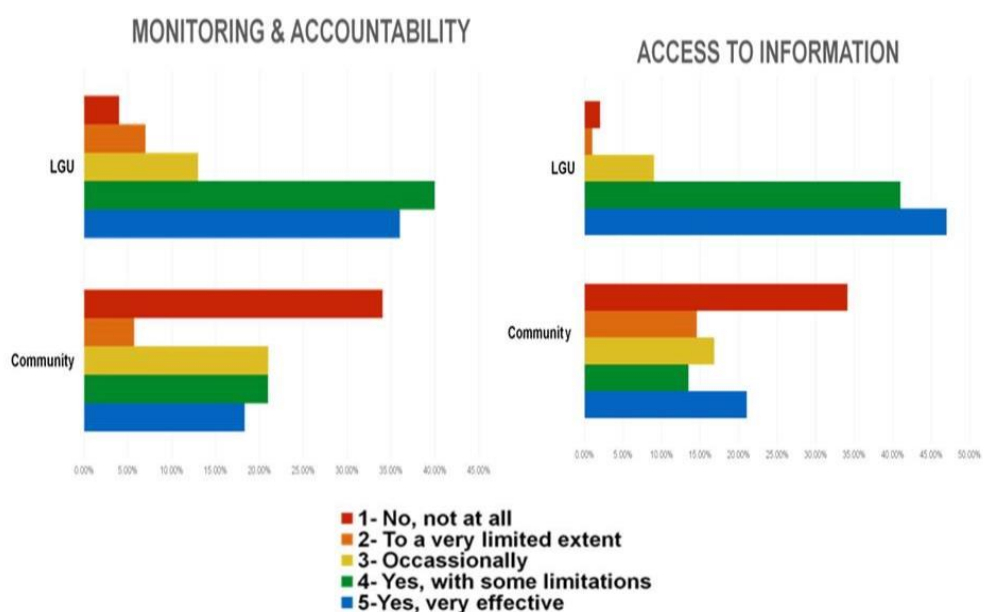


Figure 8: Monitoring, Accountability & Access to Information

Another indicator for commitment to political leadership is the availability of sufficient resources to address threats at the community level (see Figure 9: “Local Government Funds & Access to Financial Resources”). The local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Fund in the Philippines is composed of at least 5% of local government resources (Commission on Audit 2014). For most local governments, this is limited to 5% of their Internal Revenue Allotment, but can be increased by including the Local Development Fund, funding from higher levels of government and partnerships with CSOs for risk reduction and resilience projects. However, as shown in Figure 9, the majority of community respondents and vulnerable groups are not able to access, or have only occasional access to, financial resources from the local government. One of the reasons for these results may be that communities do not consider in-kind support received from government authorities as a financial resource they have access to. The new VFL methodology includes additional elements that will be able to account for both monetary and material support.

