Over the past decade, the number of people reportedly affected by disasters globally increased by one-third; reported deaths were up 84%. If trends continue it is estimated that, by 2050, natural disasters could have a global cost of over $300 billion a year, and will be a key element in the failure to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. At the recent Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Sir John Holmes, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, noted the challenge of ‘turning what is contained in the Hyogo Framework for Action into concrete, practical actions at every level … what we need to do is together advance the arguments which will actually support further investment in risk reduction and we need that further investment. We must share our success stories’ in order to make a life-saving difference for hundreds of millions of people who are increasingly vulnerable to disaster risk.

This edition of Humanitarian Exchange features articles on the topic of disaster risk reduction for humanitarian practitioners. Disaster risk reduction is the broad development and application of policies, strategies and practices to reduce vulnerabilities and disaster risks for affected communities, through prevention, mitigation and preparedness. An increasing body of knowledge and best practice has emerged on this topic, but there are still many challenges, not least the dynamically changing humanitarian context in which agencies must respond. Traditional humanitarian planning and response must factor in the impacts of a changing external environment including climate change, increased displacement and migration, urbanisation, HIV/AIDS and other potential pandemics, and engage with effective disaster risk reduction strategies to mitigate the negative effects of these problems. There is a need for better coordination between climate change, disasters and development communities, greater understanding of both global and local risks associated with climate change, and improved approaches to understand and respond to local vulnerabilities, while simultaneously addressing underlying complex and partly global processes.

This edition also presents articles on other subjects of concern to policymakers and practitioners in the humanitarian sector: the role of Islamic charities, the analysis and integration of market factors in food security in West Africa and improving accountability to beneficiaries.

All these articles, along with archived editions of Humanitarian Exchange, are available on our website at www.odihpn.org, where you can also submit feedback on the articles presented. As always, we welcome any comments or feedback, which can be sent to hpn@odi.org.uk.
Disaster reduction terminology: a common-sense approach

John Twigg, Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre

We’re all familiar with the scene: a training course or workshop (it could be on any topic) that starts with a long and detailed presentation on concepts and terminology. Your mind begins to wonder; you look at your watch and count the minutes till the coffee break...

If you are working in a busy operational environment, theories and definitions seem all too often to get in the way of doing the job. This is particularly true in high-pressure humanitarian work, but it is a barrier to development practitioners too. Why is this so? Staff in relief and development NGOs interviewed a few years ago as part of a British Red Cross study provided some answers, at least as far as disaster reduction was concerned. They showed strong signs of resistance to the relevant language and terminology. It was ‘too much like jargon’, ‘off-putting’, ‘too difficult to explain’ and ‘too academic’. This view is understandable in the face of the elaborate academic nature of many definitions and terms, such as this explanation of ‘preparedness’:

Preparedness is a construct which controls a process of activities designed to increase control in response to shocks.  

There is undoubtedly a place for this kind of thing in the academic – in this case, sociological – literature, but practitioners may find it hard to digest.

Box 1: Hazard and disaster terminology

A hazard is a geophysical, atmospheric; or hydrological event (e.g., earthquake, landslide, hurricane, windstorm, wave or surge, flood or drought) that has the potential to cause harm or loss.

Vulnerability is the potential to suffer harm or loss, related to the capacity to anticipate a hazard, cope with it, resist it and recover from its impact. Both vulnerability and its antithesis, resilience, are determined by physical, environmental, social, economic, political, cultural and institutional factors.

A disaster is the occurrence of an extreme hazard event that impacts on vulnerable communities causing substantial damage, disruption and possible casualties, and leaving the affected communities unable to function normally without outside assistance.

Disaster risk is a function of the characteristics and frequency of hazards experienced in a specified location, the nature of the elements at risk and their inherent degree of vulnerability or resilience.

Mitigation is any structural (physical) or non-structural (e.g., land-use planning, public education) measure undertaken to minimise the adverse impact of potential natural hazard events.

Preparedness means activities and measures taken before hazard events occur to forecast and warn against them, evacuate people and property when they threaten and ensure effective response (e.g., establishing food supplies).

Relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction are any measures undertaken in the aftermath of a disaster to, respectively, save lives and address immediate humanitarian needs, restore normal activities, and restore physical infrastructure and services.

Climate change is a statistically significant change in measurements of either the mean state or the variability of the climate for a place or region over an extended period, either directly or indirectly due to the impact of human activities on the composition of the global atmosphere or due to natural variability.

sions, which in disaster management would be seen as ‘prevention’. Disaster managers use ‘mitigation’ in a sense that is much closer to climate change’s ‘adaptation’. A glossary published recently by the United Nations University’s Institute for Environment and Human Security reproduces many different definitions of key terms in disaster work, including ‘disaster’, ‘hazard’, ‘vulnerability’, ‘capacity’, ‘resilience’ and ‘risk’. Such diversity and inconsistency are unsurprising when the concepts behind the terms are the subject of intense research and discussion among the different academic disciplines that take an interest in disasters – for instance, two multi-author volumes have been published in the past decade debating that most basic of questions: what is a disaster?

With the idea of risk becoming more dominant in discussion of disasters, the potential for ambiguity and confusion may be growing. Like ‘disaster’, ‘risk’ is a simple everyday word that has become overloaded with lots of different interpretations. Just as the adoption of ‘disaster risk reduction’ thinking has incorporated the older, separate components of disaster management and the disaster cycle (preparedness, response, recovery) into a more integrated ‘disaster risk management’ approach, so the everyday use of ‘risk’ seems to have expanded to overlap with, if not absorb, other concepts, such as vulnerability. One indication of this is that, in practice, the terms ‘risk assessment’ and ‘vulnerability assessment’ often seem to be used interchangeably.

Terminology never stands still. It adapts to shifts in thinking, by adopting new terms or expanding old ones. For example, in the 1970s people talked about ‘disaster prevention’, in the 1980s and 1990s this was superseded by ‘disaster mitigation’, which in turn was replaced by today’s fashionable term ‘disaster risk reduction’. Terms usually become obsolete for good reasons. In the case of ‘prevention’, it became obvious that it was impossible to prevent hazards or escape their impacts completely. ‘Mitigation’ of disasters’ impacts was more realistic – but arguably too broad a term, since its meaning was often unclear or ambiguous for everyone except engineers, who had always applied it far more narrowly to hazard-reducing or hazard-resistant structures. ‘Disaster risk reduction’ reflects today’s holistic thinking and integrated approaches to the disaster problem, but it too will become outdated in time.

Such matters worry academics, and rightly so, as scientific enquiry should lead to clarity, not confusion. But should practitioners worry about them? Does any of this matter at operational level? Ideas and language do have practical significance, of course: the way we think and speak about humanitarianism, development or disaster risk reduction shapes the way we approach our work on the field. But a lot of the debate seems to be hair-splitting (Do you know the precise difference between ‘capacity’ and ‘resilience’? Do you care? Does it matter?) Thinking about disasters is always developing, so pinning down a term or concept is like trying to hit a moving target. And it’s good that thinking moves on, otherwise we would still be seeing disasters purely as acts of God.

However, since we cannot do away with concepts and definitions entirely, let’s ask what practitioners want from them. First, they must be expressed clearly, preferably in plain language. Second, they must be relatively simple to understand and communicate. If possible, they should also reflect practitioners’ own view of reality, acquired from their knowledge in the field and the communities with whom they work.
more accurate ‘hazard risk’ because ‘disaster risk’ is the term favoured in practice by the disaster reduction community. Our versions raised a few eyebrows in professional and academic circles, although we could arguably have simplified some of them further.

We also provided examples in some cases to make definitions more real and intelligible. Indeed, it may sometimes be better to focus on the common characteristics of key ideas rather than to seek to define them too precisely. Operational staff may respond to this approach more readily. For instance, the NGO staff interviewed in the British Red Cross study mentioned above tended to have a sound general understanding of the relevant issues, but preferred to explain specific terms and concepts such as ‘preparedness’ and ‘mitigation’ by giving concrete examples.

Does this mean we should give up seeking consistency in our terminology? Not entirely, for it remains important. In the case of contingency planning, for example, as Richard Choularton argues in his Network Paper: ‘More consistent use of terms related to contingency planning and preparedness is needed to help improve the sharing of experience, lessons and practice’. But there are dangers here, even where we avoid the over-academic approach and look for something more practical. One is that the drive towards consistency may develop into a struggle between different groups or organisations to impose their terms and meanings on everyone else. There is also the counter-risk that consensus achieved through committee will result in definitions that try to say too much in order to keep all the stakeholders happy. The definitions of ‘disaster risk management’ and ‘disaster risk reduction’ presented by the United Nations International Strategy for

Box 2: The power of images

A visual image can sometimes be sufficient to present a concept to practitioners. Take the ‘Pressure and Release’ model developed in the mid-1990s by a group of eminent thinkers. In its simplest, diagrammatic form (Figure 1), it appears nearly everywhere these days, in training courses, lectures, guidelines and many other publications. Very few of those who see and use the diagram will have read the many dense pages of text explaining the sophisticated theory of vulnerability which it illustrates, but they respond readily to its clarity, insight and relevance.

Figure 1: PAR model

1. Real causes
   - Local economies
   - Local societies
   - Local cultures
   - Local standards in public life

2. Dynamic pressures
   - Rapid population change
   - Arms expenditure
   - Debt repayment schedules

3. Unsafe conditions
   - Deforestation
   - Decline in soil productivity

4. Disaster
   - Earthquake
   - High winds
   - Flooding
   - Landslide
   - Floods and pests

5. Risk = Hazard \times Vulnerability

6. Risk = Damage to People


Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR) may have fallen into this trap (though to be fair its definitions of most other disaster terms are neat):

Disaster risk management: The systematic process of using administrative decisions, organisational, operational skills and capacities to implement policies, strategies and coping capacities of the society and communities to lessen the impacts of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters. This comprises all forms of activities, including structural and non-structural measures to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) adverse effects of hazards.

Disaster risk reduction: 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 impacts of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development.

Let us hope that we can reach a greater level of agreement in time on basic terms and concepts relating to disaster risk reduction. There is already a strong push towards harmonisation among international agencies working in this field, led by UN ISDR. There are some parallel trends in intellectual circles, particularly in work on vulnerability, sustainable livelihoods and social protection, where previously separate discourses are coming together to create a more shared vision with a common language.

There is still a long way to go here. Meanwhile, practitioners can be guided by a few common sense principles:

• keep terms, definitions and concepts as simple as you can; it is better to over-simplify than to over-elaborate;
• in defining terms, look for common ground and shared understanding to ensure widespread acceptance;
• use key characteristics or concrete examples where definitions are difficult to explain; and
• be clear to yourself and others about what you mean when you use a term.

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The Hyogo Framework for Action: reclaiming ownership?

