



## World Conference on Disaster Reduction

18-22 January 2005, Kobe, Hyogo, Japan

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### **Thematic Discussion Paper Cluster 1.**

#### **“GOVERNANCE: INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR RISK REDUCTION”**

Discussion papers have been prepared for the five thematic clusters of the WCDR. The papers have been developed by the Lead Agencies for each cluster with the support of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF) and the ISDR secretariat.

The objective of these papers is to orient and guide the discussions in the five clusters toward the goals of the Conference. The papers provide a vehicle for coordinating the interests of the key stakeholders and will form the basis for the subsequent summarising of the thematic clusters.

Session organizers and participants in the thematic discussion are invited to draw on the papers to ensure the output of the sessions and panels at Hyogo-Kobe provide the technical assessment and guidance to complement and support the priorities identified at the intergovernmental level and to advance the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

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With the support of United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat (UN/ISDR)

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# 1. Introduction

This paper aims to guide discussions during the thematic panel on ‘Governance: Institutional and Policy Frameworks for Risk Reduction’ towards the goals of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR). It presents the position of a cross-section of stakeholders on the topic and thus assists the co-ordination of their views and interests. The discussion paper illustrates the findings of the Yokohama Review by highlighting effective action and new initiatives in strengthening governance for risk reduction. It examines the challenges and the favourable factors which have affected institutional and policy frameworks, makes recommendations for future action, and illustrates methods and approaches for implementing these. Where appropriate, recommendations are supported with examples of voluntary targets to be achieved through the programme of action.

Governance is the exercise of authority by society to manage its affairs in the economic, political and social spheres (hence it cuts across all aspects of development, including the environment, climate change, health, poverty and economic planning). Governance comprises the values, policies, institutions and mechanisms through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. It involves interactions within the public sector and between the state, civil society and the private sector. It operates at all levels of human activity, be it community, municipal, sub-national, national, regional or global.

Governance is sometimes seen as having economic, political and administrative components. Economic governance includes the decision-making processes that affect a country’s economic activities and its relationships with other economies. Political governance is the process of decision making to formulate policies. Administrative governance is the system of policy implementation.

Good governance encourages the ordering of human affairs to meet citizens’ needs and realize their aspirations. It is therefore the key to achieving sustainable human development, in developed and developing countries alike. It has major implications for equity, poverty and the quality of life. It is widely considered an important pre-requisite for successful disaster risk reduction,<sup>1</sup> which requires the integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies and development planning and programmes, together with the development of stronger institutions, mechanisms and community capacities that can systematically build resilience to natural hazards and disasters. Disaster risk reduction is not the responsibility of any single stakeholder group or unit of administration, but is relevant to all.

Disaster risk management must be rooted in the core principles of good governance: equity, participation, pluralism, partnership, subsidiarity, transparency, accountability, the rule of law, effectiveness, efficiency, responsiveness and sustainability. Appropriate institutional and policy frameworks for risk reduction are essential to minimize human, material and environmental losses from disasters, limit the disruption they cause to socio-economic systems and generally reduce

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<sup>1</sup> Disaster risk reduction (or disaster reduction) is the conceptual framework of elements considered with the possibilities to minimize vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society, to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impact of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development. Disaster risk management is the systematic process of using administrative decisions, organization, operational skills and capacities to implement policies, strategies and coping capacities of society and communities to lessen the impacts of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters.

vulnerability to them. As such, good or weak governance can be seen as one of the fundamental factors influencing disaster risk.

There are many examples of good governance in relation to disaster risk reduction from all parts of the world. In many countries, however, disaster reduction is still not sufficiently prioritized as a policy at the national level, legal and regulatory régimes are inadequate, institutional frameworks and mechanisms are weak, levels of participation are limited, and capacities and resources are lacking. These are major impediments to progress.

## **2. Issues arising from Yokohama Review Findings**

Governance is increasingly recognized to be a key area for the success of sustained risk reduction. Good governance, in the broadest sense, is expected to elevate disaster risk reduction as a policy priority, allocate the necessary resources to it, ensure (and if necessary enforce) its implementation and assign accountability for failures, as well as facilitating participation by all relevant stakeholders and enhancing their capacity to participate effectively.

### **2.1 Political commitment & elevating disaster risk reduction as a policy priority**

Policies begin as concepts, which are then developed into plans or courses of action that are approved and adopted by governments, communities or other entities. Policy should have a vision, be guided by a philosophy and be easy to understand. Policies should also be comprehensive, integrated, equitable, sustainable, efficient – and flexible to adapt to new knowledge and conditions. National policies provide firm commitments by the state to address development priorities, and give a clear mandate to decision-makers, planners and practitioners as well as civil society.

Disaster risk reduction policies may focus on any kind of approach to reducing disaster risk (e.g. control of land use, enactment and enforcement of engineering and building codes and standards) but are more likely to be successful if they are integrated and consistent with other economic and social policies. There is evidence from most countries of some measure of national policy or legislative change relating to disaster management during the past decade. Some countries have assessed the threats disasters pose to national development objectives, which has led to development of more coherent disaster management policies, although there is less evidence overall of creation of strategic risk reduction programmes or integration of disaster risk reduction into national planning objectives.