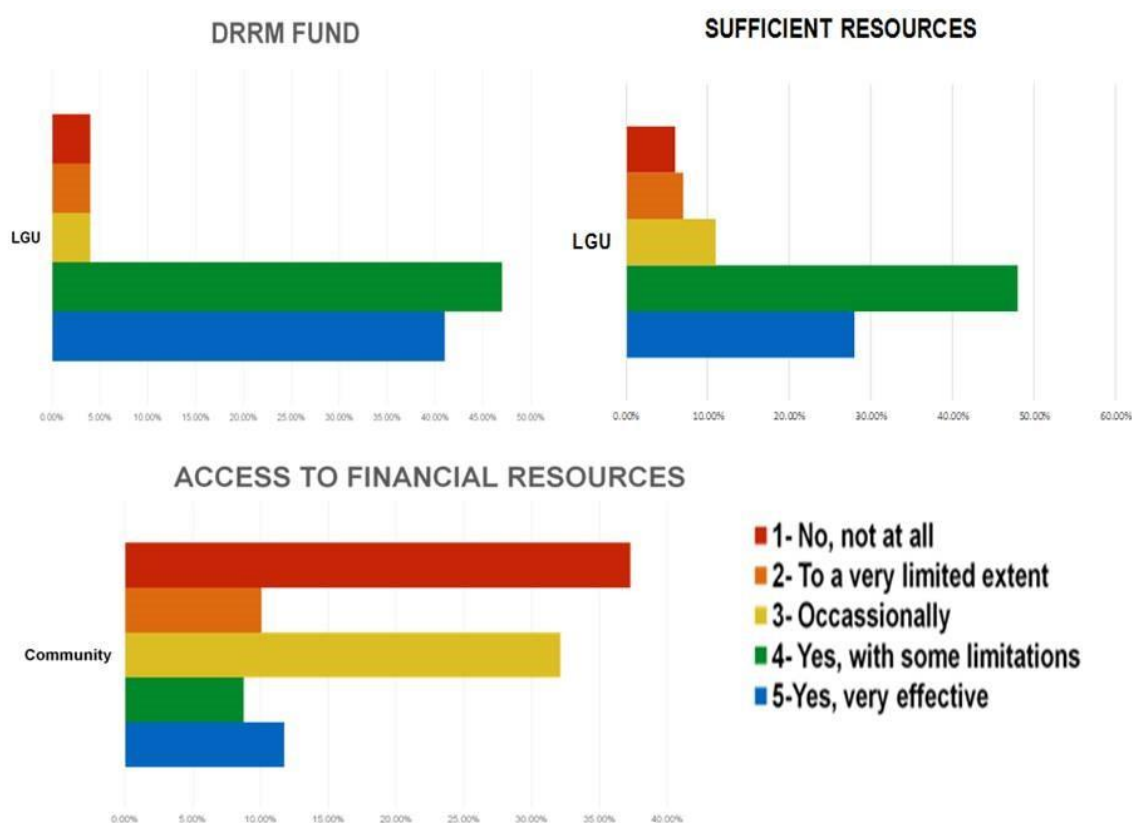


Figure 9: Local Government Funds & Access to Financial Resources

As duty bearers, the local government and CSOs have implemented various capacity-building activities in the community (see Figure 10: “Local Government and CSO Capacity Building”). An effective approach among CSOs is also the facilitation of knowledge-sharing in various aspects of risk reduction and strengthening resilience.