Mihir R. Bhatt, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute

At Kobe in January 2005, the worldwide humanitarian system and partners gathered to collect their insights, views and experience to shape and launch the historic Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a global strategy to reduce disaster risks. Like many others, the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) had been demanding such a framework since the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) was concluded in 1998 in Geneva. The global event in Kobe was unique: it augmented our insights and ideas, gave them a global appeal, arranged them into doable actions and established a global mandate for disaster risk reduction. However, it also took disaster risk reduction away from us – civil society.

This dispossession was not intended. Nevertheless, this is the effect, intended or otherwise. HFA is a top-down process, UN and donor-driven, and flows through formal institutional mechanisms and legal arrangements. National platforms are being set up and thematic platforms are being formed at the instance of those who work at the global level, in the UN or donor agencies. Although large numbers of individuals and organisations are involved, and are being consulted and engaged with good effect, the process is still decided at the top, not according to local agendas.

We, as a collective civil society, as individuals, and as humanitarian practitioners, need to reclaim the HFA as our own, not by arguments but by action, and not through contention but through cooperation. This is what I have heard again and again in the field, from local and small NGOs in Asia and in Africa over the past two years. But...
how to do this? In this article I would like to show how this is being done at AIDMI, and with its partners in the field. I will give three examples: institutional, activity-specific and system-specific. For the institutional example, I have taken AIDMI’s own work in South Asia. For the activity-specific example, I have taken the Indian government’s National Disaster Management Authority’s annual congress of 2007. For the system-specific example, I have taken the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM’s) process documentation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) in Sri Lanka.

**Institutional audit: the AIDMI Annual Report 2006**

AIDMI has reviewed, revised and reflected upon the HFA to make it useful in organisational audits and communication about AIDMI’s activities generally. In the past two years, HFA has been used as a primary tool in AIDMI’s annual reports to illustrate how actions fit with the five priorities listed below. (For more information about AIDMI publications please visit: www.southasiadisasters.net.) This has two advantages. First, it helps us identify our relative strengths and weaknesses. Second, it helps others who work with us, support us and partner with us to approach an HFA priority area as a useful reference and risk reduction resource. Below is an overview of how AIDMI’s actions contribute to the realisation of global risk reduction within the HFA.

1. **Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation**

The field and office team of AIDMI reviewed a wide range of activities that AIDMI had conducted, and separated out those activities that helped in making DRR a national and local priority. The activities were many, ranging from organising a national roundtable of key stakeholders to comment on the Indian government’s draft Disaster Management Bill to holding an Asia-wide roundtable on the use of microfinance as a disaster risk reduction measure in tsunami recovery, to hosting former US President Bill Clinton’s NGO Impact Initiative regional consultation in Chennai, India.

2. **Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning**

Although a more difficult exercise, here too the AIDMI team came up with examples, ranging from the use of GIS in city-level recovery mapping in Bhuj, which was hit by an earthquake in 2001, to creating a location-specific database for mapping the response to a series of bomb blasts in Mumbai, India, in July 2007. Similarly, methods to measure and manage the impact of livelihood recovery measures after July 2006 floods in Surat, India, were included as an example.

3. **Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels**

These key activities included over 45 community-based disaster risk reduction training sessions in 2006 in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Mumbai and Kashmir, and publishing 12 issues of SouthasianDisasters.net. Sector-specific initiatives, such as publishing a book on micro-insurance in tsunami recovery, are another example.

4. **Reduce the underlying risk factors**

Here the key effort was the expansion of 460 times (disaster insurance), from 1,000 to 3,000 disaster-affected people in India, as well as a second edition of microcredit to those who received livelihood relief following the Gujarat riots in 2002, to further accelerate business recovery. Other examples include the promotion of safer housing and infrastructure measures in slum communities. The use of cash transfers in several new shelter, community infrastructure and training projects in Kashmir and a pilot of an agriculture insurance scheme in Gujarat are further examples.

5. **Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels**

This included facilitating local response plans and organisational preparedness plans, as well as a Safer School Campaign in 10 schools in all districts in Gujarat. Efforts to strengthen local emergency medicine responses in communities are another example.

Mapping research and knowledge development: the India Disaster Management Congress

The First India Disaster Management Congress (IDMC), in New Delhi in 2006, was a major step forward in recognising that disasters pose a serious challenge to human security in India. Despite India’s high and steady economic growth in recent years, disasters deprive millions of poor Indians of the development opportunities that potentially accompany such growth. Since 2004 alone, India has faced two major disasters – the Indian Ocean tsunami and the South Asia earthquake – which between them killed more than 10,000 people.

Since 2004 alone, India has faced two major disasters which between them killed more than 10,000 people.

Yet offsetting the variety of hazards facing India, the country is also home to a very rich and diverse civil society, including trade unions, institutes, NGOs and professional societies. The role of these institutions in disaster management has been widely recognised. India’s National Disaster Management Act of 2005, as well as intergovernmental agreements such as the HFA, stress the distinctive role of NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) in disaster relief and mitigation. Hundreds of Indian official and civil society organisations presented their ideas and showcased their efforts at the First IDMC. In just one of several sessions, a total of 30 papers were submitted from individuals in 22 disciplines, from 86 organisations. Simply to organise the sheer volume of papers and new information was a challenge. The HFA again proved a useful tool for analysing hundreds of these papers. The HFA was used to identify current topics that are being researched, as well as pointing out areas where more research is required to support the HFA.
The submitted papers demonstrated that non-governmental and other civil society organisations’ activities can take various forms and can be on various different scales. Some specialised NGOs might address only one area of disaster management, such as the provision of health services. Other civil society organisations are able to run large programmes in several regions, addressing a number of aspects of disaster management by reducing underlying risk, strengthening response capacities and advocating policy changes. All of these activities make a contribution towards risk reduction in India. These efforts may be organised and understood by placing the topics of each paper into the respective Hyogo Framework priority area that the paper discussed.

Joint process review: UNIFEM Partners in Sri Lanka

The HFA has been useful in evaluating, summarising and communicating the risk reduction efforts of local women’s organisations involved in tsunami recovery. For example, UNIFEM supported the efforts of 18 local partners in sustainable recovery, focusing on women’s needs in Sri Lanka. This was a demand-driven effort. UNIFEM and its partners addressed a large number of priority areas for action in the tsunami response in Sri Lanka, with a specific emphasis on gender. The HFA was used to organise concrete contributions to risk reduction, as well as to communicate recommendations for each partner. Below is a sample of the measures taken by UNIFEM’s local partners.

Conclusion

The HFA is simple and agile; it can be applied to our own local needs and activities if suitable processes are developed and resources – human and financial – are allocated to civil society organisations to reclaim ownership. HFA means many things to many organisations. By maintaining this multiplicity of meanings, we can continue to constructively own HFA. Its sustainability lies more in resourcing such applications and innovations, rather than achieving pre-planned outputs and outcomes in a project-based way. In the end, the HFA must remain in our joint custody, a shared heritage of civil society.

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General considerations

(a) The Principles contained in the Yokohama Strategy retain their full relevance in the current context, which is characterized by increasing commitment to disaster reduction.

(b) Taking into account the importance of international cooperation and partnerships, each State has the primary responsibility for its own sustainable development and for taking effective measures to reduce disaster risk, including for the protection of people on its territory, infrastructure and other national assets from the impact of disasters. At the same time, in the context of increasing global interdependence, concerted international cooperation and an enabling international environment are required to stimulate and contribute to developing the knowledge, capacities and motivation needed for disaster risk reduction at all levels.

(c) An integrated, multi-hazard approach to disaster risk reduction should be factored into policies, planning and programming related to sustainable development, relief, rehabilitation, and recovery activities in post-disaster and post-conflict situations in disaster-prone countries.

(d) A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training.

(e) Cultural diversity, age, and vulnerable groups should be taken into account when planning for disaster risk reduction, as appropriate.

(f) Both communities and local authorities should be empowered to manage and reduce disaster risk by having access to the necessary information, resources and authority to implement actions for disaster risk reduction.

(g) Disaster-prone developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States, warrant particular attention in view of their higher vulnerability and risk levels, which often greatly exceed their capacity to respond to and recover from disasters.

(h) There is a need to enhance international and regional cooperation and assistance in the field of disaster risk reduction through:

- The transfer of knowledge, technology and expertise to enhance capacity building for disaster risk reduction
- The sharing of research findings, lessons learned and best practices
- The compilation of information on disaster risk and impact for all scales of disasters in a way that can inform sustainable development and disaster risk reduction
- Appropriate support in order to enhance governance for disaster risk reduction, for awareness-raising initiatives and for capacity-development measures at all levels, in order to improve the disaster resilience of developing countries
- The full, speedy and effective implementation of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, taking into account the impact of disasters on the debt sustainability of countries eligible for this programme
- Financial assistance to reduce existing risks and to avoid the generation of new risks

(i) The promotion of a culture of prevention, including through the mobilization of adequate resources for disaster risk reduction, is an investment for the future with substantial returns. Risk assessment and early warning systems are essential investments that protect and save lives, property and livelihoods, contribute to the sustainability of development, and are far more cost-effective in strengthening coping mechanisms than is primary reliance on post-disaster response and recovery.

(j) There is also a need for proactive measures, bearing in mind that the phases of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction following a disaster are windows of opportunity for the rebuilding of livelihoods and for the planning and reconstruction of physical and socio-economic structures, in a way that will build community resilience and reduce vulnerability to future disaster risks.

(k) Disaster risk reduction is a cross-cutting issue in the context of sustainable development and therefore an important element for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. In addition, every effort should be made to use humanitarian assistance in such a way that risks and future vulnerabilities will be lessened as much as possible.
Priorities for action 2005–2015

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation

16. Countries that develop policy, legislative and institutional frameworks for disaster risk reduction and that are able to develop and track progress through specific and measurable indicators have greater capacity to manage risks and to achieve widespread consensus for, engagement in and compliance with disaster risk reduction measures across all sectors of society.

Key activities:
(i) National institutional and legislative frameworks
(ii) Resources
(iii) Community participation

2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

17. The starting point for reducing disaster risk and for promoting a culture of disaster resilience lies in the knowledge of the hazards and the physical, social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities to disasters that most societies face, and of the ways in which hazards and vulnerabilities are changing in the short and long term, followed by action taken on the basis of that knowledge.

Key activities:
(i) National and local risk assessments
(ii) Capacity
(iii) Regional and emerging risks

3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

18. Disasters can be substantially reduced if people are well informed and motivated towards a culture of disaster prevention and resilience, which in turn requires the collection, compilation and dissemination of relevant knowledge and information on hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities.

Key activities:
(i) Information management and exchange
(ii) Education and training
(iii) Research
(iv) Public awareness

4. Reduce the underlying risk factors

19. Disaster risks related to changing social, economic, environmental conditions and land use, and the impact of hazards associated with geological events, weather, water, climate variability and climate change, are addressed in sector development planning and programmes as well as in post-disaster situations.