Disaster risk management competes with a variety of other national priorities and development needs. Nevertheless, natural disasters are intimately connected to the processes of human development: disasters put development gains at risk, while at the same time the development choices made by individuals, communities and nations affect the distribution of disaster risk. Therefore, all policy alternatives should ensure that every aspect of development contributes to identifying, managing and reducing disaster risk rather than generating new risks. This is usually referred to as mainstreaming disaster risk management into development, which is supported by the recognition of the links between reducing disaster risk and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Good policy statements will refer to the importance of disaster risk reduction in achieving sustainable development, and set out the broad goals and strategic objectives for reducing disaster vulnerability and risks, as well as for strengthening key capacities.

Other actors in disaster risk management, such as the United Nations (UN), international financial institutions (IFIs) and regional organisations may mainstream risk reduction into their own policies or assist in-country partners to do so. Strategies co-ordinated by regional organisations in the

Pacific, Asia, Central America, the Caribbean and the Andean countries have been productive, resulting in greater policy awareness and operational capabilities. Successful efforts have developed comprehensive programmes for implementation over an extended period, increased advocacy and raised awareness, involved a range of stakeholders (including communities), secured highest-level commitment from governments, and made roles and responsibilities clear at all levels. IFIs have launched new initiatives to assist client countries in managing hazard risk more effectively. These cover a wide range of activities that have an impact on development assistance and economic planning: they include incorporating natural hazard risk into the strategic planning process for countries and projects (such as a risk management checklist being developed by the Inter-American Development Bank for application throughout the project cycle), accounting for disaster risk in project loans, and revamping post-disaster borrowing to ensure that risk is not recreated during reconstruction.

In the short term, the simplest way of achieving policy shift is generally to draft a specific disaster/risk reduction policy, but this should be seen only as a first, and limited, step. The primary objective in the medium term should be integration of risk reduction as a central element in all areas of development and social welfare planning and programming by national and local governments, and regional and international donors and organisations. Ethiopia, for example, overhauled its relief-focused policy in 1993 to create a new national policy on disaster prevention and management which linked relief issues to more basic ongoing development activities and issues, involved all line ministries and assigned responsibilities at different levels. Out of this a more integrated institutional structure for disaster prevention and preparedness evolved.

The shift from response-oriented approaches to emphasis on mitigation and prevention has often proved difficult to bring about. This is due to a lack of comprehensive policies that can institute long-term strategies, action plans and reforms for sustained disaster risk reduction, as well as to competing policy priorities (e.g. economic growth, poverty reduction, political instability or conflict) and a fundamental lack of political will to engage with the issue. This suggests the need for greater effort to establish stronger political ownership of the disaster risk reduction agenda. This, in turn, requires greater accountability on the part of governments and other institutional actors, and enhancing the advocacy capacity of vulnerable people and those who work with them – issues that are discussed below.

One way of securing such ownership could be through setting specific, time-bound targets for disaster risk reduction, with clear responsibilities and measurable commitments; others are to focus on processes that would allow stakeholders to meet their targets or to establish common standards. Target-setting would require methods for auditing progress, and this raises wider questions of accountability, which are discussed below.

## **2.2 Legal and regulatory frameworks**

Disaster-related legislation and regulatory frameworks are key to creating an enabling environment for disaster risk management, by setting out the legal rights (and duties) of citizens as well as the duties of the state and other sectors in giving them protection. Policy statements can be undermined by lack of legal backing; accountability is more easily enforced where legal obligations are in place.

Legal and regulatory frameworks comprise the laws, executive orders and other legal instruments that set the ground rules for governmental and non-governmental activities relating to disasters and risk reduction. They define the authorities, responsibilities and roles of officials and organisations, establish legal authority for organisations and programmes, and sometimes create organisations and co-ordination mechanisms. They may dictate or encourage relevant policies, practices and processes.

In recent years, many countries have moved their disaster risk reduction agenda forward through progressive legislative reform. An example is the 1998 Law on Earthquake Preparedness and Reduction in the People's Republic of China, which takes a holistic approach to disaster management, emphasises linkages to national economic and social development plans, assigns leadership and other responsibilities at all levels, contains guidelines for emergency planning, provides for a range of anti-seismic measures, and includes sanctions for non-compliance.

Sometimes this process has been triggered by the experience of a recent major disaster (e.g. the creation of national and local systems for disaster management in Colombia following the Armero disaster in 1985). However, it is most successful where it is owned and driven by stakeholders in country (including civil society), expectations of the time and effort needed are realistic, and inter-institutional collaboration is enhanced. An example is the process leading to the recent Disaster Management Act in South Africa, which was characterized by local ownership of the legislation, professional pressure for change, a deliberate and multi-stage process, widespread dissemination of preparatory discussions and policy documentation, commitment to transparent debate and discussion through parliamentary processes, continuity among the individuals supporting the process, and a commitment to streamline new legislation with best practice internationally.

Although the willingness of governments to undertake legislative reform is an important indicator of political commitment to disaster risk management, the road of legal reform is not easy. Legal reform processes have proven to be lengthy. New laws and regulations have to be consistent with existing ones applying to this and other areas of public life. In some countries, particularly those in political and economic transition, an additional concern is the sheer number of laws and decrees that have been passed, making it difficult to get a clear overview and often leading to contradictory legislation. Furthermore, enacted legislation frequently lacks enforcement. Failure to enforce official building codes and standards, for example, was a contributory factor to the high loss of life in the earthquakes in Turkey in 1999. The main reasons for this include the limited resources and capacities available, unclear designation of responsibilities for enforcement, the lack of incentives and disincentives (including penalties) to promote the application of disaster risk management and reduction measures, and the inadequacy of implementation guidelines.