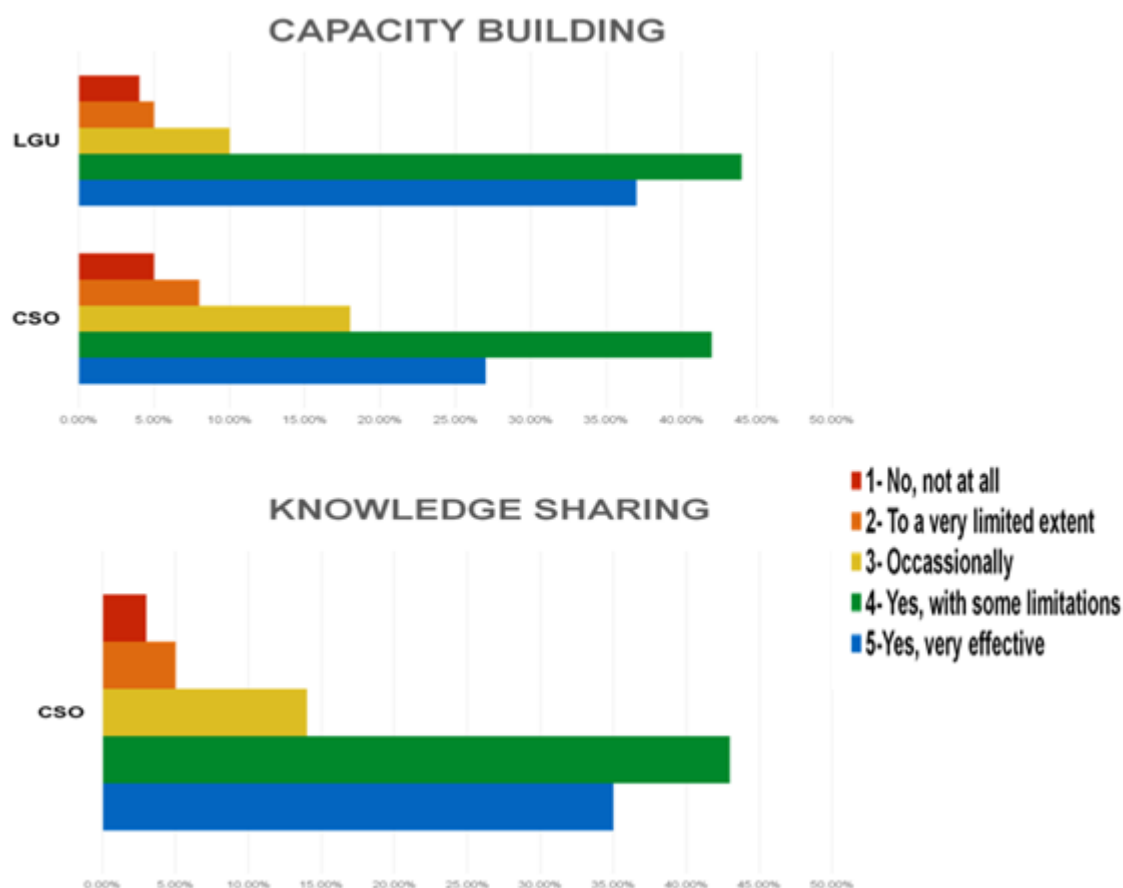


Figure 10: Local Government and CSO Capacity-building

In the Philippines, results indicate that the trainings related to resilience-building that LGUs conducted for communities and/or CSOs include topics such as livelihood trainings, DRR trainings, including rescue, first aid and basic life support training, simulation exercises (e.g. flood, fire, earthquake), peacekeeping and waste segregation. Funding limitations is a commonly cited challenge in sustaining these kinds of initiatives. Participation in trainings is again considered to be only limited to *barangay* officials, staff, and zone leaders. The local government representatives also recognise that capacity-building programmes need to be improved to better respond to the needs of communities.

Some activities that CSOs in the Philippines initiated with the *Barangay* Council, to help strengthen the capacities of communities to remove barriers and participate in resilience processes, include DRR training on inclusion and first aid, farming, gardening, basic marketing, and entrepreneurship. However, in this case, as previously noted, funding limitations are the main challenges for sustaining these initiatives. It is also recognised that increased participation from vulnerable groups is needed. Attitudinal issues, such as lack of interest or motivation of people to join the activities, were also highlighted as challenges.

All respondents were asked to list inclusion factors: 3 factors which facilitate inclusion and 3 factors which prevent inclusion (Figures 11 and 12). Risk reduction and resilience-building processes that build on these factors can fully involve and meaningfully benefit communities, especially more vulnerable and marginalised groups. It was also noted in the course of the discussions and during the presentation of findings of the VFL Pilot in the Philippines that, even if certain people are vulnerable, it is important to recognise their evolving capacities as starting points in risk reduction and strengthening resilience.