Key activities:
(i) Social and economic development practices
(ii) Land-use planning and other technical measures

5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

20. At times of disaster, impacts and losses can be substantially reduced if authorities, individuals and communities in hazard-prone areas are well prepared and ready to act and are equipped with the knowledge and capacities for effective disaster management.

Source: Extracted and abridged from the final report of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (A/CONF.206/6), 18–22 January 2005, Kobe, Hyogo, Japan.
Christian Aid and disaster risk reduction
Sarah Moss, Christian Aid

Disasters resulting from natural hazards, such as droughts, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and cyclones, are widespread in many developing countries where Christian Aid partners work, and are identified as a major threat to sustainable development and poverty reduction. This is set to worsen as the frequency and intensity of disasters increase due to the effects of climate change, chronic poverty and increasing population pressure. Christian Aid has been involved in many disaster responses – providing relief and assistance to affected communities after disaster strikes. However, like many others we recognise the importance of trying to do more to prevent these humanitarian situations happening on such a vast scale. There are many ways to help poor families protect their lives and ways of living in the face of such risk – this is what disaster risk reduction (DRR) is all about.

Community-based disaster risk reduction
Christian Aid and its partners have worked for many years on projects rooted in the community, which aim to manage emergencies effectively and reduce these communities’ vulnerability to future disasters. These projects are often referred to as community-based or community-centred DRR.

The benefits of inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction projects are generally acknowledged in the development and humanitarian fields. Communities themselves understand their local context and their people, and are best placed to act when something happens, to save lives and livelihoods, often searching for and rescuing people before outside help arrives, and passing on local knowledge and techniques to adapt their ways of life to circumvent major risks and hazards. Christian Aid and its partner organisations have supported many successful community-based DRR initiatives over the past ten years. Whilst these have had enormous benefits for the communities concerned, especially in the face of devastating disasters and the complacency of governments, over the past few years we have also noted the limitations of this approach when trying to meet the global development challenge presented by disasters, in particular climate change.

Meeting the global development challenge
We have become more aware of the limitations of what can be accomplished when operating on a very local scale. Despite many positive outcomes from community-centred DRR, we are less sure about how to scale up these successful risk reduction activities to find wider application.

Box 1: Community-based approaches to DRR

The core attributes of a community-based approach to disaster mitigation and preparedness are that the principal authority over the programme must rest with the community. Local knowledge and wisdom can best identify the needs of a community and the causes of their vulnerability – and the most suitable plan of action. The most effective disaster mitigation strategies will be those that build on community knowledge.

Villagers and representatives from the local government in Bangladesh mapping and analysing their risk environment.
and more people and contribute to safer societies and countries, and achieving municipal and national results, rather than simple and singular project objectives."

Case studies

Malawi

In 2003/04, Lenge village in Chilawas district, Malawi, suffered from serious food shortages caused by drought. Villagers resorted to desperate measures in order to survive. In nearby villages such as Ngaba, Christian Aid partner ELDS had engaged in risk reduction activities with communities, raising awareness and providing training and assistance in activities including crop diversification, water cropping and water conservation. In these villages, the situation was not as severe, and families were able to support themselves through the crisis. The efforts were cost-effective as well, while total food aid in lengthier village was 1.5 billion Malawi Kwacha over six months, the cost of the disaster risk reductions project in Ngaba village was only 15 million Malawi Kwacha.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, Christian Aid is seeking to establish links with communities and governance structures through its work with Practical Action. Neither the government's Reconstruction and Development Agency (RADA) nor the Disaster Management Ministry and Centre (DMC) has the capacity and resources at district level to implement Sri Lanka's national disaster management plan. Practical Action engaged in participatory, demand-driven planning in Ampara and Hambantota provinces through Provincial Disaster Preparedness Committees and province-level Tsunami Reconstruction Coordination Mechanisms. These forums allow civil society to participate in decision-making, share lessons about reducing vulnerability to disasters and help to ensure the smooth implementation of disaster management at provincial level. They also minimise complexities and duplication among implementations.

India

One lesson to come out of the evaluation of the West Bengal disaster preparedness programme 2004 was that, although the programme was enormously beneficial for the thousands of people who participated, coverage and overall impact could have been much greater if there had been more work with local authorities to link villages and community volunteer committees with higher-level governance structures at district and state level. We also identified an under-explored opportunity for more effective advisory input to raise the profile of DRR at municipal, state and national level. In comparison, a project run by Christian Aid partner SEEDs in Uttar Pradesh is actively working to influence government to include earthquake training and preparedness in the national curriculum, and to involve different sectors of the government and society in raising awareness and influencing policy.

Haiti

In 2005, staff from local organisations in Haiti including four Christian Aid partners received training in facilitating community-based DRR. The four partners then used their knowledge to help communities in Mare-rousse, north-west Haiti, to address risk in the villages through awareness-raising and small micro-projects. Communities identified funding, decontamination and soil erosion as their biggest risks, and decided to reduce these threats through workshops on environmental protection and soil conservation for adults and schoolchildren, reducing decontamination and charcoal-making through training on the use of alternative cooking methods, planting fruit trees to reduce soil erosion and provide additional food and nutrients and establishing and training disaster management committees in their communities. Communities played a full part in analysing the risks and deciding how best to address them. Outside support was brought in where needed.

Kyrgyzstan

A Christian Aid project funded by DFID/CP in 2006 targeted four villages and local government representatives. A rural disaster team and a school disaster team was established in each village and received training on disasters, early warning and first aid and basic equipment. These committee members then trained other community members, drew disaster risk maps of the villages, planned evacuation routes and organised structural mitigation work, such as strengthening river banks and building dykes. A major challenge for the project was the political and administrative culture of top-down planning still prevalent in the region and the lack of government funding for DRR. Moreover, the concept of participatory government is a relatively new phenomenon. There is also scepticism about NGOs. In light of this, the project aimed to link government and communities with Christian Aid partner Shoola playing a facilitating role. This showed some success, with government staff participating in the training sessions and workshops, and offering to provide technical assistance for the structural mitigation work. However, the project phase (one year) was deemed too short, so Christian Aid and Shoola are continuing to support this work over the longer term in order to encourage sustainability and greater collaboration between communities and authorities.

India

In 2005, staff from 11 local organisations in Haiti including four Christian Aid partners received training in facilitating community-based DRR. The four partners then used their knowledge to help communities in Mare-rousse, north-west Haiti, to address risk in the villages through awareness-raising and small micro-projects. Communities identified funding, decontamination and soil erosion as their biggest risks, and decided to reduce these threats through workshops on environmental protection and soil conservation for adults and schoolchildren, reducing decontamination and charcoal-making through training on the use of alternative cooking methods, planting fruit trees to reduce soil erosion and provide additional food and nutrients and establishing and training disaster management committees in their communities. Communities played a full part in analysing the risks and deciding how best to address them. Outside support was brought in where needed.

Kyrgyzstan

A Christian Aid project funded by DFID/CP in 2006 targeted four villages and local government representatives. A rural disaster team and a school disaster team was established in each village and received training on disasters, early warning and first aid and basic equipment. These committee members then trained other community members, drew disaster risk maps of the villages, planned evacuation routes and organised structural mitigation work, such as strengthening river banks and building dykes. A major challenge for the project was the political and administrative culture of top-down planning still prevalent in the region and the lack of government funding for DRR. Moreover, the concept of participatory government is a relatively new phenomenon. There is also scepticism about NGOs. In light of this, the project aimed to link government and communities with Christian Aid partner Shoola playing a facilitating role. This showed some success, with government staff participating in the training sessions and workshops, and offering to provide technical assistance for the structural mitigation work. However, the project phase (one year) was deemed too short, so Christian Aid and Shoola are continuing to support this work over the longer term in order to encourage sustainability and greater collaboration between communities and authorities.

The role of government and civil society

The root causes of people's vulnerability to disasters can often be found in national and global political, social and economic structures and trends: weak planning and building codes, inadequate policies governing civil protection and disaster response, inade-
quite international policies on greenhouse gas reduction and climate change, a lack of national welfare system or safety nets, indebtedness and aid dependence. Therefore, over the long term ensuring that people’s lives and livelihoods are resilient to disaster involves much more than community-based work. It involves creating a supportive political and legislative environment in which good initiatives can thrive, be sustained and be replicated. It involves a multi-sector and multi-level approach, as laid out in the UN Hyogo Framework for Action, and the cooperation of national and international bodies. But this needs to be a participative process which involves civil society as much as government – all citizens have a role to play, and individuals can take responsibility for different actions. In short, the sustainable scale-up of community-centred DRR work depends on governments and civil society working together. This inclusive approach has become central to Christian Aid’s DRR work with local partners through the ‘Building Resilient Communities Project’, funded by DFID.

ensuring that people’s lives and livelihoods are resilient to disaster involves much more than community-based work

Good practice in disaster risk reduction

Over the past decade, we have learned through experience that the most effective DRR projects meet the following criteria:

1. They are based on a thorough analysis of the particular risk and vulnerability environment, and an understanding of the people affected.
2. They encourage civil society and governance actors to participate in the analysis of risk, so that DRR activities ensure that the needs of citizens are acknowledged and addressed fairly.
3. They aim to develop stronger links between community-centred and government-led DRR initiatives.
4. They attempt to bridge the gaps between micro, meso and macro-level DRR activities in terms of transfer of information, assigning responsibility, funding and allocating resources.
5. They are set up to encourage a facilitating environment to promote sustainability, scale-up and the replication of good practice.
6. They promote greater interaction and participation between community members and governing authorities, are linked to the bigger picture, are resourced appropriately and are implemented effectively.

The role of NGOs

NGOs should focus on the long-term goal of municipal and national results rather than simple and singular project objectives or internal organisational goals, which have often been the focus in the past. This might involve distinct project timelines, but should also fit into a long-term plan which is congruent with local wishes, and in line with local visions for the future. It is important to see DRR as a long-term process that requires sustained attention, even if resources, training and skills requirements may change over time.

NGOs can support this aim in the following ways:

- provide training and awareness raising of the issues;
- develop collaborative strategies to promote scale-up and the replication of good practice;
- support the scaling-up of the Hyogo Framework;
- raise the profile of DRR as a policy and advocacy concern, with the aim of creating a favourable environment for sustainable DRR (restructuring processes and reforming institutions and legislation);
- aim to increase the resources deployed and the range of actors working for the common goal of risk reduction;
- provide facilitation or technical advice and assistance where requested;
- help to link donor funding for DRR with good-practice initiatives; and
- promote coherent and sustainable solutions to disasters.

Community-led policy monitoring

One way to encourage governance actors to acknowledge the needs of their citizens is through community-led policy monitoring (CLPM). In CLPM, communities are at the centre of the action – identifying needs and action plans, and challenging the government to provide the right enabling environment and resources for citizens to reduce their risk to disaster.

