



# Towards the Next Generation of Risk Reduction and Resilience

## Sustainable development needs resilient communities

*It is no secret: Prevention is more effective and much cheaper than reconstructing and rebuilding. However, the importance of disaster risk reduction for inclusive, sustainable development has long been neglected. With the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in 2005 this situation started to change slowly. The HFA is “the first plan to explain, describe and detail the work that is required from all different sectors and actors to reduce disaster losses” (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNISDR). Already this year the course will be set for the future of the HFA and thus of Disaster Risk Reduction. The Fourth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva in May 2013, organized by UNISDR, is part of a global review process on progress towards achieving HFA’s objectives and priorities. This paper aims at describing the main challenges for the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.*

### Why foster disaster risk reduction?

Every year we witness the same patterns of events. A disaster hits a country, people die and the world wonders why the disaster was not foreseen or even prevented. The negative impacts on wellbeing and national economies are immense. Afterwards, governments and the general usually provide huge amounts of money for emergency aid and relief work. For the less visible work of disaster preparedness and risk reduction, much less money is made available despite the well-known fact that every dollar invested in disaster risk reduction can save up to five dollars of emergency assistance costs, not to speak of lives. Whether the hazard is an earthquake, drought, rising sea level or flooding, the most vulnerable segment of the affected population suffer most (see Alliance Development Works 2012). Not only are they extremely exposed to risks, they also are poorly prepared, and are often left with little means for

recovery and rebuilding<sup>1</sup>. In times of climate change, it is more urgent than ever that emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction become central pillars of development cooperation and national policies.

### Increasing exposure

A huge threat to inclusive sustainability and the livelihoods of millions of people is not only the increasing number and severity of disasters but also the number of communities exposed to disaster risks. Between 2002 and 2011 the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) recorded more than 4,130 disasters with more than one million lives lost and a minimum of USD 1,195 billion in losses. In 2011 alone, 302 disasters claimed 29,782 lives, affected 206 million people and inflicted damages worth an estimated USD 366 billion. Today, due to

<sup>1</sup> 95% of people killed in disasters live in developing countries (Oxley 2013:2).

demographic changes, urbanization and other causes, increasing number of people and assets are located in areas of risk. Over the past 30 years the number of those living in flood-prone river basins has increased by 114%, those living on cyclone-exposed coastlines by 192%. At least half of the world largest cities with populations ranging from 2 to 15 million are highly vulnerable to seismic activity. These statistical data are supported by case study evidence that shows that local communities face small-scale recurrent disasters every day, in the context of fragility, poverty, informality and uncertainty. It is worth noting that costs for recovery often have to be borne by the communities themselves (Oxley 2013:2).

Although developed countries are normally far better prepared against disasters and equipped with better coping mechanisms, the tsunami in 2004 (the floods in Thailand led to a drop of 2.5% in global industrial production) and the earthquake in Japan in 2011 (estimated drop in GDP 1%) have shown that developed countries are not necessarily less vulnerable in terms of economic

GDP per capita in the OECD countries. This means that loss of wealth in weather-related disasters is now exceeding the rate at which the wealth itself is being created (ib.).

### Governance and participation

Other important challenges for disaster risk reduction are related to the issue of governance and accountability. Most governments have not fully employed coherent disaster risk reduction mechanisms across sectors and between central and local governments. One gap refers to the capacity to act after a disaster has occurred, and the lack of capacity or authority to influence decisions related to national planning and investments. Accountability mechanisms have not been fully explored, although they can guide government and public awareness of and support for disaster risk reduction policies. Accountability can improve the effectiveness of action and service delivery capacity.