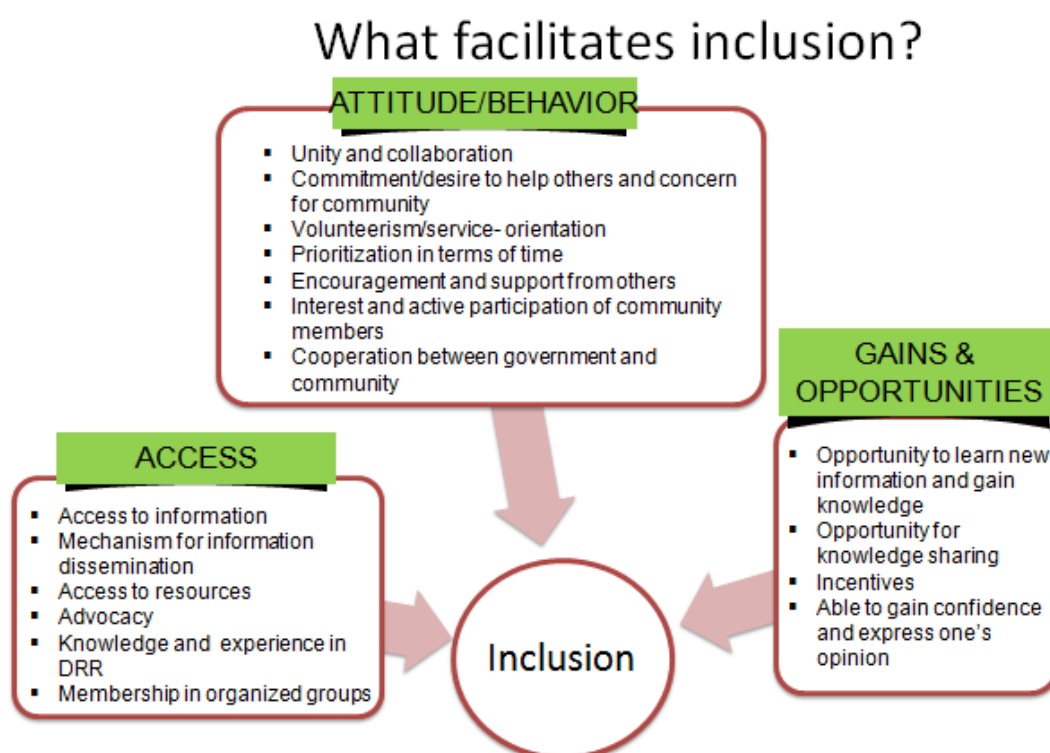


Figure 11: Factors which facilitate inclusion

What prevents inclusion?

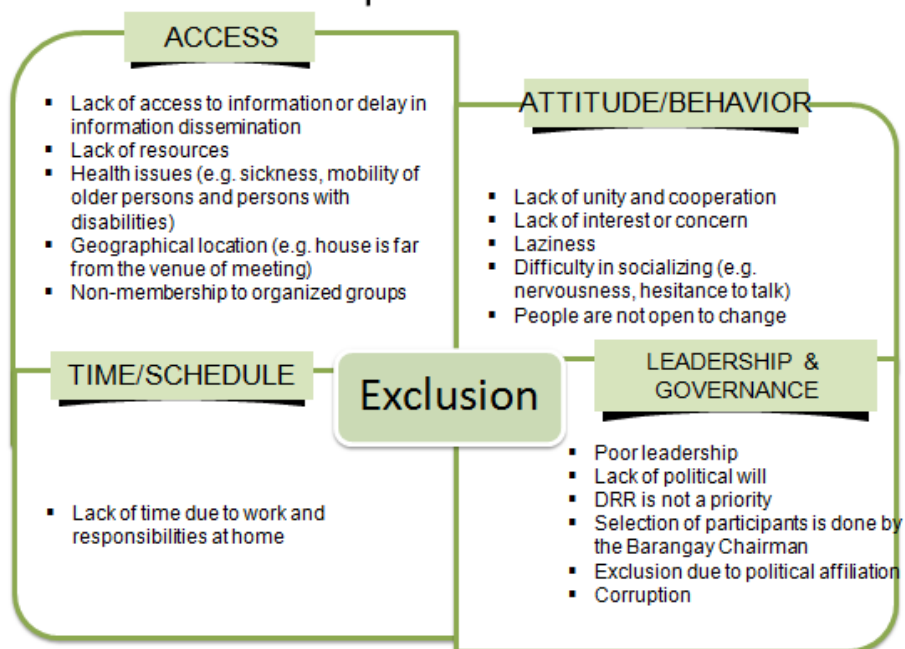


Figure 12: Factors which prevent inclusion

Summary of key findings

To summarise the analysis presented above, below are some key points that have been identified from the implementation of the VFL 2019 Pilot.