In early 2007, Christian Aid, CAFOD and Trocaire released a joint publication entitled ‘Monitoring: Government Policies. A Toolkit for Civil Organisations in Africa’. This is a practical tool to help local organisations plan how they can monitor different government policies. Although written for use in Africa, the majority of the toolkit contains generic information that could be used by any civil society group working advice on how to undertake policy monitoring.

With reference to this tool kit and the Hyogo Framework for Action, Christian Aid has produced a series of short guidance notes to help civil society organisations and communities to better monitor, influence and secure commitment to the Hyogo Framework at the local level by:

- documenting and analysing the different approaches and tools for community-led policy monitoring that will be needed to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action;
- making specific recommendations for achieving effective and successful policy monitoring and mainstreaming of DRR at a local level, based on lessons learnt from existing policy monitoring initiatives and case studies.
Sarah Moss is Disaster Risk Reduction Unit Manager at Christian Aid. Her email address is: smoss@christian-aid.org. This article benefited from contributions by Bina Desai, Jacob Nyirongo, Rupappa Kachela, Harold Paul, Sirela Tulave, Claudia Reyen, Charles Sekur and Bel Yayi. The guidance notes, and a DRR community training video during the Storm: What You and Your Communities Can Do about Disaster) and referenced documents will be available on the Christian Aid website (www.christian-aid.org). They can also be obtained by contacting smoss@christian-aid.org.

References

Preparedness for community-driven responses to disasters in Kenya: lessons from a mixed response to drought in 2006
Nik Bredholt and Matt Wingate, CAFOD Horn & East Africa Office

CAFOD responded to the drought in Kenya during 2006, but the response came late. This article considers ways in which better preparedness and greater and more timely involvement with drought-affected communities could have improved the response, to save lives and support livelihoods.

Evidence of impending drought in Kenya was available from at least early 2005. Credible early warning information, delivered through recognised and well-resourced regional and national structures, spoke of successive rain failures, depleting pastures and worsening human and animal health. Despite this, a discernable, collective humanitarian response only got underway after another rains failure in late 2005, followed by a declaration of national emergency at the end of the year. By March 2006, when most international agencies, the UN and the government were getting up to speed, acute malnutrition rates were well above the emergency threshold, 5.5 million people were said to be affected, livestock were dying in large numbers and there were severe water shortages.

For CAFOD, and many organisations like it, the response was late, despite early warnings, including from affected communities themselves. Why? The answer lies in the specific needs of the humanitarian system, to get the right information at the right time, and in the interaction with affected local communities through which this information is made available.

Information that triggers a humanitarian response
Like others, CAFOD requires evidence to launch a humanitarian response: indications of trends sufficiently bad to justify releasing resources, launching an appeal or scaling up response action.

A breastfeeding mother is measured before receiving a food ration of unimix from a feeding station near Marsabit, funded by CAFOD's partner the Diocese of Marsabit.

Nutrition surveys conducted by UNICEF in Marsabit, Moyale and Samburu found U5M rates of between 18% and 31%.
Local capacity limitations

Capacity limitations go beyond early warning and problem identification. CAPFOD responded to the latest drought in Kenya through a programme in seven districts, working with six partners and through about 51 rural health facilities. The programme in this case was largely local church and development offices, with a history of response rooted in the Catholic Church’s charitable mandate to assist those in need. That mandate has endowed many of these organisations with tremendous strengths, but has also given them technical weaknesses. The historic role in service provision and the clear sustainability of these institutions, which have existed for decades, means that there is no incentive for them to withdraw, and too often the response has been general food aid. This has done little to strengthen the community’s capacity to cope, nor has it challenged the belief held by some in the humanitarian community that local actors, and particularly faith-based organisations, are seldom adequately equipped to deliver technically sound humanitarian responses.

When CAPFOD sought government funds on behalf of its local partners for a supplementary feeding programme, the reply to the application highlighted concerns around the technical capacity of such partners. Could they really deliver humanitarian programmes to international standards? The immediate priority after all is saving lives, and risks should not be taken in such matters. CAPFOD proceeded with a response anyway, using its own resources to deliver a nutrition programme during the first half of 2006. With limited additional staff capacity and having restricted itself largely to district-level officers and senior staff in partner organisations, both field staff and beneficiaries struggled to see the distinction between a supplementary feeding programme and their general food ration. The consequent frustration did little to encourage partners or communities that a so-called technically sound nutrition response was worthwhile. In many locations the programme reverted to the partner’s default course of general food distribution.

In mid-2006, CAPFOD made a second attempt to deliver a supplementary feeding programme. Using three of the same partners, the programme considered lessons from the first phase, the most prominent of which were the lack of technical capacity and insufficient personnel to allow the scale up of such a programme. This time, however, the programme invested significantly in additional staff at rural health facilities, additional resources for transport and accommodation, not only for office-based staff, but also at the community level through nurses and community health workers.

signs of drought are seen earliest at the local level

The huge difference between the first and second phase of programming has led to some obvious but important insights for future programmes with local partners.

- Most notably, it is clear that signs of drought are seen earliest at the local level. Whilst macro-level indicators, such as nutrition rates, grain reserves, national livestock prices or depleting water tables, are all valuable in highlighting the extent of a crisis, climate-dependent households feel the impact of a pending drought many months earlier, and are already discussing it among themselves and with local organisations.
- For local actors already on the ground, there are no inherent capacity constraints that cannot be overcome to produce quick and technically sound responses.

Considerable efforts are now being made to consider the links between early warning information and prompt humanitarian response. In the Greater Horn of Africa, for instance, the Integrated Food Security and Humanitarian Phase Classification system developed by the Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia is gaining wider recognition. Yet there is little evidence that consistent and adequate consideration is being given to the fundamental role of local actors and communities. The key problem is that local actors lack technical capacity, when measured by usual international humanitarian benchmarks. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) recently flagged the need for greater emphasis on what it called ‘people oriented early warning’, and the Humanitarian Evaluation Coalition (TEC) highlighted the critical role of local people and local organisations in ringing alarm bells when natural disasters occur.

by March 2006, when most agencies were getting up to speed, acute malnutrition rates were well above the emergency threshold

Up staff. CAPFOD’s local church partners were saying that there was a problem, but the information was largely anecdotal and was not credible enough.

There is a dichotomy here. On the one hand, professional, large-scale early-warning systems lack the flexibility or programme linkages to trigger responses at the local level. On the other, local actors speak with communities on the ground, but lack the systems or capability to get their information heard. This quandary is entrenched in wider evaluations of early warning systems. The UN recently flagged the need for greater emphasis on what it called ‘people oriented early warning’, and the Humanitarian Evaluation Coalition (TEC) highlighted the critical role of local people and local organisations in ringing alarm bells when natural disasters occur.

Phase Classification system developed by the Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia is gaining wider recognition.

However, support is needed, and it should come at appropriate times in the disaster cycle. 

Locally relevant information and community participation

Communities have an important part to play in humanitarian action. A mechanism must be found to engage locally rooted health facilities, and their outreach services, in both the collection and dissemination of early warning information, with an emphasis on sharing information directly with disaster-prone local communities. This extensive and established resource is largely under-utilised. With a little effort and support, rural health facilities could enhance their quantitative data and the utility of their anecdotal information to generate local responses to emerging drought, or as it manifests itself at the village and even household levels. This demands the active involvement of community members, local nurses and volunteer mobilisers, and could thus serve the dual purpose of developing the evidence base, whilst also increasing the risk reduction capacity of communities, enabling them to make early and appropriate livelihood decisions in the face of drought or other disasters.

In a recent CAFOD assessment of four pastoralist districts, Marsabit, Isiolo, Kilima and Wajir, communities time and again spoke of threats to their traditional coping mechanisms thanks to a decade of poor rains, and petitioned tirelessly for knowledge and training to respond better to drought. This proposition is in context to the situation CAFOD and its partners currently face in marginalised parts of Kenya. Early warning information is generated for external responders, not for those affected by a threat. It is macro-level and one-way in its flow. In Kenya, although the most prominent system – the Arid Lands Resource Management Project (http://www.aridland.go.ke) – is at the district level, it has little power to act until the information has passed through national structures. On the return journey, there is no evidence that information actually reaches the communities we strive to support.

Conclusion

Although some additional hardware is required, the challenge is creating an information collection mechanism through local structures, not primarily in equipment or infrastructure, but in capacity. Stakeholders should strive to help establish information formats that include anecdotal information, whilst also taking into account the vital statistical data that should contribute to humanitarian action, strengthening the accessibility of established systems and enhancing them wherever possible. Through a programme that contributes to the long-term management of malnutrition through rural health networks, a complementary structure could effectively be established using the same staff and volunteers to provide early warning information to local actors in a format that enables them to generate a response.

Meanwhile, parallel support must be given to address the capacity constraints most local agencies face. Genuine emergency preparedness must take place away from periods of humanitarian crisis. Since valued local actors are rarely just emergency response organisations, such capacity-building should be integrated with longer-term activities, and should recognise the impact of disasters on the livelihood activities these actors also undertake. In particular, emergency preparedness should include contingency planning and technical specialisation, supporting partners to read the signs that local early warning is generating and establishing clear-cut response processes according to the evidence immediately – universally – available.

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Working with vulnerable communities to assess and reduce disaster risk

Bruno Haghebaert, ProVention

The importance of community-based participatory approaches is now generally recognised in the fields of disaster preparedness and mitigation and, increasingly, also in disaster response and recovery. The rationale for using participative approaches in disaster risk reduction is well known:

• Local communities are the first responders when a disaster happens. In the hours following a disaster search and rescue and the provision of immediate assistance to the injured and homeless are almost entirely carried out by family members, relations and neighbours. In the case of small-scale events, communities may be left entirely to their own devices, as there may be no external assistance available at all.

• Top-down disaster risk reduction programmes often fail to address the specific vulnerabilities, needs and demands of at-risk communities. These vulnerabilities and needs can only be identified through a process of direct consultation and dialogue with the communities concerned, because communities understand local realities and contexts better than outsiders.

• Collaborative approaches in disaster risk reduction are increasingly recognised in the fields of disaster preparedness and mitigation and, increasingly, also in disaster response and recovery. The rationale for using participative
Even the most vulnerable communities possess skills, knowledge, resources (materials, labour) and capacities. These assets are often overlooked and underutilised and, in some cases, even undermined by external actors.

It is therefore crucial that at-risk communities are actively involved in the identification and analysis of the risks they are facing, and participate directly in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risk activities.

Over the last two decades, a diverse range of community-level risk assessment methods have been developed and field tested, mainly by NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs). The influence of participatory action research (PAR) and community development methodologies, such as participatory rural assessment (PRA) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA), is evident in many of these risk assessment methods.

