

Swiss NGO DRR Platform



Hyogo Framework for Action, post 2015: What would we like to see Voices from the field

Under the umbrella of the Swiss NGO DRR Platform, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in collaboration with Caritas Switzerland (CaCH) and the Global Risk Forum (GRF) Davos has conducted a study on the Swiss experience in DRR using the Delphi methodology.

THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION (HFA) PRIORITIES OF ACTION:

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction (DRR) is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation

2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

4. Reduce the underlying risk factors

5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

Background and aim

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters will come to an end in 2015. The HFA offers guiding principles and practical means for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) to achieve substantive reduction of disaster losses by 2015¹. Considering the discussions on a HFA post-2015 (post-Hyogo Framework for Action HFA; also referred to as HFA2), the Swiss NGO DRR Platform recognizes the need to contribute to the policy dialogue on a post-HFA by sharing the DRR and HFA experience of its members. As operational agencies, this experience incorporates that of their South-based partners.

This Delphi study aims to feed lessons learned from working and implementing projects on DRR in the field into the policy dialogue on a HFA2. The study is designed to build a bridge between field practitioners and policy makers. The key messages are derived from DRR practice, based on the perspectives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) which work with men and women in affected communities. The study provides concrete evidence for the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to DRR and the roles of multiple actors in increasing community resilience and reducing their vulnerability and poverty.

What do we build on?

Effective policies for DRR can greatly reduce the loss of life and assets due to disasters. Some governments have successfully adopted and implemented DRR policies, but others lag behind, leaving their citizens highly vulnerable. Based on lessons learned and the know-how of DRR field practitioners, the Swiss NGO DRR Platform shares its experience through its members, and their partners in the South. It is undeniable that despite the HFA implementation, there is still a clear gap between governments' policies and civil society's practices. The key messages identify the gaps and the challenges faced by NGOs, highlighting important areas of focus for overcoming these obstacles in the HFA2. They reflect the voice of CSOs, bringing them up from the bottom to governments to enable policy-makers to better focus and target the most in need.

Methodology

The 10 key messages below result from a Delphi study process combining interviews with representatives of Swiss organisations and an online survey with members of the Swiss NGO DRR Platform and their partners in the field. The Delphi study entailed three steps: 1) in-depth interviews were conducted with selected DRR experts in Switzerland on specific questions with which draft key messages for policy advocacy in DRR were formulated; 2) the key messages were shared with the same experts, for feedback and comments; 3) the refined key messages were shared and discussed with experts in the field, in the form of a survey monkey, to obtain their critical reaction and reflections. This feedback was then collated, the results being presented in this report.

• Representatives of the following organisations participated in the interviews in Switzerland: SDC (Humanitarian Aid Unit and GPCC); the Swiss Red Cross; CaCH; GRF Davos; ProactNetwork; Heks; Medair; Natural Disaster Reduction Consulting GmbH; PLANAT; FOEN; University of Lausanne, Centre for Research on Terrestrial Environments, IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. In total, 14 participants (men and women) were interviewed.

• Field staff of the following organisations where invited to participate in the anonymous survey: Caritas international, SRC, Medair, Heks, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Solidar, Bread for all, World Vision International, TearFund, Terre des hommes. 35 participants (men and women) answered the survey monkey.

Policy dialogue is needed

Nearly all participants to the survey agreed that policy dialogue is important, being the means to influence policies pertaining to DRR. Policy dialogue facilitates the establishment of an enabling environment for DRR strategies, by creating space for dialogue among DRR stakeholders including CSOs. It is important to make room for the voice of CSOs as they are key players in implementing DRR measures, as emphasized in the key messages.

KEY MESSAGES

Capacity building and ownership

KEY MESSAGE N°1

“Local men and women in communities need to have a clear understanding and ownership of DRR, tailored to their circumstances, to develop sustainable DRR strategies and improve the resilience of their livelihoods.”

