

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) – a fundamental element of building resilience

The increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters is well-recognised, resulting in escalating threats to the world's most vulnerable populations - who are least-equipped to cope with such threats - and greater economic losses. The EU has made a strong commitment to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) via its strategy for supporting DRR in developing countries to “contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication by reducing the burden of disasters on the poor and most vulnerable countries and populations groups, by means of improved DRR”ⁱ. The EC Communication on the Mid-Term Review of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid noted DRRⁱⁱ as an area where progress has been made, but where “further practical progress is essential”, especially in terms of working with development actors.

Over the past year, the EU has been a key player in raising international high-level commitment to 'resilience'ⁱⁱⁱ as an approach that can support coping mechanisms and long-term poverty reduction. Initiatives such as the recent EC Communication on Resilience^{iv} are very timely, and present an opportunity to make progress in the important area of Disaster Risk Reduction.

Disaster Risk Reduction is an essential element of strategies and programmes for resilience

DRR involves analyzing and managing hazards to reduce vulnerability to disasters. It covers activities which support preparedness, prevention and mitigation from a local to an international level. A programme in a flood-risk area for example might address improved environmental management to reduce flooding (prevention), river-bank reinforcement or dams (mitigation), early warning systems, and evacuation planning (preparedness). Community participation (a 'bottom up' approach) is particularly important to maximize resilience, as is a gender-sensitive approach.

DRR interlinks with and reinforces other areas of work towards community resilience, including Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and poverty reduction approaches. Effective DRR reduces disaster losses, preserving the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and populations. As such, it reduces the need for costly disaster response and subsequent recovery measures. Necessarily engaging a range of stakeholders, DRR is also linked to promoting the good governance essential for sustainable development.

➤ DRR should be prioritized in development programming

Following a disaster, there is a high motivation among affected populations and donors to reduce vulnerability to future disasters, which means DRR has been largely led by humanitarian actors. However, there is a limit to what can be achieved in an emergency context; a long-term approach is essential to build capacities and embed mitigation measures. Community resilience is therefore best supported by making risk reduction an integral part of development programming^v.

➤ A focus on risk will lead to more effective assistance for vulnerable populations

Improved analysis of risk and vulnerability in development programming will ensure a more sustainable basis for development, and facilitate the integration of DRR into development programming. Addressing underlying risk factors for populations is essential to avoid recurrent crises. The sharing of evidence-based knowledge about the benefits of DRR, the interaction between scientific research and local knowledge, and information-sharing at a community level are all important to improving community resilience.

➤ Better coordination and an LRRD approach are needed for efficiency and effectiveness

Donors and policy makers have often dealt with DRR, CCA and sustainable development via separate policy frameworks and funding. This may lead to duplication of efforts and inefficient use of funds, while at a community level many of the resilience challenges that these policies seek to address are the same.

Improved Linking of Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)^{vi} will also ensure that DRR measures initiated during humanitarian interventions are effectively carried through into development programmes, and that development programmes are better able to support capacity building and risk reduction measures.

➤ **A concerted global approach to building resilience can be supported by post-2015 frameworks**

To support coordinated international action for risk reduction, the EU and its Member States should seek a strong successor plan to the Hyogo Framework^{vii} built on learnings to date,^{viii} and clearly linked to a post-MDG^{ix} agreement for addressing the root causes of poverty. Integrating community resilience throughout a post-MDG framework is also essential to ensure sustainability of development goals.

To enhance community resilience there is an urgent need to invest in DRR

In 2011, the cost of disaster loss was over 300 billion USD^x which is more than double total ODA.^{xi} As a result of climate change, natural disasters are expected to be amplified in frequency and impact.^{xii} The largest human cost will be borne by populations already disadvantaged by poverty, with existing inequalities making women disproportionately affected by disaster. The current financial climate makes committing to DRR as a value for money strategy particularly pertinent. Meanwhile, the increased acceptance of community resilience as a goal for development presents an opportunity to make the necessary investment in DRR.

➤ **DRR should be adequately funded under EU and Member State development budget lines**

To translate current political will for enhancing community resilience into action, a clear financial commitment should be made^{xiii} (e.g. a percentage of the total aid allocation for a particular country) to address the underlying drivers of vulnerability to hazards of a given population. To ensure transparency and accountability, DRR funding should be clearly identifiable, and results of investment in DRR interventions should be evaluated.

➤ **Funding for DRR should reflect real risks**

In order to increase the resilience of the most vulnerable populations, funding should be directed to where it is needed most.^{xiv} Current risks, and expected future risks (such as those related to climate change), vary geographically and will affect different sectors of a population in varying ways. Frequent small-scale disasters (most often weather-related) rarely hit the headlines but represent the biggest grassroots threats to lives and livelihoods. Specific approaches to risk reduction required for communities in situations of conflict and fragility are also less likely to be funded. To target funding where needs are greatest, risk assessments and local evaluations are important.

NGOs have a particular added value in supporting effective DRR programming

The fourth pillar of the Hyogo Framework (addressing risk at a local level) is the one where most progress remains to be made. To address this more effectively, more priority should be given to NGOs as relevant actors. Combining experience, expertise and longstanding community relationships, local and international NGOs are essential in assisting DRR programming to address local contexts and support capacity building for community resilience. Furthermore, NGOs offer the necessary partnership to link local level implementation to national level policy making.

➤ **DRR funding should be accessible to NGOs as development and humanitarian actors for programmes at local, national and international level**

ⁱ EC Communication [COM\(2009\) 84 final](#)

ⁱⁱ EC Communication [COM\(2010\) 722 final](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Key components of resilience include working at different scales (local-national-global) in a coordinated way, assessing risk and dealing with uncertainty, working with multiple actors in society, working across 'sectors' in institutions, combining local and indigenous knowledge with technical and scientific knowledge and joined-up approaches such as LRRD

^{iv} Including recent EC Communication [COM\(2012\) 586 final](#)

^v See also OECD (2012) ['Towards Better Humanitarian Donorship'](#)

^{vi} See also VOICE & CONCORD (2012) ['Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development \(LRRD\): Towards a more joined up approach enhancing resilience and impact.'](#)

^{vii} [Hyogo Framework for Action \(HFA\) 2005-2015: A ten-year plan to reduce natural hazard risk signed by 168 countries](#)

^{viii} These include i) ensuring that national-level progress in DRR is underpinned by local-level change i.e. that policy improvements actually result in better risk reduction at local level, and ii) ensuring that progress in preparedness and response is matched by progress in tackling underlying risk factors which make populations vulnerable to disaster

^{ix} [Millennium Development Goals](#) - 8 international development goals agreed in 2000 by 193 UN member states to achieve by 2015

^x Munich RE, [Natural Catastrophes Worldwide 2011](#)

^{xi} Official Development Assistance (ODA) – funding flows from donor countries to support economic development and welfare.

^{xii} IPCC Special Report (2012) ["Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation \(SREX\)"](#)

^{xiii} 2nd Global Platform 2009 recommendations: By 2010, establishment of clear national and international financial commitments to DRR, for example to allocate a minimum of 10 percent of all humanitarian and reconstruction funding, at least one percent of development funding, and at least 30 percent of climate change adaptation funding, to DRR

^{xiv} [Disaster Risk Reduction, Spending where it should count \(GHA 2012\)](#)