Community risk assessment (CRA)

Community risk assessment serves a dual purpose:

1. The primary purpose of a community risk assessment is to provide data to better inform local decisions on the planning and implementation of risk reduction measures. An effective CRA will contribute to a greater understanding of the nature and level of risks that vulnerable people face, where these risks come from, who will be worst affected; what means are available at all levels to reduce the risks; and what initiatives can be undertaken to reduce the vulnerability and strengthen the capacities of people at risk. CRA identifies specific vulnerable groups/individuals, based on key social characteristics such as gender, age, health status, disability and ethnicity (either through checklists or through a situational analysis). The process also includes an analysis of patterns of population density, livelihood security and occupational activities that increase the vulnerability of certain households and communities. Capacity assessment aims at identifying a wide range of resources: coping strategies, local knowledge, leadership and institutions, existing social capital which may contribute to risk reduction efforts, skills, labour, community facilities, preparedness stocks and a local evacuation plan. An additional and often overlooked aspect of a participatory risk assessment is the local perception of risk, which can play a key role in deciding on mitigation measures.

2. The process of carrying out a participatory assessment and the ensuing action planning may be of equal long-term importance as the tools that are adopted to collect and analyse data on vulnerabilities and capacities. This process is one of participatory partnership and active long-term engagement with communities in defining their problems and opportunities. The process also enables communities to analyse and better understand their capacities and strengths, building collective self-confidence. As such, CRA is both an assessment tool and an organising process.

Another advantage of the participatory approach is that, when it is conducted with mutual respect, trust may develop that allows ‘outside’ knowledge to be integrated with ‘inside’ knowledge. The result is a form of hybrid knowledge that is very robust and effective in reducing risk.

CRA has been mainly used to assess social vulnerability and capacity, but ideally it needs to be integrated with other risk assessment processes, such as:

1. Physical, economic and environmental risk assessment. This requires a more integrated and multi-disciplinary approach to explore the synergies and links between the natural and human-made environment.

2. Assessment of other risks and threats. In societies faced with multiple threats to lives and livelihoods (such as HIV, conflict and climate change), CRA has to become a fully integrated process that addresses all threats. These threats are often interlinked; for example HIV can lead to reduced resilience to drought and food insecurity.
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3. Post-disaster damage and needs assessment. In most cases different groups conduct pre- and post-disaster assessments. This artificial separation is unfortunate and wastes vital knowledge and effort. There are major benefits in the full integration of CRA with pre-disaster and post-disaster damage and needs assessments. Clearly, the assessment of damage and social needs after disasters represents a far more accurate measurement of vulnerability and resources than any predictive assessment. In addition, the data from CRA concerning risks as well as resources, collected before a disaster can be valuable in designing and implementing effective disaster relief and recovery activities in response to local needs and demands.

The ProVention CRA Toolkit
In May 2004, the ProVention Consortium organised an international workshop on ‘Social and Vulnerability Analysis’. The workshop aimed to review current methods for community risk assessment, define elements of ‘good CRA practice’ and identify gaps. One of the key recommendations by the participants was the need to document and analyse the different methods used by various organisations, and collect good practice case studies. The main project partners in the development of the CRA Toolkit initiative were the Disaster Mitigation Programme for Sustainable Livelihoods (DiMP) at the University of Cape Town, and Dr. Ben Wisner.

The CRA Toolkit has four main features:
• A register of 25 methodological resources and a compendium of 35 case studies. For most methods and case studies a guidance note has been developed. Each note provides a detailed analysis of the method and case study concerned, and a brief abstract.
• A search tool, which allows users to carry out a search according to a range of predetermined categories.
• A glossary of terms, which provides a detailed description of the different CRA concepts, methods and tools.
• Additional links to CRA, community-based disaster risk management and participation materials.

Intended users of the Toolkit are international NGOs and their partner organisations, local government staff, risk researchers and CBOs active in developmental and/or humanitarian work.

The project team’s main findings with regard to the methodologies were:
• There is a wide variety of CRA material in terms of type, approach and focus. Organisations have developed a broad range of methods (and acronyms) each according to their own institutional and programmatic interests (see Box 1).
• Although all methods are aimed at ‘community-level’ risk assessment, not all material is people-centred and truly participatory in nature.

Box 1 Examples of community risk assessment methods
- Capacity and Vulnerability Assessment (CVA)
- Community Wide Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (CWVCA)
- Damage, Needs and Capacity Assessment (DNCA)
- Disaster Risk Assessment (DRA)
- Gendered Community Risk Assessment (GCRRA)
- Hazard and Vulnerability Assessment (HVA)
- Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment (HRVA)
- Participatory Capacity and Vulnerability Assessment (PCVCA)
- Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA)
- Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PVCA)
- Resilience and Vulnerability Assessment (RVA)
- Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA)

- Most methodologies have been developed by INGOs and Northern experts, rather than by Southern NGOs and CBOs.

The project team also collected and analysed 35 CRA case studies from Asia, Latin America, Africa and Small Island Developing States. Key findings were:
• Partnerships between NGOs and local government enhance the effectiveness of the assessment and action planning process (see Box 2 overleaf).
• Multi-hazard approaches are feasible and are more rewarding in the long run.
• Using a livelihood approach in CRA has important benefits.
• A blending of local and external knowledge is often highly effective in reducing risk.
• CRA can also be used successfully in complex situations where there are multiple issues to be addressed in addition to risk reduction, such as community development, poverty reduction and conflict resolution (see Box 3 overleaf).
• It is vital to plan monitoring and evaluation at the design stage and collect sufficient baseline data before risk reduction activities start.

Participatory approaches can also be used in post-disaster situations (for damage and needs assessment and recovery planning).
Future plans
ProVention aims to regularly update the good practice case studies in the CRA Toolkit in order to evaluate the long-term impact of community risk assessment and planning processes. More case studies will be added to the Toolkit in the near future. Organisations that would like to share their CRA experiences for inclusion in the Toolkit are invited to send case studies to cra@ifrc.org. Lessons learned from the CRA Toolkit initiative will be documented in a publication to be released in 2008.

Bruno Haghebaert is Senior Officer at the ProVention Consortium Secretariat, which is hosted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Geneva. For more information, visit the ProVention website: www.proventionconsortium.org. The author would like to thank Ian O’Donnell (ProVention Consortium) (ianodonnell@ifrc.org), Ben Wisner (Oberlin College) (bwisner@igc.org) and Adolfo Mascarenhas (Links Trust) (mascar@udsm.ac.tz) for reviewing this article. The CRA Toolkit is available at www.proventionconsortium.org/CRA_toolkit.

References and further reading
Risk reduction is the mantra of our times. However, for some it has become purely a development mantra, which, if pursued assiduously enough, will somehow eliminate disasters. This line of thinking emphasises that, with enough prevention, risk will disappear and there will be no need for response. According to this school of thought, emergency response to disasters, dominated as it is by the need to save lives and provide emergency relief assistance, does not address the underlying causes and risks that provoked the crisis in the first place, nor does it stimulate rapid recovery. This often results in the reproduction of the very conditions of risk and vulnerability that led to the disaster in the first place. Money spent on emergency response should instead be spent on mitigation, which constitutes true risk reduction.

Nothing could be further from reality. A more realistic view of risk reduction would define it to include all actions that reduce the suffering of the population and the damage to human habitation. Disasters are a force of nature which we cannot prevent. No amount of mitigation can insulate the people and structures of places like Istanbul, Mexico City, Almaty, Ulan Bator or Manila from the effects of an earthquake. However, speedy and effective emergency response can reduce the number of casualties, ease the suffering of the population and telescope the time in which a semblance of normalcy is restored to society. Therefore, investing in effective response mechanisms reduces the likely severity of the impact of the disaster on the affected population, and as such reduces the risk to the population. Disaster response preparedness should be a key component of effective risk reduction. This is recognised by the Hyogo Framework for Action adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005.

Risk reduction through disaster preparedness preparedness

Currently, the international community has made limited efforts to further risk reduction by working with disaster-prone developing countries and regional organisations to improve their response systems. Ensuring that this is done is the responsibility, as mandated by the UN General Assembly, of the UN’s Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and his Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). John Holmes, the current ERC, appears to appreciate the importance of this. At the request of national governments, OCHA has utilised the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination team (UNDAC) for risk reduction through disaster response preparedness. The UNDAC team has analysed and suggested improvements to national disaster response systems in a range of countries, including Afghanistan, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Lanka, Mongolia, the Philippines and Tajikistan. At the same time, however, systematic risk reduction by means of disaster response preparedness needs to include complementary actions at international, regional, national and community levels. Some of these are discussed below.

Risk reduction through response preparedness at the international level

Risk reduction through emergency response preparedness at the international level should involve integrating international response processes and capacities into national disaster management plans and strategies.
Disaster Risk Reduction

Preparation for Climate Change.

The nearest countries to a disaster site can obviously get there first, so investing in regional response frameworks is good risk reduction. This should involve assisting regional groupings such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Centro de Prevencion y Desastres Naturales en America Central (CENAPRED), and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) to create their own frameworks for regional response. A good recent example of risk reduction in this form is the ASEAN Committee of Disaster Management (ACDM), which in 2006 signed an agreement on a framework of regional disaster response. In formulating this framework it was assisted by OCHA and other UN organisations.

One way to reduce risk is by organising disaster response seminars and exercises at the regional level. INSARAG arranges regional earthquake response simulation exercises with governments of disaster-prone countries. In these exercises, international urban search and rescue (USAR) teams from the region participate in a skeleton form along with national USAR teams, the Local Emergency Management Authority, UNDAC teams, NGOs such as MapAction and Telecoms Sans Frontieres and private sector companies such as DHL. The last such exercise in the Asia-Pacific was held in Shijiazhuang, China, in 2006. The next one will be held in Cebu, Philippines, in August 2007. ASEAN has also started to conduct regional disaster response exercises, and one is planned in Singapore in October 2007.

Risk reduction through response preparedness at the national level

For international and national response mechanisms to dovetail effectively, working relationships of trust and support must be established between the international community, especially the IFRC (OCHA), and the governments of disaster-prone countries prior to disasters striking. It is too late to try to do so after a disaster has happened. Overall risk is reduced by assisting governments in enhancing their own disaster response capacities and systems, since this will help them respond faster and more effectively. The aim should be to reduce risk by creating:

- a suitable national legal and policy framework for disaster response;
- a designated ministry as national focal point for response, with an established system of inter-ministerial coordination;
- a similar structure at the provincial/district level;
- a cadre of well-trained and well-equipped responders at all levels;
- good logistics and communications with all provinces and districts; and
- established systems of coordination with incoming or locally based international organisations and responders such as donor teams, the UN, the IFRC and NGOs.

This should include creating established standard operating procedures to integrate international responders with the local emergency management authority. The importance of this was underlined during the earthquake in Bam in Iran in 2003, which saw approximately 1,300 international responders from 34 countries on the ground in four days – enough to overwhelm the most efficient of national systems.