The success of DRR requires behaviour change amongst all the different stakeholders. It is about empowering men and women in communities with knowledge and skills, and fostering political will in governments. Assessments and planning at community level is therefore essential, taking into account differences between women’s and men’s needs and opinions. For example, in many societies women may not have the same opportunities as men to read newspapers or attend public meetings; thus information needs to be channelled to them in different ways - through specific meetings or songs or radio emissions, as appropriate. Similarly, where social norms dictate the public separation of men and women or different social groups, shelters need to be designed with this in mind. As state agencies are often heavy, slow, and with limited efficiency, local stakeholders have a particularly important role and responsibility. A bottom-up approach in which both policy makers and decision makers support a “community-based, socially inclusive DRR approach” helps to sensitize men and women in communities to be better prepared and take more responsibility in DRR activities. Without a common understanding (requiring regular dialogue) and an effective coordination between the numerous DRR/M actors, DRR cannot properly be achieved. Indeed, community-based approaches are valid, needed and complement macro policy measures of governments.

KEY MESSAGE N°2

“Governments play a key role in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) by clarifying responsibilities among the various DRR actors (government agencies, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), local government administrations, private sector, etc.) and building capacities for effective DRR measures at all levels.”

The implementation of DRR strategies depends heavily on government's commitments (to provide sufficient means and to ensure that measures are correctly applied), ownership and understanding of its importance. Governments should not only work as coordinators, but rather work as collaborators with the various DRR actors who also have an important role to play to build capacity. Indeed, governments should have a leading role in providing a space for dialogue, such as a platform: to share and spread knowledge, using the experience from all above mentioned relevant sectors/actors to frame policies.

Effective risk management requires action from a variety of actors at local, national, regional and global level, of both a public and private nature. NGOs/INGOs' role is to support and translate policies and plans into practice by sharing with decision makers project findings, lessons learned, good practices and challenges. Their role is not to replace governments. This process will enable governments to review and improve the content of policy papers by better considering ground reality when developing plans and strategies.

Preparedness and Coordination

KEY MESSAGE N°3

“Investment in prevention, preparedness and raising awareness on risks pays back. It reduces costs for the government after a disaster

and helps to improve communication, coordination and transparency among DRR actors.”

Most disasters are not inevitable. DRR measures are proven to be both highly effective and efficient. Early measures help to reduce the losses and to provide support for immediate recovery and adaptation after a disaster strikes. It is of utmost importance to ensure that the government has the necessary funds to finance the country's DRR and CCA programs (as climate change is part of the DRR process). Risk management needs to guide private and public planning and investments. Indeed, the way that governments manage and regulate both public and private investment will determine exposure to hazards and vulnerability of people and property. Instead of merely issuing statements of intent, governments should set a legal basis for investing in preparedness to reduce and manage risks that are inevitable due to natural hazards. This would help to develop legally enforceable rights, enshrined in policy frameworks. A better coordination ensures more transparency, enforces better accountability mechanisms, and fosters political will in governments in the long term. Governments need to coordinate the various aspects of DRR and ensure concerted action between participants (men and women), as well as across sectors and geographical areas.

KEY MESSAGE N°4

“When a disaster strikes, governments, CSOs and other actors should seize the window of opportunity to better coordinate and ensure that policies and practices which address future risks are put in place to build back better.”

When a disaster strikes, too often funding rains from many sides and its use is poorly coordinated. Even though there is a national DRR policy/law in place in some countries, there is a need to build capacities at the local government and CSO level in order to

fully implement relevant policies and ensure that DRR is mainstreamed in all development policies and programs. This should be done not only for prevention but along the different phases of the DRM circle equally, namely prevention and preparedness, intervention and recovery.

It is of utmost importance that government and all the numerous DRR actors provide a response based on previous experience to avoid funding chaos, unproductive overlaps and poor coordination. This is possible only if all hands join together. Acting with the government is therefore important. For example, collaboration platforms with agreed working agendas can be created, to ensure coordination.

