

Resilience and DRR

NGOs vision & priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda

A position paper for the programme:

“Post 2 Post: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in the Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process”

*Final editing: Leida Rijnhout (OP for MG NGO)
European Environmental Bureau
Leida.Rijnhout@eeb.org*

Introduction (draft)¹

According to the United Nations, over the past twenty years disasters from natural hazards have affected 4.4 billion people, claimed 1.3 million lives and caused \$2 trillion in economic losses. For the first time, disaster losses globally have topped \$100bn for three consecutive years (2010–2012), far outstripping humanitarian aid. According to Ban Ki Moon ‘economic losses from disasters are out of control’.

Disasters have a devastating impact on development. Families lose homes, livelihoods and loved ones, communities lose businesses, jobs and services, children and particularly girls miss school and are at risk of early marriage – the list of impacts goes on. Disasters can cancel progress on poverty reduction and the drive for economic growth can expose countries to more risk – cities can be engines of growth, but unplanned urbanisation exposes many people to risk.

Resilience to disasters and other shocks and stresses is therefore a defining characteristic of sustainable development: the goal of resilience is to sustain development through extreme shocks and disturbances. With the latest climate science indicating that global warming far beyond 2°C is increasingly likely, and that even a 2°C warming will have far worse consequences than expected just a few years ago, the need to for a development framework that promotes resilience to a rising frequency and intensity of hazards is greater than ever.

A Post 2015 Development Framework is required that promotes measuring and reducing losses of all forms from disasters, and which responds to the complex and interconnected causes of vulnerability.

Summary

Ending absolute poverty should be the priority for the post-2015 development goals and this requires a strong commitment to reduce disaster risks, otherwise development efforts for the poorest will be unsustainable. Unaddressed, the impacts of climate change and disasters will place local and national progress against development goals at risk.

Economic losses from disasters are doubling every 10 years. 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. A development framework is needed that promotes reducing risk by investment in DRR and a change to private and public development pathways in order not to create hazards and vulnerability.

Our position

Disasters ‘can be the most important cause of impoverishment, cancelling progress on poverty reduction’. The World Bank has also reported on growing evidence that adverse shocks, above all health and weather shocks, and economic crises play a major role in pushing households below the poverty line and keeping them there.

Disasters of all scales reveal the boundaries within which development can take place. Determining the conditions and parameters under which a society or community can continue to operate without collapse is important to understanding their immediate and long term sustainability. Strengths and weaknesses can

become apparent under the extreme conditions that lead to disasters revealing critical thresholds that must not be crossed. In this way resilience can be seen as a defining characteristic of sustainability.

Our view is that if the post-2015 development framework is to be sustainable, it must actively reduce risk and build resilience, which means:

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.

Goals and Targets

A specific target to reduce disaster risk is needed that must:

- **Be transformative**, addressing all three aspects of disaster risk reduction
 - Reduce the **underlying risk factors** to avoid unacceptable risk creation – for example active environmental, ecosystems and land use management
 - reduce **existing levels of risk** – for example through early warning systems and contingency plans
 - strengthen **community/household resilience** - the capacity of people to absorb, adapt and thrive in the face of shocks and stresses – for example through empowerment and social protection.
- **Reduce the impact of extensive disasters** as well as intensive ones, as recurrent small-scale disasters are a key driver of poverty.
- **Ensure that risk is reduced for the most marginalised. States should**
 - report data disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, age, disability and other relevant criteria, and ensure that targets must be met for the lowest income quintile.
 - report data **disaggregated to sub-national and community levels**, to ensure that disparities are not hidden by national averages.
- **be based primarily on outcome** (such as measurable reductions in risk or losses), rather than only inputs (such as existence of legislation). This is because input targets do not guarantee a reduction in risks, outcome targets have more political traction, and detail on inputs fits better in the post-HFA.

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.
- There is also emerging work exploring different and potentially more useful targets, including **indices of relative vulnerability and resilience, risk modelling**, a composite indicator of **underlying risk drivers**. Some of this is being explored under the HFA and it is imperative that these work streams are coordinated.

