We need a Reality Check!

How can we ensure impact at the frontline?

An Implementation Plan for civil society, to ensure the Post-2015 DRR Framework has an impact at the local level.

March 2015
Joining together for local level impact

The challenge of ensuring local level impact of disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies is clear.

Whilst international frameworks and government policies are needed, delivering change at the local level is still a major challenge and much faster progress is vital. Engaging, supporting and partnering with civil society organisations (CSOs) is critical to speed up impact at the local level. This document provides a reality checklist for delivering local-level impact, highlights the critical role of civil society in achieving this, and provides an activity plan for how civil society and governments can partner in the implementation of the Post-2015 DRR Framework.

In 2014, the Center for Disaster Preparedness (CDP) – a CSO based in the Philippines – partnered with others to deliver participatory local level risk assessments in 26 diverse Barangays (villages) of Mercedes Municipality. They brought local officials and small CSOs together and provided training through the DRR and Management Committees to build their capacity to conduct the participatory risk assessments and train others to do so, even in remote locations.

Based on the results of the participatory risk assessments, communities drafted their own DRR plans and multi-hazard contingency plans in conjunction with local governments. CDP will also be facilitating biannual reviews of the risk assessments so that plans can be updated in light of changing local contexts. CDP also brought different groups together to create community early warning systems and organised hazard simulation drills for disasters highlighted by the assessments to be of the highest priority to community members; including storm surges, typhoons, and landslides. Lessons from these practices and real experiences have resulted in local level action. For example, a direct lesson from the typhoon simulation drills is the development of livelihood protection plans, including the use of floating fish cages, a local practice to build the resilience of local fishing livelihoods.

Key factors enabling this increase in local level resilience include the ability of CDP to facilitate people to work together for the first time, identify shared objectives, establish joint accountability, and build trust. Strong relationships were forged and different perspectives recognised and understood.

The Municipal Government is now reviewing the current DRR, poverty reduction and climate change adaptation policies to ensure community resilience priorities are being taken into account, and developing a Municipal Code that will lead to permanent changes in the way that disaster risk is considered in the drafting of all sectoral policies.

These lessons from the Philippines, replicated in other communities around the world, highlight the tremendous potential for impact at the local level when people work together. CSOs can play a critical role in enabling this collaboration when supported by governments and other groups. Joining hands at the local level must be a focus when implementing the Post-2015 DRR Framework.

Let’s admit it, we as public officials sometimes overlook our people’s situation and we even seldom literally see them…Understanding their situation, their vulnerabilities, capacities and the risks that they face is very important. Without the people’s knowledge, we will not be able to make sound laws and policies for DRR.

Councillor Ramil Apolinario member of the Municipal Council of Mercedes.
The need for local level impact

In March 2015, the Hyogo Framework for Action on Disaster Risk Reduction (HFA) will be succeeded by the Post-2015 DRR Framework. As governments sign up to the new framework, agreeing to build the resilience of people, communities and countries, how can we ensure that local level impact is achieved as in the case of Mercedes in the Philippines?

Resilient communities are the building blocks of resilient nations. Without effectively building resilience at the local level, national targets cannot be met. Furthermore, the majority of losses are from small scale recurrent disasters that do not attract national attention and which need to be addressed at the local level. It is therefore critical for governments to ensure that when implementing the Post-2015 DRR Framework they work to have an impact at the local level.1

Since 2007, GNDR’s Views from the Frontline programme (VFL) has been run by hundreds of civil society organisations to explore perspectives of progress in reducing risk – the goal of governments committed to implementing the HFA. Overall, communities report limited impact at the local level. There has continued to be a growing gap between national policies and local practice. As a result, since the adoption of the HFA in 2005, disasters have continued to affect an increasing number of people. Since 2005, more than 1.5 billion people were affected by disasters: over 700,000 people lost their lives; over 1.4 million were injured; and 23 million were made homeless as a result of disasters.2

But why has the HFA led to limited changes at the local level? It did not take into account real life at the frontline. It’s time for a Reality Check.

57% of respondents to Views from the Frontline reported that losses are increasing.

The people I work with everyday see many clouds – international initiatives and plans, but very little rain – actual change at the frontline

Bishop Donald Mtetemela
an East African development worker for over 25 years

---

Living at the Frontline means...

Living in poverty, insecurity and fragility, informality, and complexity.

More than 1.5 billion people live in fragile and conflict-affected settings.3 In many countries and communities informality is the norm; for example, over 70% of buildings in Peru are informal and do not follow the national and local construction standards. But these compounding factors are not fully considered in the HFA, and implementation often dangerously assumes that disasters take place in stable and formal settings.

Living with the constant threat of everyday disasters.