International conventions, protocols and acts may provide a mandate and encouragement to policy makers and legislators. The 1998 Aarhus Convention, for instance, covers rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. The UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) has identified references to disaster reduction in 25 international development agendas from the past decade. It seems that some governments make serious efforts to adhere to standards and codes set out in international treaties and protocols to which they are signatories and which are actively monitored by international organisations; but in all cases, monitoring and advocacy are required to ensure that actions match obligations.

The growing adoption of rights-based approaches by humanitarian and development organisations worldwide may also stimulate positive legislative change. There has been some discussion about the application of the rights-based approach to disaster reduction. The notion of a 'right to safety' (i.e.

the right to the highest attainable standard of protection against natural and human-induced hazards), although not explicitly set out in international human rights instruments and their interpretations, is consistent with them. It can be linked to several basic and accepted political, social, economic and cultural rights (e.g. to life, liberty and security of person; to economic, social and cultural development; to an adequate standard of living (including housing); to freedom from hunger; to health and safety at work; and to health), as well as to government's established duty to provide security to its citizens. Several national constitutions already contain provisions that support the right to safety, sometimes expressed as the right to an environment that is healthy and safe. Benchmarks can be set for measuring progress towards achievement of rights, as the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has done for the right to adequate food and the right to health.

International relief efforts are often delayed or impeded by legal and administrative systems which are ill-equipped to address the urgency of disaster situations. Legal and regulatory systems need to be capable of supporting fast and effective responses to disasters, facilitating national and sub-national preparedness and response measures together with cross-border regional and international assistance. In this regard, law and policy makers should seek to incorporate the various international laws, rules and principles which promote the facilitation of international disaster response in areas such as customs, telecommunications, transport and immigration. They should also aim to promote and encourage adherence to quality and accountability standards for international relief. Such measures are currently being examined by the International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) Programme of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

### **2.3 Institutional Frameworks and Structures**

Policies and legislative measures are weakened by the absence of adequate means of carrying them out. For this, appropriate institutional frameworks and arrangements are needed. These comprise all organizations or institutions with a recognized role to play in disaster risk management, the mechanisms for co-ordination between them, their human resources, funding, equipment and supplies, leadership and effectiveness.

In order to support exchange of information and communication, institutional frameworks should allow vertical and horizontal co-ordination of multiple stakeholders (from government, civil society, and the private sector) representing different sectors and disciplines. Overall, while there is no ideal model administrative structure for disaster risk reduction and many variations are possible in practice, efforts to strengthen 'institutional machinery' need to ensure appropriate individual structures, mandates, and roles and responsibilities. Institutional frameworks are influenced by the political, social, economic and cultural contexts in which they operate, and can only be developed within these contexts; but reform of public administration is, or should be, on all national agendas and offers a good opportunity for disaster reduction mainstreaming.

It is widely believed that a strong, well located or central agency/authority for disaster and risk management is a key element in the institutional framework, providing a visible focal point for the management and reduction of risk as well as efficient emergency response. Successful nodal agencies facilitate a coherent approach to disaster management and provide a framework for co-ordinated action. But it is vitally important that such agencies demonstrate leadership and professional competence, and earn the confidence and support of stakeholders at all levels. In practice, such calibre and commitment are often lacking. It must be acknowledged that in many if

not most countries such agencies originated to undertake disaster response/civil defence activities and have found it difficult to adjust to new, holistic, approaches to risk management.

There is widespread a drive towards decentralization of government authority and responsibilities. Decentralization is an important vehicle for sharing responsibilities between central, intermediate, municipal/city and local levels, as well as for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction within the essential functions of government. Based on the principle of co-responsibility for vital functions, tasks should be transferred to the lowest institutional or social level that is capable of completing them (subsidiarity). Decentralization empowers local levels with a sense of ownership and fosters participation. Where local governments are put in charge of implementing government policies and programmes, decentralization serves as a vehicle for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction at local level and reaching communities more effectively. Decentralization coupled with multi-stakeholder participation creates a more inclusive atmosphere and leads to greater community participation; decisions are also more accountable if made locally. It has facilitated effective counter-disaster partnerships in many countries, notably the Philippines, which underwent extensive decentralization in 1991: here, local government is gaining capacity and becoming more committed to disaster risk reduction, and its relations with civil society in local-level disaster management are growing stronger.

Whilst decentralization has been an asset in many contexts, especially where central government lacks capacity to act for whatever reason, the appropriateness of this model must be judged in the context of the local organizational and administrative culture. Decentralization can lead to disaster risk reduction becoming isolated from mainstream government decision-making. Collaboration between different sectors and levels of administrative and operational responsibility is crucial if disaster risk reduction activity is not to become fragmented. The scale of some major disasters can overwhelm the resources available at local levels. Local-level actors cannot address all the structural causes of vulnerability: they have neither the jurisdiction nor the power to tackle the deeper political, social and macro-economic forces that put people at risk.