Framework

Cross-cutting Issues

Across the framework the role that shocks and stresses play in undermining development, particularly for the vulnerable, must be recognised 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** to ensure that risk reduction is not treated as a standalone issue, which has been proven as ineffective.¹ Risk analysis and disaster risk reduction needs to be strategically integrated across the spectrum of development policy, planning and practice, to be considered in all policy and spending decisions, in order to reduce rather than exacerbate risks. Thus it needs to be an integral part of other key sectors such as gender equality, health, education, food security etc. This would include
 - a. Food security - ensuring food security for all during and after disasters, and build sustainable resilient agriculture
 - b. Health, education, urban
 - i. ensuring access for all to resilient infrastructure (healthcare, educational, other strategic infrastructure such as key roads/ports etc) which continues to function post-disaster
 - ii. ensuring provision of emergency shelter
 - iii. land use policy, planning and investment to reduce risks.
 - c. Gender – recognising greater impacts of disasters on women as well as greater capacities - putting participatory DRR at the forefront of protecting and sustaining communities.
 - d. Water - Water and sanitation systems are built to hazard-resistant standards, and can resist becoming a breeding ground for disease.
 - e. Governance – DRR institutions at all levels ensure participation of all marginalised groups
- **Integrating the principles of community resilience (see indicators below) into the Post 2015 Development Framework** as an essential element of achieving lasting development gains that leave 'no one behind'. Disaster risk is not shared equally between rich and poor. People are vulnerable because they are politically, socially or economically excluded, with little access to resources, influence, information or decision-making.

Placing the Position

The framework's narrative should clearly outline the risks to development of disasters and other shocks and stresses, making it clear that this should be addressed through:

- a) risk reduction – reducing risk we already have;
- b) avoidance of creation of unacceptable levels of new risk – requiring greater analysis and choice of different development models. We need to tackle the root causes of the increase in disaster losses;
- c) building the resilience of communities and states to shocks and stresses.
- d) the narrative should also outline the value of indigenous knowledge and empowering local communities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Resilience indicators should measure both losses from disasters and emphasise **how** to strengthen resilience rather than more prescriptively try to describe **what** resilience looks like, which is almost impossible given diverse local contexts. A single goal or target on resilience therefore must encompass indicators of losses resulting from disasters, finance for strengthening resilience & disaster risk reduction, and adoption of principles of community resilience.

Outcome indicators includes the social, environmental and economic losses to communities and societies:

¹ See [World Development Report 2014, Risk and Opportunity](#)

job losses, damage and destruction of homes and the injuries and lives lost from disasters disaggregated by socio-economic groups and as a proportion of household wealth, with an emphasis on reducing losses to the most marginalised, excluded and disadvantaged groups who are the least able to recover.

Process indicators include the allocation of resources for the implementation of resilience strengthening and disaster risk reduction policies, programmes, laws and regulations in all relevant sectors and in national and local administrative budgets. Also that the citizens right to the highest possible standard of security, protection and access to the necessary information against hazards is incorporated into legal or constitutional frameworks.

Proposed indicators of community resilience principles are:

Participation: The rights of all including women, indigenous peoples, poor and marginalised groups to participate in policy and development planning processes is set out in policy and law and the means of participation is defined.

Inclusion: The percentage of women and poor and marginalized groups represented in local and national decision making bodies.

Learning: The integration of local/ traditional knowledge and technical/scientific knowledge in policy and development planning processes in all sectors.

Self Organisation: decentralised local governance systems are integrated with other levels and adequately resourced and decentralised responsibilities are clearly identified and allocated.

Accountability: Knowledge of risks, rights, roles and responsibilities. With clear accountability mechanism of DRR policy and program implementation where community is involved in the monitoring processes (social audit is in place), accessible complaint handling mechanism is in place, and make the report of progress available to public.

Responsiveness: community reports on their capacity to identify problems and find and implement solutions in a timely manner. Percentage of budget allocation to resource community's action plan in undertaking disaster risk reduction activities and in building resilience directly and through the collaboration with the local authorities.

Collaboration and partnerships: the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships tasked with strengthening community resilience. Strong policy for environmental protection and clear commitment from private sectors and media in strengthening community resilience through transparent mechanisms that are socially and environmentally accountable.

Living within social and environmental boundaries: integration of living within environmental boundaries into development planning; establishing a social protection floor.

Next Steps

There is a clear need to develop a broad consensus on the disasters targets and indicators required. There are two major pieces of work on this

- UNISDR is undertaking work on indicators for the post-HFA framework
- UNDP and ODI will soon start a piloting programme of targets and indicators in several countries for the post-MDGs.

NGOs are supporting both of these pieces of work, and building up political support for DRR targets, partly through engagement in capitals, and also through the 'Friends of DRR' group, based in New York. We are proposing an experts meeting in London in February, and a retreat for the Friends group in New York in May.

Conclusion

Dynamic pressures like climate change and urbanisation are continuing to increase people's vulnerability to disasters and the poor long-term development outcomes that can result from them. Addressing this will require a Post 2015 Development Framework that promotes measuring losses of all forms from these events, and which responds to the complex and interconnected causes of vulnerability.