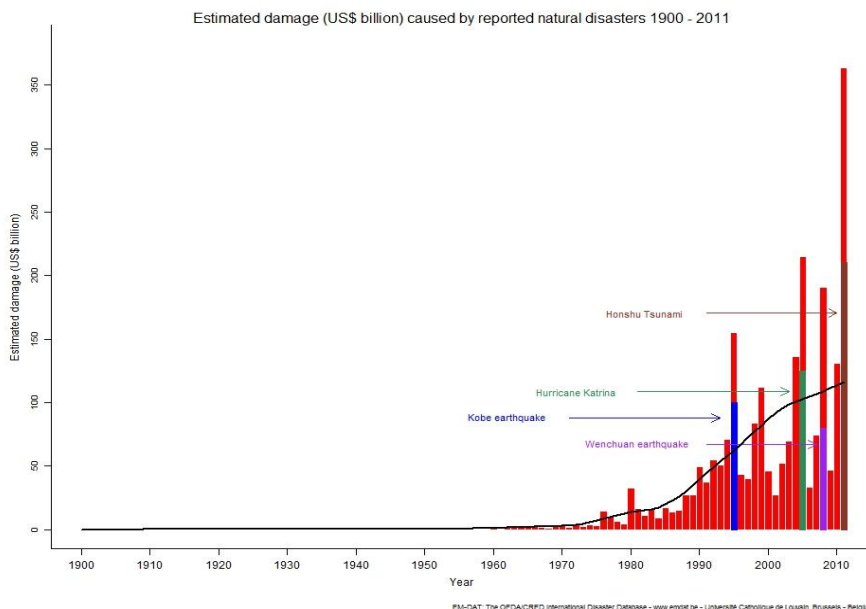
Local communities, in particular those affected by extreme poverty, are often extremely exposed and therefore most vulnerable to disaster impact. Understanding the local context is key to applying the correct mitigation practices. Praxis shows that local communities are seldom involved in defining policies. Implementing the right strategies requires not only a deep knowledge of natural hazards but also of prevailing political and socio-economic conditions.

### International response

Aware of these challenges the international community has adopted the so-called Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). The HFA was the central outcome of the second World Conference on

Disaster Reduction in Kobe, in 2005. It was signed by 168 member states The HFA is a ten-year plan aiming at substantially reducing losses resulting from extreme natural events.

The HFA defines five priorities for action aimed to disaster risk reduction:



losses than the Small Island States or Least Developed Countries (LDC). A new global ranking by Maplecroft (cit. in UNISDR 2012:2) shows that out of 170 countries, the world's largest and fastest growing economies are among the most exposed to the impacts of climate change. Since 1981, economic losses from disaster are growing faster than

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction 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 Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.
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.

## Benchmark 2015

The year 2015 is a decisive benchmark for at least three ongoing international processes that either deal directly or indirectly with DRR.

1. Within the context of the **UN-Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC)** governments are expected to deliver on a global, binding treaty to be adopted in 2015 in Paris reducing worldwide carbon emission and increasing climate resilience through right adaptation measures.

2. The **eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG)** expire the same year and are supposed to be merged and further developed with so called Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which shall then be applied to all countries and not just to those of the south. But sustainability goals can not be reached if disasters regularly destroy achieved development goals and communities remain highly vulnerable.

3. The **UN General Assembly will convene the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)** taking place in Japan in early 2015 to agree on a post-2015 Hyogo Framework of Action. In order to prepare accordingly the Global Platform for DRR was established already in 2007 as a biennial forum for information exchange, discussion of latest development and knowledge and partnership building across sectors, with the goal to improve implementation of disaster risk reduction through better communication and coordination amongst stakeholders.

Thus the HFA is the first plan to describe processes in detail that are necessary to reduce disaster risks in various sectors. The implementation of the HFA is being coordinated by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), which regularly reports on progress made in putting the plan into practice.

## Fundamental flaws

There is general agreement that the HFA was successful in encouraging a systematic and pre-emptive approach to disaster risk and creating awareness for the issue. The framework was not only useful as a point of reference for most actors working in the field of DRR, but also served as an effective advocacy tool in raising political commitment and in particular financial resources. Furthermore, the HFA has promoted multi-stakeholder engagement, dialogue between a diversity of actors and government responsibility.

However, it remains unclear, whether the HFA has really triggered systemic change on the local level - in other words, if the HFA is “fit for purpose” (GNDR 2013). Based on consultations with civil society organizations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, the “Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction” (GNDR) noted several systemic and strategic flaws of the current HFA. From the point of view of Welthungerhilfe the following three are most important:

- **Scope:** The HFA does not address the proximate and underlying causes of vulnerability and exposure sufficiently, es-

pecially for small-scale disasters, which are increasing rapidly in developing countries experiencing strong economic growth. This includes in particular the underlying drivers of climate-induced risks<sup>2</sup>. As a consequence the main “ownership” lies with humanitarian actors and not so much with the development sector.

- **Gap:** There is a substantial gap between national policy adopted in line with the HFA and local practice or action. One reason for this is the non-binding character of the HFA and thus its very limited transparency and accountability.
- **Lack:** There is a serious lack of resources and infrastructure to implement DRR in developing countries and a lack of support for capacity building. The HFA does not address this issue sufficiently.