The priority is in understanding the need to mainstream DRR in all activities including all actors from local men and women in communities to governments as well as from implementing organizations to donors. Clear responsibilities on who does what will enable better coordination and faster answers to the most in need.

Environment

KEY MESSAGE N°5

“Ecosystem-based approaches are key to implement risk-sensitive and climate resilient planning across development sectors. Member states should explicitly recognise ecosystem-based approaches as an integrated solution to DRR and Climate Change (CC) in the post-Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA2)”.

Ecosystem management is a tested solution in sustainable development and has been regarded as an inherent “win-win” and “no regret” solution to address rising disaster and climate change issues². Active ecosystems and land use management is recognized as efficient action to reduce people’s underlying vulnerabilities and increase their resilience to natural hazard and climate change. Indeed, “healthy, well-managed ecosystems can be harnessed to influence all three

components of the disaster risk equation: ecosystems can regulate and mitigate hazards (e.g. forests can reduce incidence of landslides), ecosystems can reduce exposure to hazards by acting as natural buffers (e.g. coral reefs and sea grasses protect coastal areas from storm surge impacts), and ecosystems support local resilience, by sustaining livelihoods and providing for basic needs, such as food, shelter and water – before, during and after hazard events.”³

The current HFA recognizes the role of sustainable ecosystem management as a priority in DRR. However, this component should be given more attention and further strengthened in the post-2015 framework. The growing number of environmental actors involved in DRR working on ecosystem management, should therefore be given a stronger role in the implementation of the HFA2.

KEY MESSAGE N°6

“A holistic integrated risk management approach is necessary to address underlying vulnerability. Make sure that decisions are taken based on past community based DRR experience (which includes ecosystem health) to build national capacities.”

Although inter-linkages between CC and DRR are widely acknowledged, these two domains continue to develop somewhat in silos with different separate stakeholders, expert groups, funding mechanisms and processes. In order to break these silos, an efficient approach to adopt is Integrative Risk Management (IRM) which concentrates on all phases of the risk circle and helps to reduce vulnerabilities and increase resilience. IRM focuses not solely on natural disasters only, but highlights the need for interconnected risks of all kinds, values the important role that men and women in communities play in managing risks, and learns from past experience. This approach recognises and adequately addresses extensive risks by reaching out to the community level and addresses the small-scale disasters that account for 90% of overall losses.

Legal and institutional frameworks and governance

KEY MESSAGE N°7

“When developing a national strategy, identifying risk drivers is a priority, based on men and women’s knowledge/needs in community. It ensures long term planning, brings closer scientific knowledge with realities at the front lines, and ensures better governance.”

Despite significant achievements in DRR in the past years, the drivers of risk have not yet been adequately tackled. Risk-blind investments that lead to an over-exploitation of resources are factors that put people even further at risk. Trans-boundary and global characteristics of risk drivers require further cooperative efforts. The availability and open access to science-based risk information and knowledge is instrumental to cost-benefit analysis, transparent transactions, accountability, and the development of partnerships across public, private and other stakeholders⁴.

Public policies need to be underpinned by appropriate governance frameworks that incorporate actions not only by national and local governments but also by civil society, the private sector, the science and academic sector and others, this would lead to increased partnerships and collaboration between different sectors. Moreover, for policy documents and national development plans, it will be crucial to integrate a resilience perspective into the development agenda to avoid maladaptation.

Rights based approaches (RBA) and policies

KEY MESSAGE N°8

“Political will is necessary. It can ensure that the needs and rights of the most vulnerable men and

women in rural and urban areas are reflected and prioritized through policies at government level and generate committed donors.”