- The perception of risks is holistic both for communities and governments. In both the Philippines and Tonga, respondents raised a range of types of threats and highlighted interlinkages between them. Both countries indicated that rising drug use was the second top risk for future generations.
- Perceptions of inclusive governance differ significantly between local government, CSOs and communities. The biggest mismatch in responses can be found in risk assessment. Reasons provided by communities for this lack of inclusion in assessment processes included: lack of time, party politics, apathy and lack of motivation from community members, and lack of a systematic mechanism to engage.
- Inclusive monitoring and accountability needs improvement. Communities do not participate, sometimes for lack of interest, time, or knowledge, other times because the monitoring tools are available only for community leaders or local government officials.
- Access to resources is perceived very differently between governments and civil society/communities. Whilst it seems that there are local funds available for local resilience actions, both civil society and

community respondents stated that there was no access to these resources for local actors. In the case of the Philippines, the support of the government in disaster response is acknowledged, but the community feels they cannot access resources to prevent risks/threats, whilst the government claims the communities have access to resources.

- Communities suggest holistic actions that address root causes. Whilst suggestions of specific disaster preparedness activities were raised, the majority of suggested actions would fall under the silo of 'development', including improved waste management, which appears as critical for communities across both countries. Communities clearly view the threats they face as interconnected and not falling under specific siloes of 'disasters', 'climate change' and 'development' issues and, with this on-the-ground insight, are able to suggest actions that will cut across plans and ensure coherence in how governments reach international targets.

Philippines

In the context of the Philippines, it was found that lack of awareness and education is a barrier to addressing threats in the communities. Several contributing factors to lack of awareness were mentioned, including non-participation of some residents in capacity-building activities due to conflict in work and household schedules, lack of interest and commitment due to party politics, and poverty. Some of the residents find it difficult to not work for a day or several days because they have families to feed. Many community members are not trained in formal DRR initiatives because only a few residents attend the trainings organised by their regional offices.

Results of inclusive risk governance surveys reveal a consistent disparity in perception between community members and their duty-bearers. Although there is a common recognition of the existing mechanisms for inclusive risk governance between community members and the local government, this does not always translate into affirmative perceptions of inclusion among community members. For example, the conduction of barangay assemblies, house-to-house visits and other meetings, were recognised by community members as mechanisms for assessment, planning and in accessing information. However, they do not lead many members of the community to feel that they are included in these processes.

The results indicate that while there may be efforts to put in place mechanisms for inclusive risk governance, genuine participation is yet to be achieved because unaddressed barriers continue to restrict community members, particularly the most vulnerable. For instance, persons with disabilities and older people experience difficulties in

participation due to lack of accessible venue, facilities, and methodologies. In some cases, they are forced to spend more in order to be able to participate. Children and youth are also often excluded in decision-making processes that employ adult-centric approaches. On the other hand, many men and women in communities lack the time to participate on account of their economic activities. There is a need for local government and CSOs to have a deeper understanding of the socio-economic, political, and cultural context of communities to be able to provide them with a more enabling environment where they can participate.

Tonga

In each community, very few people are involved in the planning/assessment and implementation of some of the “blessings” in the communities, as they have claimed. Such activities are mainly done with the small proportion of the community that work well with the town officer. The duty bearer claims that, for most programmes and work inside the community, when local residents are called for a meeting only a few people turned up and those are the community members that ultimately end up being involved in the project. In contrast, the local community members surveyed suggested that when they hear about the meeting, they all rush in, but complained that it is too late.

In general, there is a variance in perceptions of participation: duty bearers feel they are including people, whilst communities feel inclusion efforts are tokenistic or exclusive to certain groups of people. Respondents with disabilities responded most strongly, indicating that they felt they were being overlooked in the risk assessment process. Many government representatives surveyed reported that they call town meetings but participation rates are low due to apathy.

