

# PARTNERS FOR RESILIENCE



## Policy brief for post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction: Key Messages on Building Resilient Communities

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA): Building Resilient Nations and Communities, agreed to by Member States in 2005, is coming up for revision in 2015. This policy brief proposes *three key messages* to be addressed in the Post-2015 Hyogo Framework (HFAll) for building safe and resilient nations and communities. The policy brief articulates the positions of the organisations allied under the Partners for Resilience Programme, a five year programme which aims for the integration of climate change adaptation and ecosystem-based approaches into disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs. The integration of these approaches has resulted in, amongst others, the development of new tools for making risk assessments and for planning 'ecosystem and climate-smart DRR activities', as summarised on the final page of this policy brief.

### Key messages for the Post-2015 Hyogo Framework:

#### 1. Recognize the key role of ecosystems for DRR

Healthy ecosystems can play a key role in hazard mitigation and can even prevent hazards from occurring. On the other hand, ecosystem degradation enhances disaster risk. Therefore, 'environment' should be treated as a cross-cutting issue in HFAll. Ecosystem degradation should be recognized as a root cause of increased disaster risk, and urgent action for the restoration and appropriate management of ecosystems as a means to increase community resilience as well as to reduce disaster risk and the impacts of climate change should be promoted.

#### 2. Increase support for community action and promote connection between local actors.

Community level involvement and interventions are crucial to the success of any disaster risk reduction effort. HFAll should acknowledge and promote a central role for local communities in DRR interventions (risk assessments, planning and implementation) as active participants contributing valuable local knowledge and expertise and sharing in local level governance. Promoting community-self management and negotiating difference between actors about agenda's, values and scales is essential.

#### 3. Integrate adaptation and DRR and enable better use of climate science across time scales.

Climate change adaptation (CCA) and DRR should be more closely linked in HFAll. Scientific information on changing risk patterns across different time scales (short, medium and long-term) should be integrated into decision-making and financing mechanisms.

### **1. Recognize the key role of ecosystems for DRR**

Environment should be treated as a cross-cutting issue in HFAII. Ecosystem degradation should be recognized as a root cause of increased disaster risk, and urgent action for the restoration and appropriate management of ecosystems as a means to increase community resilience as well as to reduce disaster risk and the impacts of climate change should be promoted.

#### **Rationale**

Ecosystem degradation and unsustainable resource use (including land and water) are major drivers of increased disaster risk. For instance, the degradation of wetlands can lead to increased drought and flood risks. Addressing how we use and manage ecosystems is central to sustainable risk management. It is in particular important to draw attention to the role of sound water and wetlands management as wetlands are lost at rapid rate and water related hazards account for 90% of all hazards (World Water Assessment Report, 2012, page 27).

Investing in ecosystem based approaches such as the protection, rehabilitation and sound use of wetlands and river basins is increasingly recognized by the development and humanitarian sectors as essential for DRR. They offer important opportunities to lowering risk by reducing exposure to natural hazards, minimizing their impacts, and building community resilience. For example, healthy mangrove forests can reduce storm surge levels and reduce the height and force of waves; restoring the hydrological functions of a floodplain enables capturing and regulating water flows and reduces the impacts of floods and droughts.

Healthy ecosystems also contribute strongly to the livelihoods of communities. People derive many benefits from ecosystems, such as water purification, pest and disease control, as well as the provision of food and energy; all building blocks for societal resilience. For instance, dynamic river floodplains yield between 20 and 40 times more fish than artificial reservoirs (*Bayley, 1995; Jackson and Marmulla, 2000; Marshall and Maes, 1994; Richter et al, 2010*) and mangrove ecosystems and coral reefs are important fish nurseries. This contributes to a community's capacity to withstand natural hazards and bounce back quickly after a disaster has struck. Adversely, environmental degradation reduces community resilience to disasters.

Sectoral, local, regional and national land-use and development plans and processes that do not take into account ecosystem approaches tend to accumulate disaster risk by intensifying the impacts of natural disasters. It is vital that such plans and processes are aligned with DRR-specific efforts such as ecosystem restoration.

Disaster risk reduction efforts have made significant progress in improving disaster preparedness and early warning. While these elements remain essential in any disaster risk reduction strategy, they are more effective and efficient when designed on the basis of landscape level hazard and risk mapping (e.g. on the river basin scale), which address underlying drivers of disaster risk, in particular environmental degradation.