90% of disasters prioritised by respondents are everyday according to Frontline, a new study conducted by GNDR in Latin America, which asked communities about their perceptions of the threats and consequences faced at the local level. These everyday disasters are small scale and recurrent, and result of environmental, economic, social and political threats. They are frequently unrecognised, unrecorded, and unsupported at local, national and global level. This finding is reinforced by UNISDR who found that 99% of disaster records are attributed to extensive risks and that these are responsible for 42% of total economic losses from disasters.4

Diverse and interrelated risks cannot be viewed in isolation.

At the local level, climate change, disaster risk, conflict and poverty are all experienced as part of one challenge: the security of lives, livelihoods and assets. Communities rarely differentiate between hazards in their own risk management. However, there has been a lack of integration and ownership of the DRR agenda outside of the disaster risk management community, and a lack of alignment between objectives, actions, and evaluations of climate change adaptation, DRR, and poverty reduction initiatives.

Local people are the everyday heroes.

They are the ones that tackle everyday small scale recurrent disasters and have rich experience of the threats they face and clear priorities for addressing them. However, the existing sources of local level resilience are often not drawn upon.

---

5 UNISDR (2013) Make the Voices Heard of the 1.5 Billion People in Fragile & Conflict-Affected Areas
6 UNISDR (2013) Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction
We can ensure real impact at the frontline if we:

1. Understand local perspectives of risk
   Listen and understand the experiences of people most at risk

2. Consider the local context
   Recognise the real life challenges of fragility, insecurity, and informality

3. Leave no one behind
   Ensure the inclusion of all groups, particularly those most at risk

4. Collaborate
   Work with and across all groups and levels

5. Mobilise local resources
   Build on existing capacities, knowledge and other sources of resilience

6. Align across policies
   Ensure coherence across development and climate change activities

7. Hold people to account
   Ensure accountability to local communities

8. Learn from the past and look to the future
   Learn lessons and recognise future trends to inform recovery and development planning

9. Be environmentally aware
   Recognise, protect and strengthen the functions of ecosystems

10. Recognise the potential of civil society
    Actively work with civil society to achieve these essentials

Reflecting on UNISDR’s reviews of the HFA, as well as GNDR’s Views from the Frontline review of progress at the local level, this Reality Checklist highlights 10 essentials for local level impact.

If Governments, civil society and other groups work together using this checklist when developing plans to implement the Post-2015 DRR Framework, then local-level impact can be enhanced.
The critical role for Civil Society Organisations in ensuring local level impact

How can CSOs ensure the essentials in the Reality Checklist are tackled?

The new Post-2015 DRR Framework asks for different groups to define their own roles in achieving the framework’s outcomes. CSOs are unique. They benefit from strong relationships with communities; relationships with international, regional and national policymakers; positioning at the local level as well as global reach; human resources; and knowledge and experience from the field. These particular added values mean that our members identify six core roles for CSOs.
What do these roles mean in the context of implementing the Post-2015 DRR framework?

Examples of civil society activities to ensure local level impact under each of the Priorities of the Post-2015 DRR Framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil society roles</th>
<th>Priority 1 Understanding disaster risk</th>
<th>Priority 2 Strengthening governance to manage disaster risk</th>
<th>Priority 3 Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience</th>
<th>Priority 4 Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to Build Back Better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitor</td>
<td>• Undertake participatory local disaster risk and resilience profiling and assessment.</td>
<td>• Actively participate in the development of multi-stakeholder governance arrangements, such as participatory budgeting and decision making processes.</td>
<td>• Implement activities to reduce underlying risk factors. For example: » Community owned social protection mechanisms » Sustainable management of ecosystems</td>
<td>• Implement activities to better prepare for response and recovery. For example: » Support the creation of update of local preparedness and contingency plans. » Conduct preparedness drills and pre-positioning of resources. » Support development of local disaster recovery frameworks. » Support continuation of basic services after a disaster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connector</td>
<td>• Bring groups together to explore disaster risk information, encourage debate, and inform local action.</td>
<td>• Encourage those most at risk to participate in multi-stakeholder platforms tackling risk and resilience issues.</td>
<td>• Encourage those most at risk to participate in multi-stakeholder platforms tackling risk and resilience issues.</td>
<td>• Facilitate participation of communities and other groups in disaster preparedness, response, recovery activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>• Lobby for contextually appropriate DRR policies, plans and practices.</td>
<td>• Campaign for the rights of communities to participate in DRR planning.</td>
<td>• Promote disaster-resilient public and private investments.</td>
<td>• Campaign for the institutionalised use of post-disaster forensics to enhanced preparedness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity Builder</td>
<td>• Initiate training and learning activities which enable communities to participate in disaster risk profiling and assessment.</td>
<td>• Build civil society capability to engage in and influence multi-stakeholder governance.</td>
<td>• Build capacities of communities to share information and experiences, and collaborate with other sectors.</td>
<td>• Share local lessons learnt to support the development of “Build Back Better” standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Broker</td>
<td>• Develop platforms and other ways to gather and share local knowledge, perceptions, and practices within and beyond communities.</td>
<td>• Raise public awareness of individual and institutional roles and rights.</td>
<td>• Share knowledge between sectors, through platforms and networks.</td>
<td>• Share local lessons learnt to support the development of post-disaster forensics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementer</td>
<td>• Support the creation of local disaster loss databases.</td>
<td>• Gather and report on public perceptions of risk.</td>
<td>• Share local knowledge to ensure resilience is at the heart of approaches taken by other groups. For example: » Land use planning by governments » Continuity planning by businesses</td>
<td>• Support the creation of local disaster loss databases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reality Checklist**

These 10 essentials will help guide local level impact across all activities.