Risk can also be reduced at the national level by establishing links between international early warning systems such as the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) and national disaster management agencies.

Finally, the international community should systematically and collectively assist the governments of disaster-prone countries in developing a national disaster preparedness strategy and contingency plans. Using a database such as that developed by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), CDERA could list the 30 most disaster-prone countries in the world and focus international efforts on reducing risk by assisting them in developing efficient response systems. Similar lists already exist. The IFRC’s World Disaster Report, for instance, lists countries affected by natural disasters, while Columbia University’s Centre for International Earth Science Information Network ranks countries according to their level of preparedness for climate change.

Risk reduction through response preparedness at the regional level

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- a similar structure at the provincial/district level;
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Risk can also be reduced at the national level by establishing links between international early warning systems such as the Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) and national disaster management agencies.
with the aim of speeding up decision-making and factoring early-warning systems into contingency planning and public awareness, education and training programmes. Risk can also be reduced by ensuring the participation of disaster-prone countries and responding countries in international response networks such as INSARAG, UNDAC and the Environmental Emergencies network. Enhancing national skills and developing national standards in this way reduces overall risk.

Risk reduction through emergency response preparedness at the community level

Assisting communities in disaster risk reduction should be the bedrock of any risk reduction strategy, since it is communities that are affected by a disaster. This is best done through national authorities and organisations in the community. For risk reduction through emergency response preparedness at this level, an analysis of possible emergencies to which the community is vulnerable, and the corresponding risk to life and structures, is essential. The response to floods is different from the response to earthquakes, so different techniques need to be applied to reduce the risk. Professional, organised and competent emergency response at community level saves the most lives immediately after a disaster has struck.

Emergency response preparedness at community level must involve developing effective community first response plans based on the community's needs, as perceived by the community, and with a sense of community ownership. These should include ensuring a professionally competent and practiced fire brigade, police or other NGO or volunteer local response entity. The community government, in conjunction with local Red Cross/Red Crescent societies or other social organisations, should develop early warning and contingency plans for evacuation, especially for communities threatened by floods, utilizing local assets.

Risk reduction during the response to a disaster

Decisions taken during the emergency response phase of a disaster often have far-reaching and irreversible implications. This implies that risk reduction must be kept in mind from the very beginning of the response to a disaster. Decisions taken and relief structures established during the initial emergency response phase have a tendency to remain in place long after the response phase is over. For example, during the response to the earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005, the decision to use the terminology and sequencing of the newly designed ‘cluster approach’ for the UN Flash Appeal was taken by the UN Country Team on the second day of the UNDAC mission, for reasons of logic and convenience. However, once the Flash Appeal was written and published, the cluster approach became cast in stone, and was followed by international responders and subsequently by the Pakistani government for the duration of the emergency.

Conclusion

Disasters threaten human beings and their property. We cannot eliminate disasters, and therefore we cannot eliminate disaster risk. Despite the increasing popularity of risk reduction within the development community, good response preparedness and good response are essential ingredients in overall risk reduction because they save lives and restore functioning society as quickly as possible. Actions to reduce risk by efficient response need to be taken at the international, regional, national and community level, and dovetailed into each other. Once this is recognised, disaster response preparedness and disaster response will be accorded their due place in the risk reduction enterprise.

Arjun Katoch is Chief, Field Coordination Support Section, UN OCHA, Geneva. The views expressed in this article are the personal views of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

References and further reading


Justifying the cost of disaster risk reduction: a summary of cost–benefit analysis

Courtenay Cabot Venton, Environmental Resources Management

Cost–benefit analysis (CBA) can play a pivotal role in advocacy and decision-making on disaster risk reduction (DRR) by demonstrating the financial and economic value of incorporating DRR initiatives into aid planning. Natural disasters are affecting more of the world’s population, and are projected to increase in severity and intensity under climate change. The cost of disasters, both in terms of lost GDP as well as spending on relief and rehabilitation, is significant. Investment in DRR is, however, limited. There is uncertainty around where and when disasters will strike, and what harm they will cause (particularly in the case of events such as cyclones). Meanwhile, governments and donors focus spending on immediate needs for poverty reduction, such as health, water and food security, and hesitate to invest in DRR where the immediate development outcomes are not always clear.

Evidence on the costs and benefits of DRR consistently shows that investment brings greater benefits than costs, and therefore should be a priority for development planning. However, this evidence is limited and very location- and hazard-specific. Further work is needed to demonstrate to finance ministers and donors that mainstreaming DRR is financially and economically justified.

The cost of disasters

With their rising incidence and increasing severity, the cost of disasters, both in terms of lost GDP and expenditure diverted to relief and rehabilitation, is significant. The World Bank has estimated that, between 1990 and 2000, natural disasters caused damage valued at between 2% and 35% of an exposed country’s annual GDP. Table 1 shows information reported by the World Bank on the impact of natural disasters for selected countries around the world, in terms of the percentage of annual GDP.

Table 1: The impact of natural disasters on GDP, 1990–2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>5.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>13.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>13.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>12.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The World Bank’s conclusions have been supported by the recent, high-profile Stern Review, which estimated the costs and benefits of reducing the risks associated with climate change, of which natural disasters are a core component. Stern’s central conclusion is that the benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting. The Review estimates that, if steps are not taken to combat climate change, the overall costs and risks will be equivalent to losing at least 1% of global GDP each year, now and for the foreseeable future. If a wider range of risks and impacts is taken into account, the damage could rise to 20% of GDP or more. In contrast, the costs of the action required to reduce emissions to a level which would avoid the worst impacts of climate change can be held at around 1% of global GDP each year.

The cost–benefit analysis and disaster risk reduction

Cost–benefit analysis is an economic tool that can be used to compare the costs and benefits of DRR interventions. Table 2 provides a summary of available evidence on the net benefits of DRR projects.

Only a handful of community-level studies have been conducted, and these have used different methodologies and approaches. Initial research suggests that DRR measures often bring greater benefits than the costs they incur, but this may vary significantly depending on factors such as the type of disaster, the country concerned and the DRR measures employed.

Further action

There is a critical need for further evidence of the costs and benefits of DRR. In particular, we need systematic studies comparing regions, types of hazard and DRR interventions to provide a sounder comparative basis upon which conclusions could be drawn on the costs and benefits of DRR measures. Practical guidance on how to undertake CBA is required for use by practitioners and governments alike to facilitate prioritisation of DRR measures and to maximise the effectiveness of limited financial resources.

Studies that seek to use the findings from CBA to engage in advocacy with governments and international institutions should be encouraged. This linkage between practice and policy is essential in order to ensure that any further detailed work on DRR options is used to effect change in high-level policy and decision-making. It is worth noting that work is also being taken forward within...
Table 2: Evidence on the net benefits of disaster risk management projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source and type of analysis</th>
<th>Actual or potential benefit</th>
<th>Result/return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex-ante appraisal (assessment before implementation)</td>
<td>Increase in banana yields in years with windstorms</td>
<td>Expected return negative as banana yields decreased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kramer (1995): Appraisal of strengthening the roots of banana trees against windstorms in St. Lucia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank: Hypothetical Evaluation of Integrated Risk Management Project, Construction of flood control facilities and strengthening of national and provincial institutions for disaster management</td>
<td>Reduction in direct flood damages to homes, avoided evacuation and relocation</td>
<td>Internal Rate of Return (IRR): 20.4% (range of 7.5%–30.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC (2002): Ex-post evaluation of Red Cross mangrove planting project in Vietnam for protection of coastal population against typhoons and storms</td>
<td>Savings in reduced costs of dyke maintenance</td>
<td>Annual net benefits: $2.7 billion; Benefit/cost ratio: 52 (over period 1994–2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson (1998): Ex-post evaluation of flood control measures in China over the last four decades of the 20th century</td>
<td>Reduction in direct damage to property and agriculural land</td>
<td>$3.95 billion spent on flood control averting damage of about $12 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank (2004): Prefeasibility appraisal of Polder system against flooding in Piura, Peru</td>
<td>Reduction in direct and indirect economic impacts</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Ex-post evaluations (assessment after implementation of measures) | Reduction in direct social and economic, and indirect economic impacts | Benefit/cost ratio: 3.76 (range: 3.17–4.58) |
| Benson (1998): Ex-post evaluation of flood control measures in China over the last four decades of the 20th century | Savings in reduced costs of dyke maintenance | Annual net benefits: $2.7 billion; Benefit/cost ratio: 52 (over period 1994–2001) |
| Vermeiren et al. (1998): Hypothetical evaluation of a range of different prevention measures (breach physical) against floods and landslides 2003 in the Philippines | Avoided direct economic damage | Benefit/cost ratio: 3.5–3.5 |
| World Bank (2004): Prefeasibility appraisal of Polder system against flooding in Piura, Peru | Reduction in direct and indirect economic impacts | Benefit/cost ratio: 3.8; IRR: 31%; Net Present Value (NPV): $77.7 million |
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Note: This summary was provided by R. Mechler, Cost–Benefit Analysis of Natural Disaster Risk Management in Developing Countries, working paper for sector project ‘Disaster Risk Management in Development Cooperation’, GTZ, 2005.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

to ensure that effort is not duplicated. Change and DRR agendas should be more closely linked. Natural disasters are a core impact of climate change. The climate change context to understand the costs and benefits of adaptation options. Much of this is overlap.

It is easy to be intimidated by the scale and extent of the problem, and the variety of counter-risk approaches that can be taken. But lasting benefits of adaptation options. Much of this is overlap.

Community resilience to hazards can be built up incrementally over time, as long as the basic approach is sound.

Natural disasters – disasters resulting from natural hazards such as a variety of counter-risk approaches that can be taken. But lasting benefits of adaptation options. Much of this is overlap.

This Review is above all a practical document. However, it is not a manual in the process of planning and implementing risk reduction. Instead, it is a guide to practical steps that can be taken.

Box 1: Cost–benefit analysis explained

Cost–benefit analysis is an important economic tool for selecting investments, and is used in many sectors and with many applications. It can be used both pre-investment, to choose between different project options, or post-investment, to assess the economic value of a project.

Projects are typically evaluated using cost–benefit analysis, in which an objective is set, and cost comparisons are made between different options for meeting those objectives. Although cost–benefit analysis is commonly used in evaluations, it does not account for the wider economic impacts of a project. Cost–benefit analysis, on the other hand, allows for a comparison between benefits and costs (benefit being defined as anything that increases human well-being).

The steps included in a CBA typically include the following:

- Identification of the scenario with and without the DRR intervention, and the additional impacts resulting from the DRR intervention (e.g. reduction in lives or assets lost).
- Quantification of the impacts – both positive and negative – in both scenarios.
- Costs and benefits are discounted over the lifetime of the project as a given discount rate.
- The net discounted benefits are divided by the net discounted costs to arrive at an estimate of the economic benefit received. If this ratio, referred to as the Net Present Value (NPV), is greater than one, the benefits outweigh the costs. Economists also sometimes refer to the Internal Rate of Return (IRR). This calculation estimates the IRR, or discount rate, which results in an NPV of zero.