Disaster risk reduction therefore requires robust and sustained linkages to be established between local and national levels. As the ultimate policy maker, central government should recognize the relevance of decentralizing authority for implementation to local government and institutions, and support the process with resources and efficient co-ordination. External support agencies, in turn, need to pay more attention to building sustainable disaster and risk management capacities at intermediate and local levels.

The structures of individual institutions also need to adapt to be able to pursue disaster risk reduction more effectively. Policies and operational programmes alike must be supported by appropriate organisational structures, systems and attitudes. Every organisation differs in these respects, and hence the nature of an individual institution influences the way in which it approaches disaster reduction (or any other issue). Institutional development is therefore a vital part of the risk reduction process. Awareness of disasters and risk, and commitment to dealing with them, must be incorporated at all levels within institutions. Risk management, in the broadest sense, should be an integral part of strategy, procedures and culture. Responsibility and authority must be clearly defined within organisations and sufficient resources allocated. Because organisations are run by people, the general level of understanding, capacity and commitment must be increased by information sharing and training at all levels; there must be ownership of this process throughout the organisation.

The challenges in institutionalizing disaster risk reduction are formidable. It is unrealistic to expect organisations to 'mainstream' it overnight: rather, this should be seen as a long-term process,



especially in the case of large organisations and complex institutional structures. The reviews of policies, strategies and systems that all organisations carry out periodically offer a good opportunity to incorporate risk awareness and reduction practices with minimal disruption. However, gradualist approaches should not be used as an excuse for delay.

## **2.4 Multi-stakeholder participation**

Integrated risk management requires multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral collaboration. The recognized value of wider public participation and the use of partnerships of various descriptions has greatly expanded in recent years, in line with increasing acceptance of a more holistic approach to risk management. Positive examples of strong cross-sectoral stakeholder participation include the Risk Assessment Tools for Diagnosis of Urban Areas against Seismic Disasters (RADIUS) programme and the Earthquake Megacities Initiative (EMI). In general, though, practice still lags behind theory in this respect, and there is a need for more systematic and conscientious effort to strengthen partnerships between national, municipal and local authorities, and between the public, private and civil society sectors.

At the heart of good governance is a commitment to sharing decision-making power between the stakeholders in a process. This must be built on the political will to accept power sharing and the perception of the state as a facilitator in development. This contrasts with the widespread view of government as the dominant actor shaping development and disaster risk management. Governments do have primary responsibility with regard to the right to safety and security and must remain critical actors in development, based on their role as mediator between public and private interests. However, they cannot and must not shoulder these tasks alone, as the participation of other stakeholders is crucial. The goal should be a strong civil society and a strong state, working in partnership with a socially committed private sector.

National committees or similar officially recognized multi-disciplinary, -sectoral and -stakeholder national platforms within the ISDR have been advocated as important mechanisms for advancing national commitment to disaster risk reduction. The establishment and strengthening of national platforms are important as an expression of political will to support disaster risk reduction and a step towards its implementation at national and more local levels. National platforms should provide a forum for dialogue between all the different stakeholders and in some circumstances may provide a framework for co-ordination and collaboration between them. Multi-stakeholder scenario planning, such as the participatory ‘future search’ workshops held in St Kitts and Montserrat in the Caribbean in 2004, offers considerable potential as a way of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into sustainable development planning. National platforms should also seek to represent the interests of those groups who are generally excluded from decision-making processes.

A number of the committees and platforms originally created during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) were largely notional, technical in orientation or only sporadically active; there has since been a growing movement to recognize broader national platforms or institutional mechanisms. Some countries have integrated earlier national committees into the basic institutions of governance. There have also been some constructive interactions at regional levels between ISDR national platforms for information exchange and advocacy (for example, among the European national platforms in 2003-4) – such moves are valuable, given that disaster risks are not confined within national boundaries. However, building well-functioning and competent national platforms requires strong leadership and resources; and in many countries it is a challenge to integrate all the main stakeholder groups, especially civil society and among technical

capabilities. On a number of occasions, international advocacy has played a catalytic role in bringing existing but often fragmented capabilities and institutional resources together within a country. A further challenge is to ensure clarity about the roles and responsibilities of national platforms in relation to those of government and other agencies; otherwise there is a risk of duplication of effort and even competition.

Community organizations, volunteer groups, professional organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other elements of civil society are important governance actors. They must be empowered to play an active role in forming policies to address risk, informing national risk management strategies, and implementing these at the local level. Participatory processes are essential to ensure that the needs and priorities of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations are met, and that local expertise and resources are used to best effect. This will then influence resource allocation and negotiations on the acceptable levels of risk in society. Although much more needs to be done to strengthen the role of civil society, some progress can be reported.

The importance and viability of collaboration between officials, NGOs and communities has been demonstrated by innovative relationships and partnerships following earthquakes in Colombia, Turkey and India in 1994, 1999 and 2001 respectively. In Bangladesh, there has been success in involving government and communities in developing the National Environment Management Action Plan. In reality, local people and their organizations are usually the main actors in disaster reduction and response. The role and value of community volunteers and *ad hoc* or emergent groups in emergency assistance is now more widely documented and recognized but they are still inadequately resourced and integrated into formal disaster management structures.