The failure of governments to adequately prioritise and invest in good risk management – whether from natural or man-made hazards – across all areas of work is the biggest driver of disaster risk. Many countries struggle to find sufficient resources and capacity. Because of weak governance, DRR is often poorly funded. This is partly because the deep extent of losses is not understood, as disaster losses are not properly accounted for, as well as lack of political visibility for DRR measures.⁵ Shortcomings in DRR are increasingly being regarded as a consequence of weak governance that combines political and economic factors. There is a clear need for public policy and collective action across all aspects of DRR activities, including risk assessment, prevention and mitigation, risk transfer, disaster relief and reconstruction. Governments are likely to lead in providing these measures, but civil society groups and the private sector also play an important role.⁶

As 2015 draws nearer, it is more important than ever that disaster reduction is included in key frameworks in a meaningful and mutually-reinforcing way, in order to deliver coherent DRR funding and action. Prevention and reduction of disaster risk are an international legal obligation and constitute a safeguard for the enjoyment of human rights.

Economics of Disasters

KEY MESSAGE N°9

“CSOs have a role to play in identifying and measuring risks and hazards. Their active participation helps to increase assistance from governments and donors as well as to assist governments to better target the most vulnerable men and women.”

The concept of “leaving no one behind” is a powerful one, and requires a focus on social equality and specific investments for marginalised women and men. Disaster risk is not shared equally between rich and poor, men and women. Individuals – often women and children in particular - are vulnerable because they are politically, socially or economically excluded, with little access to resources, influence, information or decision-making.^[1] Gendered norms can result in very different mortality rates between men and women during a disaster, as well as different secondary impacts during the recovery period. It is acknowledged that local men and women in communities have an important role to play in measuring the impact of extensive disasters as well as intensive ones, as recurrent small-scale disasters are a key driver of poverty. During recovery, the livelihood assets specifically owned by women (poultry, small ruminants, a sewing machine, cooking utensils) are often the most likely to be lost and the least likely to be compensated, leaving women particularly vulnerable – especially if widowed. At the same time, their burden of care for sick or injured family members may increase, as does the risk of sexual violence where shelter is poor. Data disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, age and other relevant criteria is necessary to generate more precise information through monitoring systems, thus assisting governments and also donors to better target the most vulnerable men and women and ensure that risk is reduced at community levels. Moreover, by incorporating risk management indicators across relevant goals this would guarantee a better coverage and monitoring of measures undertaken by governments – for example, ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities during and after disasters.

Development Frameworks

KEY MESSAGE N°10

“Negotiate the post-2015 agenda well. Bring the HFA/HFA2 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) together on parallel tracks in order to ensure a strong focus on governance and sustainability, and to strengthen the culture of prevention.”

The negotiations for the post 2015 agenda are a major opportunity to develop a coherent response across policy arenas and aim to harmonise the post-2015 paradigms. The knowledge and experience acquired in DRM to date need to inform the development of the international instruments and frameworks. Indeed, almost all key inputs to the development of the post-2015 framework have recognised the role of disasters on poverty, pointing to DRR as an important objective. Moreover, CC needs to be seen as part of broader risk management strategy which embraces natural and technological hazards and is instrumental to the achievement of sustainable development goals. If resilience of livelihoods to disasters is to be achieved, it is necessary to share a world-wide vision of sustainability in development. This means working together on parallel tracks across sectors with a transparent and strong governance build on the experience and the principles enshrined in the preceding frameworks. Ending absolute poverty should be the priority for the post-2015 development goals and this requires a strong commitment to reduce disaster risks, and adapt to CC, otherwise development efforts for the poorest will be unsustainable.

¹ UNISDR, The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, 2007

² ISDR Global Assessment Reports on Disaster Risk Reduction (2009 and 2011); IPCC Special Report on Extreme Events (2012)

³ PEDRR, PEDRR Input into Post-2015 Global Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (2013)

⁴ UNISDR Proposed Elements for Consideration in the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2013)

⁵ Oxfam International, How disasters disrupt development: Recommendations for the post-2015 development framework (2013)

⁶ Global Assessment Report (GAR) Study on Disaster Risk Reduction, Decentralization and Political Economy (2011)

^[1] Oxfam International, How disasters disrupt development: Recommendations for the post-2015 development framework (2013)

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