References and further reading


John Twigg

Disaster risk reduction: mitigation and preparedness in aid programming

Good Practice Review, 2004

Natural disasters – disasters resulting from natural hazards such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, landslides and volcanic eruptions – are a widespread and a major threat to sustainable development. Disasters result in high costs of life and extensive damage to communities, infrastructure and natural assets. Effective humanitarian and recovery approaches are needed in order to protect human life and livelihoods and to enable recovery and sustainable development.

This Good Practice Review aims to help project planners and managers to:

- appreciate the significance of hazards; primarily natural hazards, and the risks associated with them;
- appreciate the need for risk management in project planning and implementation, and the value of such efforts;
- appreciate the main issues that must be understood and addressed when carrying out risk reduction or disaster mitigation and preparedness initiatives; and
- understand – at least in broad terms – how to address these issues in practice, throughout the project cycle.

It is easy to be intimidated by the scale and extent of the problem, and the variety of counter-risk approaches that can be taken. But lasting benefits of adaptation options. Much of this is overlap.

Good Practice Review is available for free from the IFRC website at www.ifrc.org.
In the early 1990s, Sahelian countries embarked on a process to develop markets, limit government market interventions and liberalise trade. The achievements of this process, which was encouraged at the regional level by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Union économique et monétaire de l'Afrique de l'ouest (UEMOA), have to date been mixed: barriers to trade, both formal and informal, still limit the free play of the market. This mix of trade liberalisation and trade restrictions has an important influence on household food security. The high retail price of cereals in Niger during the summer of 2005 – and its devastating impacts on poor households – is often used to support the argument that ‘markets’ are to blame for creating food insecurity. Free trade proponents, however, emphasise that the majority of Sahelian households benefit from markets for their food and income. Humanitarian actors recognise that markets can alleviate or aggravate food insecurity, and acknowledge the imperative need to understand how markets work, and the links between markets and livelihoods. This article explores the vital role of markets in food security in the Sahel, and the lessons learned from the Niger food security crisis. It concludes with an agenda to guide future work of the World Food Programme (WFP), the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), FEWS NET, National Market Information Systems and other partners, to reinforce their market analysis and monitoring capacities.

**Why are markets so crucial for food security in the Sahel?**

According to a popular Nigerian saying from 20 years ago, a Sahelian man who wished to marry should not depend on the market: he should be self-sufficient in food production. Today, however, high population growth has reduced the size of agricultural plots. This, in the context of market liberalisation, has obliged Sahelian households to rely increasingly on markets for their food security. In April 2005, a typical household in Niger depended on market purchases for 70% of its food. The large majority of Sahelian households – be they pastoralists, subsistence farmers, or urban families – are not self-sufficient in staple foods. This market dependency increases in years of poor agricultural production. Households also rely on markets to earn income from the sale of animals, staple foods, cash crops and labour, to cover non-food expenditures. During bad years, coping strategies include selling livestock and taking out loans with traders. Debt forces subsistence farmers to sell staples at very low post-harvest prices to repay loans, creating spillover effects into the following year.

Food security analysis in the Sahel has for some time focused on the assessment of agricultural production; it is now time to devote more resources to analysing how markets contribute to the distribution and pricing of food; other supply sources, such as imports, demand factors; and policies, informal trade barriers and public interventions. CILSS, the key player with respect to food security analysis in the Sahel, as well as its national counterparts, have moved in this direction, and this process should continue, with the technical and financial assistance of its partners.

**Humanitarian actors recognise that markets can alleviate or aggravate food insecurity**

Cross-border trade and food markets in Niger: why market analysis is important for humanitarian action

Geert Beekhuis, WFP, and Ibrahim Laouali, FEWS NET

In the early 1990s, Sahelian countries embarked on a process to develop markets, limit government market interventions and liberalise trade. The achievements of this process, which was encouraged at the regional level by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Union économique et monétaire de l’Afrique de l’ouest (UEMOA), have to date been mixed: barriers to trade, both formal and informal, still limit the free play of the market. This mix of trade liberalisation and trade restrictions has an important influence on household food security. The high retail price of cereals in Niger during the summer of 2005 – and its devastating impacts on poor households – is often used to support the argument that ‘markets’ are to blame for creating food insecurity. Free trade proponents, however, emphasise that the majority of Sahelian households benefit from markets for their food and income. Humanitarian actors recognise that markets can alleviate or aggravate food insecurity, and acknowledge the imperative need to understand how markets work, and the links between markets and livelihoods. This article explores the vital role of markets in food security in the Sahel, and the lessons learned from the Niger food security crisis. It concludes with an agenda to guide future work of the World Food Programme (WFP), the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), FEWS NET, National Market Information Systems and other partners, to reinforce their market analysis and monitoring capacities.

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**Humanitarian actors recognise that markets can alleviate or aggravate food insecurity**
Why is market analysis important for food security assessments?

First, markets have the capacity to ameliorate the negative impacts of shocks. Without trade, a modest drop in domestic cereal production may lead to huge price increases and consumption shortfalls. With trade, prices increase until they reach parity with import prices, limiting the consumption shortfall. Understanding how markets function, and the interventions that can facilitate trade, can help in identifying measures to alleviate the negative impacts of shocks. It may also allow us to better estimate the appropriate amount of food aid to import, reducing potential market distortions.

Second, market analysis contributes to food security monitoring. If markets function well, surpluses readily move to deficit zones with adequate purchasing power. However, if purchasing power in deficit zones is very low, or trade is constrained by security problems, lack of infrastructure or the absence of competition, disastrous effects on local food supply and prices may result. Market monitoring should provide the logic of food price changes, it should explore future market developments, and it should assess the potential impact of prices on the food security of the various livelihood and wealth groups.

Third, market analysis informs the debate over cash versus food assistance. If markets are well-integrated, transport costs are reasonable and food is available, then cash assistance may be appropriate: traders will respond if markets are well-integrated, transport costs are reasonable and food is available, then cash assistance may be appropriate: traders will respond if markets are well-integrated, transport costs are reasonable and food is available, then cash assistance may be appropriate.

What happened to the food markets of Niger and Nigeria during 2004–2005?

The hike in food prices in Niger followed steep price rises in Nigeria, caused by lower agricultural production and increased demand stemming from high consumer purchasing power and demand from the poultry and food processing sectors. Higher prices in Nigeria caused a drastic drop in exports to Niger, while cereal flows reversed: Niger was supplying Nigeria. This trade-driven supply squeeze was compounded by lower domestic crop production because of locust attacks and some dry spells. As similar supply reductions may occur in the future, we have to ask why the response to the price hike in Niger took so long to materialize.

The national system for agricultural market information, SIMA, has been collecting food price data on more than 40 markets in Niger since the early 1990s. During 2004–2005, SIMA and FEWS NET reported relatively high price levels. However, this alert was not well-received by humanitarian actors and donors. The reasons advanced to explain the price increases were neither complete nor convincing, mainly because of a lack of shared knowledge amongst humanitarian actors. As a result, humanitarian actors did not agree on the significance of the price hike or its impacts until very late in the crisis.

Market analysis in Niger during 2005

The widespread publicity given to food prices and markets during the Niger crisis encouraged greater analysis of cross-border trade and markets. Public awareness of the importance of markets also increased. Journalists, NGOs and other institutions started reporting on food and livestock markets, and FEWS NET, SIMA and CILSS began conducting missions to markets in northern Nigeria. These missions, combined with WFP’s Niger market profile, provided an explanation of the 2005 price hike. They also laid the foundations for today’s collaboration in monitoring Niger’s markets by WFP, SIMA and FEWS NET.

Market analysis in Nigeria during 2004–2005

Joint market analysis in 2006

At the end of 2005, FEWS NET and WFP launched a study to identify knowledge gaps regarding links between markets and food security in West Africa. The study also formulated recommendations to reinforce market analysis of food security assessments, including: (i) establishing a regional monitoring system for cross-border flows; (ii) strengthening capacities to conduct market analysis; and (iii) developing tools to analyse the links between households and markets. CILSS, which plays a central role in food security monitoring in the Sahel, made similar recommendations during its annual meeting in December 2005. Under the guidance of CILSS, a technical working group was established in 2006 to develop recommendations on improving market analysis in West Africa.
The crucial role of CILSS cannot be overstated: it is a permanent body representing its nine member states, and ECOWAS and UEMOA count on its technical assistance to support their regional market and trade integration activities. The second challenge concerns the interaction between national market information systems. The regional market monitoring system will encompass prices and flows for both agricultural and livestock products, and publish a regular bulletin. To do this, an agreed in-depth regional understanding of market behaviour is necessary, as well as support for database and cartography development. This should be complemented with financial resources to implement the pilot phase of a proposed project to collect cross-border flow data. WFP and FEWS NET are committed to supporting this priority objective, for example through a border monitoring system.
PRACTICE AND POLICY NOTES

Zakah is derived from the verb 'zakar', which means to grow and improve. Zakah must be given by every Muslim, and is calculated at a rate of 2.5% of any disposable wealth above a minimum amount at the end of each year. According to the Qur'an:

Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and the needy, and for those employed to collect [Zakah] and for bringing hearts together and for freeing captives and for those in debt and in the way of Allah and for the rabbâ‘î – an obligation imposed by God and God’s Knowledge and Power (Qur’an, 9:60).

Today, this could perhaps be translated into the following expenditure headings:

- poverty reduction;
- administrative overheads for civil servants dealing with public welfare;
- peace-building and community cohesion;
- promotion of freedom, basic human rights and civil liberties;
- personal bankruptcy settlements;
- public work, including security and defence; and
- supporting the homeless, refugees and migrants.

Voluntary charity – in Arabic Sadaqah, meaning to give away and realising one’s faith by action – is also strongly encouraged. It is based on many sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, such as ‘Charity is due upon a person on every day that the sun rises’. Charity here goes beyond material support to encompass any voluntary act, even the offering of a smile (a famous saying of the Prophet Muhammad). It is regarded as an individual devotion for bringing hearts together and for freeing captives and for those in debt and in the way of Allah and for the rabbâ‘î – an obligation imposed by God and God’s Knowledge and Power (Qur’an, 9:60).

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The importance of charitable giving in the Muslim World should not be underestimated. According to the Saudi government, its aid to the developing world, both through unilateral and bilateral funds, places it among the largest donors in the world, with disbursements of $15 billion between 1975 and 1987. With aid levels at $4 billion a year, Saudi Arabia is the second-largest donor after the United States. However, under US pressure the Saudi government has clamped down on public fundraising activities, including banning charity collection boxes in mosques and closing down some leading charities. In July 2003, the Saudi Ministry of Information announced that all NGOs had been barred from sending funds abroad.