There are often calls for greater involvement by the private sector, but the real or potential roles of the sector in reducing risk and responding to disasters are not well understood. It is easy to underestimate the practical challenges in making corporate partnerships lasting. More thinking is needed on how to convince and then engage the private sector in long-term partnerships. One model of successful collaboration is the network of multi-stakeholder groups (involving insurance companies, house builders, public utilities, regional government and environmental NGOs) in all 32 planning authorities in Scotland, UK, which have virtually eliminated residential construction in flood hazard areas and whose existence is now part of official policy. The private sector's role in creating or magnifying risk also remains a contentious issue that needs to be analyzed objectively.

Regional-level risk management organizations, which have become more numerous and significant, are playing an important role in advocating and shaping regional policies, comparative research, knowledge sharing, and supporting the development of national capacities. They include inter-governmental organizations, academic and training institutions and NGOs. The South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), for example, has developed and introduced a disaster risk management model and guidelines to the region and provides expert support for in-country reviews of national disaster plans and arrangements. Such initiatives are likely to be more effective where many countries are affected by the same hazard, in addressing trans-boundary issues (e.g. the Mekong River Commission's work on flood risk in the Mekong River Basin), and in helping states to engage in collective lobbying (e.g. small island developing states' collaboration about climate change and rising sea levels).

Partnership-building should adopt a strategic approach. Successful partnerships cannot be achieved overnight. Time and effort are required to secure willing commitment from all the stakeholders involved, not least because many are at present weakly connected. The disaster 'community' – i.e. those who are professionally engaged in efforts to prevent disasters and deal with their consequences – comprises a great diversity of professional disciplines and organizational types. It is

frequently fragmented along these disciplinary and institutional boundaries, with a lack of mutual understanding and respect, and limited dialogue.

But vertical and horizontal multi-stakeholder partnerships are possible, at all levels. In Bangladesh, for example, the Disaster Forum is a network of 70 humanitarian and development NGOs, research institutions, government departments and independent activists. The World Health Organization's Healthy Cities Programme brings together teams from government, NGOs, communities and other organizations. Regional networking in the South has expanded rapidly in recent years, notably in Latin America, South Asia and Southern Africa.

The more accountable governments and other local, national and trans-national actors are to populations at-risk, the greater the likelihood that their performance in both pre- and post-disaster spheres will be relevant and of high quality. Accountability for disaster impact and the enforcement of disaster risk management has made progress in some countries but is generally still weak. Legal accountability depends upon the strength and accessibility of a well-functioning judicial system, which is still deficient in many countries. A well-informed citizenry plays a vital role in holding governments and other actors to account. Accountability for disaster risk reduction seems more advanced where there is public demand for a safer environment and public security. Hence where public and legal accountability is grounded in popular awareness and participation it exercises pressure on the bearers of political mandates. Citizens' capacities to monitor and put pressure on the providers of goods and services can be enhanced through a range of measures including social audits, budget analysis, use of the media and public interest litigation. Academics, technical specialists and professional organizations are potentially significant providers and disseminators of knowledge about risk management but need to be better linked to other civil society groups and more responsive to community needs. Strong coalitions between all civil society actors are essential building blocks for change.

## **2.5 Capacities for disaster risk reduction**

Human resource capacity is fundamental for the implementation and application of disaster reduction policies, strategies, legislation and programmes of action. However, there is still a considerable lack of such capacity at national and especially intermediary and local levels. This not only comprises the technical skills for disaster risk management, but also management, planning, and knowledge utilization skills. A further challenge is how to measure the success of any given programme: evaluation of capacity-building work is difficult, not just because of its multi-faceted nature but also because of the length of time needed for the capacity-building process to achieve an impact and the often intangible nature of change which is difficult to 'capture' with conventional monitoring indicators. Crucially, the building of capacity in all its forms must be clearly linked to the improvements it seeks to achieve in disaster reduction.

Local expertise, capacities and knowledge are not always used efficiently because of institutional and cultural barriers and lack of communication. Whilst technical skills are greatly needed in some places, an over-reliance on technological and scientific approaches can be observed in others. Often these are not adapted to local needs and capacities, although it has been established that local knowledge of hazards and vulnerabilities, and local coping capacities in general, play an important role in mitigating disasters and, in combination with technical and scientific solutions, provide a strong basis for lasting improvements.

A more active approach to informing, motivating and involving people in all aspects of disaster reduction in their communities is a priority. Emphasis is frequently given to the need to build from the bottom up, starting with the most vulnerable communities – an example being the Red Cross/Red Crescent's use of community-based vulnerability and capacity assessments as primary components of local development and disaster risk reduction activities. More attention is being given to the need to build and sustain capacities within communities, but there is often a big gap between rhetoric and practice, and the potential of the community as a volunteer base for disaster management is frequently overlooked. There are notable exceptions, such as the creation of partnerships between local government institutions and volunteer efforts in the Indian state of Orissa as a result of lessons learned during the 1999 cyclone, which has led to the establishment of community-owned disaster preparedness plans in 3,000 villages.

These and numerous other examples reinforce an understanding of the contribution of community-based volunteer action to disaster reduction. Nevertheless, a great deal more remains to be done to validate, document and disseminate lessons, thereby supplying practical guidance to groups, organizations, and local and national authorities seeking to support such processes. More extensive evaluation and comparative analysis of the effectiveness, sustainability and replicability of different approaches to community-based disaster risk reduction would greatly assist this process.