### **The role of ecosystems in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)**

The current HFA does to some extent recognise the role of sustainable ecosystem management in DRR. Explicit acknowledgement of environment and ecosystems is made under Priority 4: Reduce the underlying risk factors. However, the Mid-term Review of HFA highlighted that the least implementation progress was made in Priority 4 so it can be considered that environment did not receive adequate attention in HFA implementation and merits further attention in the post-2015 framework on DRR.

We therefore suggest an enhanced emphasis on the need for active conservation and restoration of ecosystems in the post-2015 framework for DRR in the following way:

#### **We recommend that the post-2015 Hyogo framework (HFAII):**

- *Acknowledges* ecosystem degradation as a root cause of disaster risk and notes that the rapid and accelerating rate of wetlands (such as mangroves, lakes, rivers, peatlands, and other catchment wetlands or floodplains) compounds the risks and impacts of increasingly occurring water related disasters.
- *Recognizes* that fully-functioning ecosystems build local resilience against disasters by sustaining livelihoods and providing important services such as water supply and important products to local populations.
- *Acknowledges* that intervention is required in ecosystems that risk losing their function of providing services that help reduce the impact of disasters.
- *Accords* 'environment' as a cross-cutting issue in the new framework, considering the multiple feedbacks between environment and disasters and the fact that healthy ecosystems can reduce disasters by influencing hazards, exposure and vulnerability.
- *Recognises* that vulnerability can be exacerbated at different geographical scales and call upon Member States to conduct landscape level assessments of community risk (e.g. within a river basin, along coastlines).
- *Urges* Member States to take substantive actions to integrate ecosystem approaches (ecosystem conservation, rehabilitation and sound use of ecosystems), and in particular wetland and water management considerations, as a means to address the underlying causes of disaster risk, in all national policies with relevance to disaster risk reduction efforts. In particular, encourages Member States to mainstream such considerations in their national disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies, local, regional and national water management and land-use plans, and national development strategies.
- *Includes* a set of indicators to the the HFAII monitoring system which enable the measuring of environmental aspects in disaster risk management. For a proposed set of indicators we refer to UNEP's Proposal to the Indicator Family (Annex I).

## **2. Increase support for community action and promote connection between local actors.**

HFAII framework should acknowledge and promote community-based and community-led initiatives and explicitly supports actions at the local level, specifically in the most-at-risk areas. The disastrous effects of small-scale everyday hazards, the heterogeneity of communities and the importance of strengthening transformative resilience to shocks and stresses, are three pivotal issues which should not be overlooked.

### **Rationale**

Participation of at-risk communities in the identification, analysis, design and implementation of DRR actions is crucial. Three key arguments justify the need for promoting community-led and community-managed DRR initiatives:

- Local communities are in most cases the first responders when a disaster happens (e.g. after an earthquake up to 85% of people are rescued by relatives and neighbours).
- Most top-down risk reduction programs fail to address the specific needs and demands of at-risk communities.
- Local actors have skills, knowledge and resources (materials, labour), which are often underutilised in DRR interventions by external actors.

At the community level, the dominant risk profile is from the under-reported and uncompensated small-scale recurrent disasters (primarily triggered by weather events), which are increasing rapidly in developing countries and have disastrous consequence for communities. Increasingly communities are dealing with multi-risk environments.

When communities play a central role in designing and implementing their local DRR action plans, they are empowered; participatory approaches will increase the appropriateness and relevance of risk reduction activities as well as the communities' sense of ownership. Moreover, it ensures addressing those issues most exigent in the lives of communities.

### **The role of community action in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)**

Along the lines of the Chair's statement at the UNISDR May 2013 Global Platform more attention could be paid to the role of local actors, including communities, civil society, local government, as this is where the action "at the frontline" against disaster risk is happening. The current document has a strong UN focus. In HFAII more emphasis needs to be given to the community and local levels, particularly the importance of linking the local level to the national level in disaster risk management efforts.

In HFA there is not enough focus on *the most* vulnerable people, particularly how disasters hit the poorest hardest. It also fails to sufficiently recognize gender and age-differentiated impacts of disasters and the role of girls and women in strengthening resilience. Women and girls are a driving force for change in their communities and incorporating gender analysis increases quality and impact.

Finally, the proposed indicators in the 'Proposed Elements for Consideration in the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction' only provide a macro-(economic) perspective and are not able to measure progress in at risk communities.