## Community resilience is key

At the heart of Welthungerhilfe’s engagement<sup>3</sup> are people living in communities that are not resilient to extreme shocks and stresses. When the International Community decides on a new framework for disaster risk reduction (HFA2) in 2015, a more radical change is required in how the HFA2 is conceived, designed and executed to adequately represent experiences of vulnerable people and ensure full participation of all stakeholders in the process of building resilience in order to reduce risks to acceptable levels (GNDR 2012). A post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework must strengthen the resilience and ability of people and their communities to anticipate, organize for and adapt to shocks and stresses of all kinds: short and long-term, natural and human-derived, rapid and slow onset, rural and urban, economic, social, environmental, geopolitical and climate change. Community resilience is the basic building block and foundation of national resilience and needs to be at

<sup>2</sup> Other drivers or causes are: resource degradation, conflict, disease, poor governance, inequality, lack of decent employment, unfair markets, prices crashes, competition for scarce resources...

<sup>3</sup> For Welthungerhilfe’s work in project countries see: Welthungerhilfe 2012a and 2012b.

the center of a post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework. In consequence, Welthungerhilfe supports the analysis of various NGOs and networks (e.g. GNDR and Oxfam) and endorses the following recommendations for a HFA2:

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## **Recommendations for a post-2015 DRR-framework**

### **1. Enhance the scope**

#### **Prioritize the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized people**

Extreme natural events have a disproportionate impact on poor countries with weak governance, on poor and marginalized communities and on demographic groups such as women and children. The framework's strategic emphasis must recognize the different levels of vulnerability amongst different countries and societal groups based on principles of justice, equity and social cohesion.

#### **Ensure that the scope of the framework includes all types of natural and human-derived disasters - including small-scale recurrent "everyday" shocks and stresses**

Vulnerable people are exposed to a complex multi-dimensional risk environment where social, economic, geo-political, climatic and environmental risks impact one another. Effective risk reduction strategies must be holistic, flexible and long-term to adequately reflect local realities. At the community level, the dominant risk is from under-reported and uncompensated small-scale recurrent disasters (primarily triggered by weather events), which are rapidly increasing in developing countries.

#### **Prioritize tackling the causes of vulnerability and exposure**

The success of a post-2015 framework will depend on its effectiveness in tackling underlying drivers of risk. Building resilience also requires tackling structural power imbalances between social, economic and demographic groups that underpin vulnerabilities within communities. These are critical influences on vulnerability and exposure. In order to take on these challenges the HFA2 must be linked to other important international conventions (UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD) and pro-

cesses (Post-MDG and SDG). DRR must be included in those agendas, too.

### **2. Bridge gap between policy and action**

#### **Strengthen capacity and resource provision for local governance structures**

A capable, accountable and responsive local government that works collaboratively with an active civil society, the private sector and at-risk communities is another factor contributing toward accelerated implementation of risk reduction policies at a local level. Most importantly, effective risk governance requires investments in strengthening local risk governance capabilities, including enhanced human and institutional capacities, political authority, financial resources, accountability and partnerships.

#### **Apply a rights-based approach**

When basic rights to education, health and housing are denied, vulnerability increases. Grounding a post-2015 framework in human rights standards and other legislative frameworks and approaches (e.g. climate-, traditional and customary laws) will reinforce accountability by ensuring that commitments to citizens' safety and protection are legal obligations.

#### **Develop new measurable targets based on outcomes**

The targets should aim to reduce human and financial costs, as well as the impact of disasters on the most vulnerable. Goals, standards, baselines, targets, indicators and associated monitoring and redress mechanisms are essential to measuring progress and enabling people to hold governments and organizations accountable. A prerequisite is a public national loss database, which records and disaggregates information about disasters and their impact.

#### **Institutionalize the role and strengthen the capacity of local civil society**

Local civil society plays a critical role in strengthening community resilience and enhancing people's ability to hold the state accountable. Civil society organizations can proactively engage in policy analysis, gather and aggregate people's perspectives, participate in strategy formulation, support policy implementation and monitoring, strengthen domestic accountability and drive the social change necessary for increased resilience

based on experience and knowledge gained through working alongside grassroots organizations.

### 3. Provide sufficient resources

#### Revise financial instruments for DRR

In order to ensure sustainability and long-term commitment, the financial architecture of donors needs to be revised. Financial instruments that coherently and continuously support the Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) approach are missing. The instruments should allow for a more integrated and comprehensive approach to risk sensitive development. The focus on funding for DRR from humanitarian aid portfolios should therefore be critically reviewed

in favour of a stronger commitment by the development sector.

#### Demand commitment by the private sector to strengthen community resilience

Companies have not yet fully adopted resilience as an integral part of their strategies. Instead, current practices can often create or enhance risks. A post-2015 DRR framework with a strong commitment to public-private partnerships would require a focus on ensuring clearer responsibilities in strengthening community resilience. This must include the role of small-scale informal businesses, which account for 75% of total employment in developing countries.

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