Institutional strengthening generally forms part of externally assisted capacity-building programmes for disaster risk reduction and often includes strengthening a national emergency management organisation, preparing a national disaster plan, enacting legislation or setting up training facilities. Such relatively narrowly focused efforts may have limited impact on capacities unless they are informed by broader risk management and governance perspectives. Externally funded technical assistance programmes can provide opportunities for introducing innovative or alternative approaches in countries (e.g. the Caribbean Development Bank's promotion of national hazard impact assessments as part of environmental impact assessment processes). However, it is essential that these are genuinely guided by local needs and priorities, and lead to sustainable, replicable improvements in risk reduction. In addition, local and national agencies responsible for disaster response or civil protection require training and resources to deal with assistance from neighbouring countries or the wider international community.

Governments are best equipped to manage large-scale initiatives, but are finding it increasingly hard to address risks conditioned by the informality of housing and livelihood patterns and the rapidity of wider changes in relation to these. NGOs are active in establishing dialogues with communities at-risk over ways of harmonizing social and economic requirements with risk reduction objectives, but their initiatives remain mostly scattered and small-scale, and often bypass local and national governments. Most governments are interested in working with civil society and the private sector, but many lack the tools and skills to do so effectively.

In the past 10-15 years, concepts associated with disaster reduction have advanced in scope and sophistication; there is growing use of commonly understood terminology, recognized policy frameworks and implementation mechanisms; and there is evidence of better official and public understanding. The adoption of the integrated risk management approach in disaster management and of analytical and planning frameworks based on vulnerability, social protection and sustainable livelihoods in long-term development programming provides a robust conceptual underpinning for cross-sectoral linkages and mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into sustainable development.

Many appraisal, planning, monitoring and evaluation methods already in use in development work are capable of integrating disaster risk issues but need to be applied more systematically. New approaches to planning and monitoring broad-based or large-scale disaster risk reduction

interventions (e.g. the ISDR/UN Development Programme (UNDP) framework to guide and monitor disaster risk reduction or the World Bank Caribbean Country Management Unit's indicators/benchmarks of good practice in risk management) could be deployed and tested further.

Information is a vital component of capacity at all levels. The changing disaster risk landscape requires a continuous updating of knowledge, data and related analytical tools. Much of the advance in disaster risk reduction capacity worldwide is due to the greater availability and systematic dissemination of information and expertise, including studies of lessons learned. Internet communications, which greatly facilitate this, provide models of formal and informal networking involving a very wide range of stakeholders worldwide (e.g. ISDR's electronic dialogues in 2003 and 2004, and the Natural-Hazards-Disasters email discussion list). It is essential that authoritative, impartial and systematic or comparative information on disaster risks and impacts and effective approaches to risk reduction, is made available more widely, especially at local level.

ISDR's global survey *Living with Risk* and public electronic consultation on 'building disaster-resilient communities and nations' (both in 2004) provided numerous examples of good practice. Notwithstanding this, more effort should go into validating disaster risk reduction initiatives, through evaluation and research. Knowledge of the spatial and temporal patterns of disaster risk and its causal factors, in rural and urban settings, is also needed, for which better impact data and harmonization of existing data sets are essential. New methods of assessing and comparing risk (e.g. the disaster risk indices developed by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and UNDP) are already proving useful in setting intervention priorities and making budgetary allocations: such methods should be adopted more widely, assessed and refined.

## **2.6 Financial resources for disaster risk reduction**

Resource limitations are frequently given as reasons for failure to implement disaster risk reduction programmes. Despite the many calls for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development planning, budgetary allocations to such work in national or international financial instruments remain extremely limited. In addition, resources from international donors are still biased towards humanitarian needs, which may limit governments' willingness to allocate their own resources to risk reduction.

One of the most telling indicators of political commitment to disaster risk management is the level of resources allocated to it by governments, civil society and the private sector. Dealing with disasters is always a challenge for decision-makers, and swift and immediate response brings popular approval to political leaders. Political systems therefore recognize the need for strong intervention following a disaster, which is reflected in the considerable resources allocated to emergency assistance. There is still a major challenge to increase the focus on disaster reduction as a central element of ongoing development funding and programming, or in other words to use existing development resources in a manner which reduces risks by addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability.

Another key problem in resource allocation refers to the degree of accountability, transparency and even corruption in both state and non-governmental organizations. Decisions about the allocation of limited development and relief resources are frequently influenced by political considerations rather than the real needs of marginalized populations. Ultimately, such failings also undermine the legitimacy of the organizations concerned. Moreover, funds allocated to disaster risk reduction may not be identified as such, especially where disaster risk reduction is integrated into other sectors.

For example, strengthening hospital and school structures to withstand particular hazard risks is likely to be included within health and education sector budgets, and the amounts spent specifically on hazard-resistant features will probably be hidden within overall capital and building costs. This makes monitoring of the allocation and use of resources very difficult.

Despite instances of the cost-effectiveness of disaster risk reduction initiatives, many decision makers do not fully understand the trade-offs involved in selecting different options, and there is still strong demand for a fuller body of evidence demonstrating the costs and benefits of mitigation in economic and social terms. Ongoing work by the ProVention Consortium aims to address this problem and supply guidance on appropriate appraisal methods.