Outcomes deriving from VFL Pilot implementation

Development of a baseline. In both countries, the VFL Pilot data is perceived by different actors as a baseline by which to measure future progress for the National Coordinating Organisations themselves for their own work, but also for local government and other organisations to measure progress in joint objectives. The baseline will allow actors to measure whether subsequent policies and programmes have an impact on losses for local people, priority threats, or perceptions of inclusion.

Increased awareness of the multitude and interconnected nature of risks affecting the most vulnerable. The dialogues and discussions made the communities, CSOs and government realise the multitude of risks affecting their lives and wellbeing. Participants in particular commented on changing perceptions on the linkages between

environmental threats, and socioeconomic and political risks confronting people. For example, in Tonga, many of the communities connected the rising crime levels to sea level rise: with increased damage to homes from the rising water levels, residents turned to stealing to help them recover funds to repair their homes.

Inclusion of marginalised groups in resilience processes. VFL provided a platform for marginalised groups, including women, persons with disabilities, older persons, and youth to share their priorities. The project also enabled them to raise significant issues affecting their health, housing, water and sanitation. The project allowed them to participate in processes that influence their safety and wellbeing. 3400 people were surveyed across the two countries, including over 1800 women and 500 children and youth.

Increased awareness of the capacities of local actors by government. Community members have demonstrated to government actors their skills at assessing, analysing and prioritising threats and actions. In the Philippines, following the national multi-stakeholder workshop where the VFL findings were presented to the government, officials reported that they would now turn to communities more than previously.

Empowerment of community members. A review and analysis of the risks and threats, including their consequences, faced by the community, done collectively, and with contribution from the most vulnerable, enables the community to take ownership of the necessary actions that need to be taken to address them, including the barriers. Across the 2 countries, 20 community actions plans have been developed and are being implemented. These are owned and managed by the communities and grassroots organisations.

Increased partnerships and joint accountability for resilience. The project provided many opportunities for different stakeholders to engage and discuss shared objectives. The national multi-stakeholder workshops and the local action planning meetings led to the design of collective actions that gave them a sense of joint accountability as they aim for a safer and inclusive society for the present and future generations. Partnerships have been strengthened not just between government and communities, but also between universities and communities, and between CSOs and particular marginalised groups.

VFL 2019 Implementation and Presentation at the Global Platform 2019

A learning review was conducted from 16-27 July 2018 to inform the full VFL 2019 roll-out. Recommendations from the VFL Pilot implementation and inputs for improvement were received by several partners, including the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), the Swiss NGO DRR Platform, members of the VFL Advisory Group: all inputs and feedback were taken into consideration in

refining the VFL 2019 methodology and materials. Questions on ecosystem-based DRR and coherence among policies and frameworks have been included, while a resource toolkit has been prepared for the in-country implementing partners.

VFL 2019 surveys/structured conversations will be undertaken from November 2018 through January 2019. Aggregation and analysis of data is expected to be completed by February 2019, with local and national presentations, validation and reflection on the findings and national reports finished by March 2019. Preliminary findings from the implementation of VFL across the world will be presented at the Global Platform for DRR in May 2019.

Conclusion

A business-as-usual, top-down approach to implementing global policies and national plans will not ensure that the communities who are at the frontline and most vulnerable to disaster risks are more resilient. There is a need for a fundamental transformation in the governance mechanisms responsible for implementing resilience-building activities at all levels (Zia and Wagner 2015) based on the basic principle that resilience cannot be handed down to the communities by external actors, but rather needs to be owned and created by those most at risk. Best practices from around the world are filled with examples of communities developing their own capacities and finding their own solutions to the risks they face when included in the planning, implementation and monitoring processes for building resilience. This is especially important given the dynamic nature of risks, which transform over time, and the solutions lie within the communities who are experiencing these new and emerging risks. VFL also highlights the need to have a coherent and inclusive approach to building resilience at the local level, which is the basic building block where change must be initiated to ensure achievement of the national and global targets for resilience.

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