

Statement from the NGO Major Group on DRR **Developed as a contribution to the 7th Open Working Group, January 2014**

Economic losses from disasters are doubling approximately every decade. This is clearly unsustainable. Surprisingly, the vast majority of disaster losses are due to small-scale everyday disasters that are climate-related and get limited national and international support. It is the poorest and most marginalised groups who are worst affected.

Disasters derail development and play a major role in pushing people into poverty and keeping them there. Unsustainable development such as unplanned urbanisation is a key driver of increasing disaster risk.

What are the solutions?

Firstly states need to make development sustainable, to avoid the accumulation of unacceptable levels of risk, by promoting development planning that accounts for environmental and social costs.

Secondly, states need to invest in disaster risk reduction – we need a shift from damage control to investment in sustainability. DRR measures are proven to be both highly effective – as demonstrated by India’s management of Cyclone Phailin last October – and cost effective. The focus needs to shift however from large-scale infrequent disasters to the small scale disasters that account for most losses.

The overarching objective is to build societal and community resilience, so that people can reduce the risk of disasters and poverty. Reducing risk has to happen at the local level, targeting vulnerable groups and building on the existing capacities of communities. Both private and public development pathways must change in order to prevent the creation of hazards and vulnerability.

What does this mean for the SDGs?

The framework must clearly recognise the role that shocks and stresses play in undermining development, particularly for the vulnerable, and seek concretely to reduce this. This requires:

- A **clear commitment to a development model** that fully incorporates both short and long term environmental and social costs.
- **Incorporation of resilience building and risk management across relevant goals** – for example, requiring states to increase food security for all during and after disasters; providing access for all to resilient education and healthcare infrastructure.
- **And a specific target to reduce disaster risk.**

This target must:

- **Prioritise reducing disaster risk for the most vulnerable.**
- Stimulate **greater action to reduce underlying vulnerabilities** rather than just ‘disaster-proofing’ existing development.
- **Reduce the impacts of recurrent small-scale disasters**
- **Support locally developed actions** to build resilience.
- **Be squarely linked to climate change goals and targets**, as well as **other policy frameworks** – particularly UNFCCC and the post-Hyogo Framework for Action.

What might such a target look like?

- Similar to the recent WHO/ World Bank proposal for health, a target could be that **no one be pushed into poverty due to disasters.**

- Or it could focus on **reducing the impact of disasters on lives and livelihoods and protecting productive assets like livestock, prioritising the most vulnerable**. An ambitious goal would be a 50% reduction in disaster losses.
- Of critical importance is using **the right indicators to measure underlying risk drivers** – such as environmental and ecosystem degradation, and urbanisation – **and measuring the principles of community resilience such as participation and inclusion**.

If the post-2015 development framework is to be sustainable, it must actively reduce risk and build resilience.