It is important to be realistic about the obstacles to improving resource allocation. Research on international donors has identified a failure to 'mainstream' disaster risk reduction despite a belief in its importance. The main reasons cited are a lack of knowledge within agencies of what disaster risk reduction entails as a concept and in practice, institutional boundaries between relief and development sectors with neither fully 'owning' disaster risk reduction as its specific responsibility, and competition from other pressing humanitarian and development needs. A survey of Latin American policy makers in 2003 drew similar conclusions, identifying three main *disincentives* for disaster risk reduction despite recognition of its value: the difficulty of obtaining resources for pre-disaster action especially when the outcomes are not clear, inability to achieve consensus about appropriate measures, and the lack of public visibility of disaster risk reduction measures.

There is therefore a need for incentive structures to encourage implementation. There are relatively few examples of the creative and systematic use of financial instruments such as subsidies, low-interest loans and tax breaks to create incentives for local governments, private businesses and individuals to invest in disaster mitigation. One good example is Vietnam, where the state takes a leading role in providing a range of financial resources, well integrated with international sources of funding and accompanied by relevant policies and instruments. The system is complemented by informal and semi-formal credit schemes that play a key role in local mitigation and recovery.

International financial mechanisms (donor and market-driven) also have an important role, in encouraging national-level action. At all levels, lack of financial resources and competition for them are important issues that cannot be sidestepped, as are external factors such as debt and donor-driven adjustment programmes. To date, hazard and disaster issues have not featured significantly in the macro-economic, social, environmental and project analyses carried out by bilateral and multilateral donors and IFIs as part of loan and grant planning processes. With ever more external assistance being directed towards national budgetary support and programme-level rather than project-level initiatives, it is crucial that these issues are incorporated into the country and regional assistance programmes and poverty reduction strategies developed by donors. The various processes of research and consultation deployed in preparing such programmes must ensure widespread and local-level participation.

In some countries, local capacity building and technical support have been promoted and resourced principally by international agencies and local and international NGOs. However, local and even central governments may not be sufficiently involved in such agencies' initiatives, and may even be by-passed by them. Here there is a danger of creating parallel systems and an *ad hoc* approach to local disaster risk management, especially where central government is in a relatively weak position vis-à-vis the international agencies for financial or political reasons.

### **3. General Recommendations and Voluntary Targets for Future Action**

This section sets out some general recommendations about how best to improve aspects of governance relating to disaster risk reduction, within the broad areas discussed above. These recommendations are addressed principally to national and local governments but also to the international community, civil society and the private sector. The list is not exhaustive but identifies core areas where improvements are required.

In each area, a few voluntary targets are also suggested, but many more should be developed and adopted by governance stakeholders.

#### **3.1 Political commitment & elevating disaster risk reduction as a policy priority**

- a. Disaster risk reduction should be embodied in global commitments to and targets for sustainable development (as it is in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Social Development (WSSD) in 2002).
- b. Link the post-WCDR disaster reduction programme to the MDGs (especially the targets for poverty, health and education) and other international development frameworks.
- c. Elevate disaster risk management as a national priority by demonstrating the links between disaster reduction, sustainable development and the cost-effectiveness of disaster risk management in the broadest socio-economic sense.
- d. Create strategic risk reduction policies, setting out clear goals and objectives.
- e. Mainstream risk reduction into development, social welfare and other sectoral policies and plans.
- f. Encourage a broad-based dialogue among relevant sectors to foster their participation in creating policies and institutional frameworks for planning and co-ordination at national and local levels.
- g. Demonstrate stronger political ownership of the disaster risk reduction agenda by setting specific, time-bound targets, establishing commitments and responsibilities.

Suggested targets for 2015:

- All new and revised global agreements consider disaster and risk issues and make appropriate recommendations.
- Every country has planned national follow-up to the WSSD Plan of Implementation and every least developed country (LDC) has included disaster risk reduction in its National Adaptation Plan of Action on climate change.
- Every country and regional entity has adopted a policy and strategic plan for disaster risk management and has integrated disaster risk reduction explicitly into its other mainstream sectoral policies and programmes.

#### **3.2 Legal and regulatory frameworks**

- a. Develop, enact or modify legislation to support disaster risk management, including regulations, administrative mechanisms and human resources to enforce compliance, where required.
- b. Establish the national disaster reduction strategy on a sound legislative basis, fully integrated into and consistent with other national laws and regulations.

- c. Base the legislative framework on a clear statement of the citizen's rights to security and protection from hazard.
- d. Ensure widespread consultation about proposed legal reforms, and the broad ownership of change.
- e. Designate the responsibility for overseeing policy setting and implementation to senior ministerial authorities and public officers.
- f. Strengthen linkages and collaboration between legislators and implementing authorities.

Suggested targets for 2015:

- Every country has updated its disaster risk management legislation.
- Relevant codes and standards are updated and published, accompanied by effective systems to ensure compliance.
- The citizen's fundamental right to the highest possible standard of security and protection against hazards is incorporated into legal or constitutional frameworks.

### **3.3 Institutional frameworks and structures**

- a. Establish disaster risk reduction as an integral part of institutional strategies, procedures and cultures.
- b. Establish or strengthen institutional frameworks which are cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary, with clear roles, responsibilities and functioning co-ordination mechanisms.
- c. Strengthen awareness of roles and responsibilities among all stakeholders and ensure the skills and capacities to carry out assigned functions are in place.
- d. Establish links and exchanges between different levels of action (local, intermediary, national, regional, international).
- e. Ensure decentralized local governance systems for disaster risk reduction are integrated with other levels and initiatives, are adequately resourced, and that decentralized responsibilities are clearly identified and allocated.