Other Islamic teachings stress particular seasons for giving, such as during the month of Ramadan, when Muslims are expected to feed the destitute whilst fasting themselves. A special contribution has to be made at the end of the fasting month, called Zakah al-Fitr, an amount of food or the monetary equivalent to feed one person in need. Similarly, during the Hajj (pilgrimage) season, Muslims are expected to sacrifice a cow, goat or camel to feed the needy, called ‘Hajj’. In other cases, it is collected for charity purposes. These private organizations have become a substitute for the state welfare system in the Muslim world, replacing the traditionally government-controlled ‘alms store’ (in Arabic Bait al-Mal). The institution responsible for collecting and distributing charitable assets. Donations boxes are often found in mosques and community centres, and donations can also be deposited at the offices of Islamic charities and charity shops. Donors prefer to stay anonymous in the belief that it is better to give alms discreetly than to publicize one’s philanthropy. As a consequence, Islamic NGOs lack the systems of accountability and transparency commonplace among Western agencies. This has made it difficult for them to counter accusations that their funds are being used inappropriately.

Islamic charities after 9/11: threats and opportunities

The importance of charitable giving in the Muslim World should not be underestimated. According to the Saudi government, its aid to the developing world, both through unilateral and bilateral funds, places it among the largest donors in the world, with disbursements of $15 billion between 1975 and 1987. With aid levels at $4 billion a year, Saudi Arabia is the second-largest donor after the United States. However, under US pressure the Saudi government has clamped down on public fundraising activities, including banning charity collection boxes in mosques and closing down some leading charities. In July 2003, the Saudi Ministry of Information announced that all NGOs had been barred from sending funds abroad.

The ultimate cost of measures such as these is borne by beneficiaries. In Somalia, for instance, the local branch of the Saudi charity the Al Haramain Islamic Foundation (AHIF) was designated a terrorist entity by the US Office for Foreign Assets Control in 2004, prompting the Saudi government to close the organisation down. The designation of AHIF Somalia appears to have been based largely on circumstantial evidence, including salary payments to individuals allegedly linked to Al-Qaeda. But the closure of the charity has led directly to the closure of a number of orphanages supported or run by AHIF in Somalia. In another case, in the Palestinian Territories, the US government in 2003 cited the British charity Interpal as a “specially designated global terrorist organization” on the grounds that it supported Hamas activities. In 1996, the Charity Commission had carried out an inquiry into allegations that some of Interpal’s funds had been channelled to Hamas, but no evidence of inappropriate activity was found. Following the US government finding, the Charity Commission froze Interpal’s bank accounts while it carried out another investigation. The US authorities failed to provide any evidence to support their allegations, and the inquiry was closed on 24 September 2003. Although Interpal’s accounts were released, its humanitarian work in the Palestinian territories was undoubtedly disrupted, and donor confidence in the organisation may have been undermined.

Suspicions around the role of established Islamic charities have also altered the way Muslims give to charity. Since they are obliged by their faith to give, they are forced into informal means of discharging their Zakah.
often through donations to unrecognised ‘charities’ and fundraisers at local mosques and community centres. The Saudi NGO World Assembly of Muslim Youths (WAMY) has seen a 44% drop in its fundraising income since 9/11. The Secretary-General, Saleh Wohaibi, attributes this fall to ‘fear of Muslims falling foul of strict US efforts to monitor terror funding’. But this switch away from established charities may have further weakened the transparency and accountability of charitable donations. Instead, attempts to close down or control formal charities may have had precisely the opposite effect by forcing charitable giving into less regulated channels.

The terrorist threat is real, yet Islamic charities are not guilty by default. Nonetheless, both the lack of support for Islamic charities to help them address their shortcomings in transparency and accountability and the rhetoric about their funding for terrorism continues – apart from a small number of notable exceptions. The Humanitarian Forum, for example, the brainchild of the Department of Foreign Affairs, this aims to promote cooperation in removing unjustified obstacles for Islamic charities as a contribution towards confidence-building between the Islamic world and ‘the West’.

In the United States, a number of Saudi-initiated charity organisations have come together to form the Friends of Charity Association (FOCA), which was established in January 2005 by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. This aims to promote cooperation in removing unjustified obstacles for Islamic charities as a contribution towards confidence-building between the Islamic world and ‘the West’. FOCA’s members stress their commitment to the principles of transparency and accountability. FOCA’s Transparency Project seeks to assure donors, government and the international community that Islamic charities have nothing to hide, and will work to address any deficiencies or problem areas that are exposed. Like other similar initiatives, FOCA has set up a building agency capacity.

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Accountability to the beneficiaries of humanitarian aid: old messages, new messengers

John Mitchell, ALNAP

Humanitarians have spent a great deal of time talking and writing about the importance of being accountable to beneficiaries. At its simplest, it all seems very straightforward: genuine accountability through the consultation and participation of affected people is empowering and results in more appropriate and effective aid. Everyone seems to agree on this. The concept is explicit in a raft of humanitarian aid policies, codes and principles. Donors are beginning to see it as a condition of funding and evaluations. Humanitarian action is increasingly highlighting its importance.

Thus, the language of participation, once the sole domain of developmental theorists and humanitarian idealists, has become a mainstay in the humanitarian sector, and has become a mainstay in the humanitarian sector, and has become a mainstay in the humanitarian sector. It has successfully crossed the divide between practitioners and those preoccupied with humanitarian ideals. The concept is explicit in a raft of humanitarian aid policies, codes and principles. Donors are beginning to see it as a condition of funding and evaluations. Humanitarian action is increasingly highlighting its importance.

But as very long ago, senior aid officials had a different message. In the 1990s, the prevailing rhetoric was about results-based management and demonstrating impact. The era was epitomised by Andrew Natsios, then head of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), who once famously told an audience of NGO representatives: “doing good is no longer enough. We have to show results. If you cannot measure aid empirically, then USAID will have to find other partners to fund.” In this environment, accountability to beneficiaries was a peripheral issue, something woolly and airy-fairy that could easily be put to one side in the light of more pressing matters. So, why the turnaround?

Part of the reason may be that aid agencies and research institutes have essentially failed to demonstrate the impact of their work beyond some basic data on mortality, morbidity and nutritional status. It has been possible to say something about the humanitarian imperative – i.e., saving lives in the short term – but wider questions about other humanitarian concerns, such as recovery, livelihoods, capacity-building, protection and rights, remain largely unanswered. On the whole, impact evaluations have been inadequate tools for the task in hand due to, among other things, a lack of baseline data and compressed timeframes.

Impact monitoring has not worked and research programmes have been prone to methodological problems, including the seemingly intractable problem of how to attribute impact in a multi-variable environment. But despite the lack of empirical proof of impact, USAID has not in fact found results in better and more appropriate aid and saved more lives. For aid agencies, therefore, the pressure to deliver accountability to beneficiaries is increasing, not least because donors are starting to apply accountability as a condition of their funding. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), for instance, has asked agencies to sign up to Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) accountability standards in order to be eligible for funding.

ENDPIECE
The real question therefore is how to implement participatory processes in a way that will not expose vulnerable populations to more risk. Currently, there is no clear way forward given the dearth of evidence about what has worked, where and why. The evidence base simply does not exist. It is astounding that no-one has yet brought experiences together and presented an analysis. Guidance on how to set up participatory programming exist, but these content is based primarily on developmental theories rather than on experience gleaned from the humanitarian environment. This is not to say that some experiences are not there – there is good reason to expect that there is much evidence locked in grey literature, in old agency sit reps, the odd evaluation and in the heads of the people involved. But it remains largely hidden and untapped.

All this leaves one with the feeling that the new level of participatory rhetoric, although preferable in many ways to the results-based management talk of the last decade, is based on untapped assumptions rather than evidence. But for some it serves a dual purpose: not only does it sidestep the problem of demonstrating impact, but it also fits with the current geopolitical agenda and the tactics for winning the war on terror. The reality is that, despite the humanitarian principles of impartiality and proportionality, most aid remains tied to bigger political objectives. As this "war" increasingly involves winning hearts and minds, so the importance of consultation, of understanding people’s views and needs, increases. In this context, the language of participation contains within it both humanitarian ideals, and military and political objectives. In a world where humanitarianism and geopolitics are often linked, participation provides an idiom that, on the surface at least, is satisfactory to all parties. One can only hope that this includes those who are most at risk of violence, discrimination and deprivation.

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Mobile Health Units in emergency operations: a methodological approach
Stéphane Du Mortier and Rudi Coninx
Network Paper 60, June 2007

Mobile Health Units are often used to provide health care in unstable situations, such as armed conflicts, where fixed services cannot function for reasons of security. They are, however, a controversial way of providing health care, because of the cost, their logistic complexity and the ethical concerns.

Drawing on the experience of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and on the relevant literature, this Network Paper provides a decision-making framework for health care workers considering whether to use mobile health units. The paper gives an overview of the place of MHUs in health care systems, and provides the theoretical background to the decision-making process around how and when to set them up. It also elaborates on the strengths and weaknesses of Mobile Health Units, and uses practical examples both from the literature as well as from the authors’ own field experiences to illustrate its argument.

The paper concludes that, although a logical approach in contexts where traditional permanent (fixed) health structures are unavailable, absent, overburdened or dysfunctional, other options should be considered before embarking on the wholesale substitution of health care services through mobile health units. This paper will provide the theoretical background to the discussion and will offer a methodological approach to the decision-making process.
Humanitarian Practice Network

The Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN) is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience.

HPN’s aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

HPN’s activities include:
• A series of specialist publications: Humanitarian Exchange magazine, Network Papers and Good Practice Reviews.
• A resource website at www.odihpn.org.
• Occasional seminars and workshops bringing together practitioners, policymakers and analysts.

HPN’s members and audience comprise individuals and organisations engaged in humanitarian action. They are in 80 countries worldwide, working in northern and southern NGOs, the UN and other multilateral agencies, governments and donors, academic institutions and consultancies. HPN’s publications are written by a similarly wide range of contributors.

HPN’s institutional location is the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), an independent think tank on humanitarian and development policy. HPN’s publications are researched and written by a wide range of individuals and organisations, and are published by HPN in order to encourage and facilitate knowledge-sharing within the sector. The views and opinions expressed in HPN’s publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.

Funding support is provided by institutional donors (AusAID, CIDA, DANIDA, DFID, Development Cooperation Ireland, MFA Netherlands, SIDA, USAID), non-governmental organisations (British Red Cross, CAPCO, Christian Aid, Concern, International Rescue Committee, MSF, Oxfam, Save the Children (UK), World Vision) and UN agencies (WFP).

Humanitarian Exchange is edited by Rachel Atkinson.

Printed and bound in the UK by Charlesworth.