**We recommend that the post-2015 framework on DRR (HFAII):**

- *Acknowledges* that resilient communities are the foundation of a resilient society and that to achieve lasting impacts it is essential to engage risk communities and local actors in all disaster risk reduction efforts, as key drivers of change.
- *Urges* Member States to prioritise the most at-risk, poorest and marginalized population groups, in particular those living in areas affected by insecurity and conflict, in national disaster risk reduction policies and interventions.
- *Urges* Member States to decentralize decision-making and resource allocation for disaster risk reduction interventions to the appropriate local level.
- *Urges* Member States to build up the capacity of local authorities in systematically conducting participatory community risk assessments.
- *Recognizes* the role of local and indigenous knowledge as central to informed risk assessments and policy decisions, in addition to scientific knowledge.
- *Includes* a family of indicators to the HFAII monitoring system to enable measuring progress on risk management at the local level at the most-at-risk areas, which should be based on the Views of the Frontline Studies, carried out by the Global Network of CSOs for DRR.

**3. Assess and address changing risks by integrating adaptation and DRR and enabling better use of climate science across time scales.**

Climate change adaptation (CCA) and DRR should be more closely linked in HFAII. Scientific information on changing risk patterns across different time scales (short, medium and long-term) should be integrated into decision-making and financing mechanisms.

**Rationale**

Over the years, the relationship between climate change and disaster risk has become more pronounced. It is widely recognized that many impacts of climate change will materialize through climate variability and extremes. The world has already witnessed a changing frequency, intensity, geographical extent, duration, and timing of extreme weather events, and we are already locked into further changes. We are also witnessing impacts on the lives and livelihoods of people, especially those that are resource dependent, leaving them more vulnerable to future shocks.

However, while all of these were happening, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction agendas have, unfortunately, still evolved largely independently and in parallel, even if both streams only aim for the same thing – reduce the vulnerabilities of at-risk communities and nations and contribute towards sustainable development. This has led to:

- DRR activities not naturally incorporating the change in risk patterns and vulnerability brought about by climate change. For example, disaster management agencies and humanitarian organizations are still being insufficiently connected to climate science across timescales;
- DRR activities only focused on historical events and the development of risk reduction and contingency plans based on past disaster experiences and not taking into consideration climate information and forecasts in the development of no regrets actions;

- DRR activities were not maximized to include climate change mitigation activities that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
- CCA policies and measures that focus solely and on the change in hazards and insufficiently address pre-existing vulnerabilities and how best people can adapt;
- DRR and CCA policies and measures which are only focused on long term livelihood and development programming and not mindful of the humanitarian impacts of the increased level of risks already brought about by climate change today. The storm surges brought about by cyclone Haiyan already contained a strong sea level rise component directly related to climate change and have resulted in 94% of the casualties.

In order to help vulnerable communities better anticipate short term, mid-term and long-term threats, it is vital to ensure activities and investments are robust in light of changing risk patterns and have the flexibility to be adjusted over time. This is only possible when we bridge the gap between scientific understanding of climate related risks and implementation of DRR. Now, more than ever, the world has compelling scientific evidence about how climate variability and change affect risk patterns. Hence, we need to ensure that climate science is better integrated in efforts for risk reduction, risk prevention and strengthening resilience.

#### **The Role of climate change in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)**

Through the current HFA, climate change has been recognized as a cross-cutting factor in reducing disaster risks, playing an important role under each priority area. As a result, governments have started to recognize the importance of coordinating their CCA plans with DRR measures. They also began to see that these policies should be incorporated into their development and poverty eradication programmes.

At the same time, the production and dissemination of high quality climate information across timescales has increased, with an increasing focus on provision of climate information across timescales and the interface between producers and users of scientific information (“climate services”). There have been more and more examples, where indigenous knowledge and local perceptions of risk were successfully complemented with scientific knowledge, data and assessment methods, including climate modelling and forecasting and early warning.

However, in most cases, science remains underutilized, and dynamic climate risk information is seldom deliberately incorporated in disasters risk reduction efforts. Worse, in some cases, DRR and CCA agencies even compete for political space and financing, even while they both still struggle to effectively influence mainstream development planning.

Disaster risk assessments can be made more effective by better use of dynamic risk information, including better weather and climate forecasting in the short, medium and long terms, coupled to information on vulnerability and exposure. Such information should trigger actions across timescales, from long-term risk reduction and adaptation, to short-term regular early warning.

For HFAII the challenge is to bridge the gap between scientific understanding and decision making within the full continuum from long term development planning to humanitarian work preparedness and response. This requires:

- Better cooperation between scientists and policy makers so that scientific climate information can be the bases for policy decisions and actions.
- Better translation of scientific knowledge into a language that is easy for people to understand, appreciate and apply.
- More support for stronger scientific and technical capacity that will inform the development of national and local programmes and projects
- The exchange of knowledge about climate-related risks among all stakeholder groups in DRR policies and actions.
- Maximizing the use of climate forecasts in short, medium and long term in order to identify no regrets actions at various levels
- Use of forecast-based climate financing that will help fund actions based on science and forecasts in light of increased levels of risk (across timescales)
- National DRR policies and platforms to take into consideration climate change science and climate change mitigation and adaptation practices and approaches into all DRR efforts, e.g. by creating early warning systems that characterize risk across timescales, from hours or weeks to years or even decades ahead of a potential emergency. These warnings systematically trigger actions to improve vulnerability reduction, preparedness and response.