Suggested targets for 2015:

- Every country has reviewed and updated its institutional framework for disaster risk reduction to incorporate all relevant stakeholders at all levels, with roles, responsibilities and resources clearly defined and allocated.
- Formal systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of official institutional arrangements are in place, with transparent procedures and findings that are made public on a regular basis.

### **3.4 Multi-stakeholder participation**

- a. Strengthen strategic partnership and alliance building across sectors and disciplines at all levels (e.g. disaster risk reduction partnerships could be linked to Local Agenda (LA) 21 initiatives: more than 6,400 local authorities in 113 countries are engaged in LA21 activities).
- b. Stimulate multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral partnerships and networks (formal and informal) for information exchange and debate.
- c. Establish or strengthen multi-sectoral and adequately resourced national platforms for disaster reduction to co-ordinate policy and action and maintain dialogue; ideally these should be officially recognized.
- d. Empower community-level organizations, volunteer groups and other elements in civil society to participate in disaster reduction decision-making, policy setting, planning and implementation.
- e. Improve access to information on disaster risk and risk reduction measures.



- f. Encourage the private sector to practice and contribute to risk reduction, and strengthen public-private sector partnerships.
- g. Ensure all aspects of partnerships (roles, responsibilities, opportunities and resources) are based on local community interests and participation.

Suggested targets for 2015:

- The rights of all groups in society to participate in disaster risk reduction decision-making, policy setting, planning and implementation are explicitly recognized in policy, legal and institutional provisions, and the ways and means of such participation are defined.
- The right to information about hazards and risks and the effectiveness of measures taken to address them is set out in policy and law, and systems are in place to facilitate public access.
- Every country has an independent, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral national platform for disaster risk reduction that is recognized and supported by government.

### **3.5 Capacities for disaster risk reduction**

- a. Ensure funding to support a sustained approach to disaster reduction capacity building, as well as for building strategic partnerships and multi-stakeholder dialogue.
- b. Improve knowledge of disaster risk management through widespread exchange of good practices and lessons learned, with greater emphasis on validation of disaster risk reduction initiatives and application of effective frameworks for planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- c. Strengthen the capacities of all types of civil society organization to take part in disaster risk reduction and multi-stakeholder dialogue and action, and to hold others to account, through processes of participation and empowerment.
- d. Recognize the role and contribution of voluntary action to capacity building in disaster risk reduction and strengthen the enabling environment within which such action can flourish.
- e. Further explore the integration of local/traditional and technological/scientific knowledge for disaster reduction.
- f. Improve knowledge of the patterns and causes of disaster risk in all settings, and methods of analysis.
- g. Incorporate risk and vulnerability assessment methods more fully into formal development planning, grant-making and lending processes.

Suggested targets for 2015:

- All formal planning processes of governments and other actors are amended to include hazard-vulnerability-risk analyses as mandatory components in appraisal and approval.
- All significant disaster risk reduction initiatives are thoroughly and independently evaluated, and the findings are made public.
- Capacities in disaster reduction are assessed and reported upon by all stakeholder groups as a matter of course in project, programme and national-level reporting and evaluation procedures.
- Achievements in disaster reduction are reported in national MDG reports.

### **3.6 Financial resources for disaster risk reduction**

- a. Allocate resources for the implementation of disaster risk management policies, programmes, laws and regulations, in all relevant sectors of national and local administrative budgets.
- b. Set clear criteria for measuring the use and effectiveness of such resources; improve understanding of the costs and benefits of risk reduction alternatives and how to assess them.

- c. Prioritize disaster risk reduction in IFIs' development policies and processes; in particular, ensure hazard risk is taken fully into account in preparing country and regional assistance programmes and poverty reduction strategies.
- d. Develop alternative and creative financial strategies for managing disaster risk.
- e. Identify and overcome political and institutional disincentives to investing in disaster risk reduction.
- f. Redress the bias towards short-term expenditure for emergency relief assistance following a disaster, in favour of longer-term investment in development initiatives to reduce disaster vulnerability and risk.

Suggested targets for 2015:

- All actors identify resources they provide for disaster risk reduction in their institutional and programme budgets, in both development and humanitarian sectors, and report regularly on their use.
- All donor assistance and lending programmes, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), include a full analysis of disaster risks and make specific provisions for their mitigation.

## 4. Conclusions

This discussion of issues and the recommendations for action has presented a broad but achievable programme. However, achievement of these recommendations depends above all on governments, international agencies and other institutions becoming more responsive to the needs of people at risk and more accountable to them. There are many mechanisms for delivering greater accountability, but one of the most important is a diverse, pluralistic institutional environment.

The environment and the threat of hazards are constantly changing. Therefore, governance in all its dimensions must be forward-looking to anticipate changes, new conditions and uncertainty. The capacity of governance structures and systems to adapt and respond to rapid significant change – in particular, to the disaster risk implications of rapid urbanization and climate change – requires much more analysis and debate.

The debate on disaster risk reduction should not be detached from those on other political, economic and social processes. The planning and accomplishment of disaster risk reduction initiatives should never be a purely managerial matter: they must not lose sight of the wider principles of social justice, equity and rights which underpin good governance.

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