1. Understand local perspectives of risk
2. Consider the local context
3. Leave no one behind
4. Collaborate
5. Mobilise local resources
6. Align across policies
7. Hold people to account
8. Learn from the past and look to the future
9. Be environmentally aware
10. Recognise the potential of civil society
Joining hands...

Civil society cannot do these things alone. These actions require partnerships and collaboration between different groups and across levels, whether that be sectoral, global, national and local. Only when working together can we ensure the Post-2015 DRR Framework has an impact at the frontline.

Civil society has responded to the request made in the Post-2015 DRR Framework to identify their roles in achieving the framework’s outcomes, and their actions under the framework’s priorities. However, support is required to ensure fulfilment of the actions outlined in this implementation plan. At the national and local level, this will vary from context to context. It will need financial commitments, technical support, or human resources from governments and other groups. It will also require governments, donor agencies, UN agencies, financial institutions and other international and regional organisations to open the political space for civil society to operate. When this happens, experience shows that local level impact can be achieved.

If we do not join hands...no one person or group can make change happen

Reverend Lawrence Temfwe
Jubilee Centre Executive Director, Zambia
Participant in Views from the Frontline, 2011

Taking next steps together

CSOs and national and local governments should:

- Have a reality check together. Use the Reality Checklist to develop and assess implementation strategies for the Post-2015 DRR Framework.
- Sit down together and identify activities they can partner on, including the actions outlined in this implementation plan.
- Collaborate to use Frontline, a local level participatory monitoring tool that gathers local perspectives on risk and resilience. For more information see www.gndr.org/frontline
- Share planned and ongoing activities that are creating local level impact and learn from what’s going on in other parts of the world at www.gndr.org

Who We Are

The Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction is the largest international network of organisations committed to working together to improve the lives of people affected by disasters world-wide. Our purpose is to enable civil society to connect local to global and speak with a collective voice that drives action which reduces risk and increases the resilience of the most vulnerable.
A world of resilient communities where vulnerable people are able to prepare for, resist against, recover from and adapt to hazards and a changing climate. However, what brings our members together is being joined in the singular purpose of enabling civil society to connect locally to global and speak with a collective voice that drive action to reduce and rise the influence of the very worst. NGDR operates through a global hub in London, England, and rural areas allowing better coordination within regions and development of regional positions.

Central America
- Costa Rica
- CNDH, DGA, Grupo Amenaza, Mininter, Ministerio de Desarrollo Humano y Social, UIS, UCAI, Universidad Católica de San Buenaventura
- El Salvador
- CARE, Jewish World Service, Plan International, South-South Cooperation, United Nations
- Guatemala
- Ministerio de Comunicaciones, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Organización de Estados Americanos, United Nations Development Programme
- Haiti
- IDH, IRC, Save the Children, UNHCR
- Dominican Republic
- IDH
- World Vision

South America
- Argentina
- BMBF, Consejo de la Biblia, CONICET, DaCE, ICS, INAR, INE, MINAS, Naciones Unidas, ONG, PROJECON, SENERG, UNAM, UADE
- Brazil
- BMBF, CAPES, CNPq, CNPq/FAPEMIG, Embrapa, FAPESP, ICMBio, MCTIC, UFMG, UNESP, UnB, Unicamp
- Colombia
- BIEM, CIC, CIPEC, ENI, INETER, SENAMHI, UNAM, UNA
- Ecuador
- BMBF, CAPES, CEPODEA, CIPEC, COLCIENCIAS, CONICET, ICMBio, INETER, INFO, MCTIC, SENAMHI, UnB
- Paraguay
- BMBF, CIPEC, COLCIENCIAS, INCAA, INM, MCTIC, SENAMHI, UnB, UNICEF

Central Asia
- Afghanistan
- Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water and Environment
- Armenia
- Kyrgyzstan
- Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Economy and Development, United Nations
- Tajikistan
- Ministry of Emergency Situations, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Science, United Nations

North Africa & West Asia
- Algeria
- Iran
- Jordan

What are you waiting for? If you or your organisation are interested in being part of NGDR, here is how.

Membership application
To apply for membership, complete and submit the online membership application form on the NGDR website or apply directly to the NGDR Secretariat.

+44 (0)208 977 7726
info@ngdr.org
www.ngdr.org

Note: The application process is free and there are no membership fees.