**We recommend that the post-2015 framework on DRR (HFA II):**

- *Emphasizes* that changing risk patterns, extreme events and vulnerability brought about by climate change need to be considered and integrated in all DRR policies, platforms, plans and budgets.
- *Urges* breaking down the barriers in institutions, policies, and financing mechanisms between (i) climate change adaptation (ii) disaster risk reduction (iii) civil defense and humanitarian response.
- *Facilitates* use of risk information for anticipatory action across timescales, including through support for climate services (across scales, from local communities to national government agencies)

### **Standards, criteria and tools**

The Partners for Resilience alliance has developed a set of new tools for making risk assessments and for the planning of 'ecosystem and climate-smart DRR activities'. They have also drawn on their previously developed and widely used successful tools.

#### **[Minimum Standards on Climate Smart DRR](#)**

This document is a set of practical checklists to help local community leaders and DRR practitioners to ensure their risk reduction efforts are climate-smart and contribute to climate change adaptation, meaning that these efforts consider the future risk patterns induced by changing climate, often including rising uncertainties. The [Minimum Standards for Local Climate-smart Disaster Risk Reduction](#) provide a 'good enough guide' to help local community leaders, DRR practitioners and policymakers ensure DRR efforts are going beyond business as usual by truly address changing climate-related risks. [Download](#).

#### **[Integrating Ecosystems in Resilience Practice](#)**

This document introduces a set of criteria which can be used by policy makers and practitioners to better integrate the management of ecosystems and natural resources in their disaster risk reduction work. The criteria describe the required steps to develop an "ecosystem-smart" approach in the design, implementation and evaluation of risk reduction programmes. They provide guidance on the required capacities, partnerships, institutional set-up and planning needs. The criteria are available in English, Spanish, French and Bahasa Indonesia. [Download](#).

#### **Harmonized community risk assessment toolkit**

By integrating disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and ecosystem management and restoration, this toolkit provides a holistic approach to community risk assessments. This approach, developed by Partners for Resilience, includes elements of adaptation, disaster mitigation and has a focus on tools for reducing vulnerabilities towards longer term sustainable practices.

#### **[The Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis \(CVCA\)](#)**

This methodology helps us to understand the implications of climate change for the lives and livelihoods of the people we serve. By combining local knowledge with scientific data, the process builds people's understanding about climate risks and adaptation strategies. It provides a framework for dialogue within communities, as well as between communities and other stakeholders. The results provide a solid foundation for the identification of practical strategies to facilitate community-based adaptation to climate change. [Download](#).

#### **[Building Community-managed disaster risk reduction \(CMDRR\)](#)**

Reducing people's vulnerability, strengthening their capacity and reducing the risk of hazards are all components of CMDRR. This training manual and resource book is a comprehensive process guide for trainers and facilitators on how to help communities' design and implement CMDRR. The a training of trainers format, helps guide communities in designing and implementing the various stages, steps and activities constituting the processes in developing local capacity for establishing CMDRR programs. This manual is widely used in

many communities all over the world and available now in 7 languages (English, Spanish, French, Bahasa, Bangla, Tamil, Hindi). [Download](#).

### **About the Partners for Resilience**

Partners for Resilience is a collaboration between CARE Netherlands, Cordaid, the Netherlands Red Cross, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, Wetlands International and 30 civil society partners in the global South. The alliance is integrating climate change adaptation (CCA) and ecosystem management and restoration (EMR) into disaster risk reduction (DRR) to build resilient communities through a five-year programme. The programme strengthens the resilience of more than 400,000 people in nine countries where the most vulnerable communities struggle to cope with different types of hazards and whose livelihoods are affected by droughts, floods and other hazards which are partly resulting from degraded ecosystems and a changing climate.

### **More information:**

Bruno Haghebaert, The Netherlands Red Cross: [bhaghebaert@redcross.nl](mailto:bhaghebaert@redcross.nl).

Susanna Tol, Wetlands International: [susanna.tol@wetlands.org](mailto:susanna.tol@wetlands.org)

Donna Lagdameo, Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre: [lagdameo@climatecentre.org](mailto:lagdameo@climatecentre.org)