Global Network
of Civil Society Organisations
for Disaster Reduction

IF WE DO NOT JOIN HANDS...

Summary Report
Views from the Frontline
Local reports of progress on implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action.
May 2011
20,000 views on ‘local risk governance’ and 57 video case studies have been collected by 511 organisations in 69 countries to deliver Views from the Frontline 2011

VFL 2011 is the second study in an ongoing research and learning programme that collects and shares views about progress in reducing the risk of disasters at the frontline – where those most vulnerable live and work. 7,000 people from 48 countries took part in the first set of research, VFL 2009, which showed that progress in establishing national policies and legislation had not generated widespread changes in local practices. A supportive government culture, open to the formation of local partnerships, was seen as the single most important factor to accelerating implementation of risk reduction policies at a local level. So the focus for VFL 2011 has been local risk governance – what’s working and what needs to improve?

The full report VFL 2011 report is available at www.globalnetwork-dr.org. An ongoing consultation process is now underway at international, national and local levels to explore the implications of these findings and support acceleration of risk reduction activity at the local level.

This document provides the headlines and invites a specific commitment from people, organisations and institutions working at different levels to translate risk reduction policies into action at the frontline, where the most vulnerable people continue to lose lives and livelihoods as a result of disaster.

With the objective of substantially reducing the loss of lives and livelihoods caused by disasters by 2015, 168 countries adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Japan in 2005. To help measure progress, the UN has produced Global Assessment Reports in 2009 and 2011. See www.unisdr.org for details. The VFL programme is designed to support and complement this UN-coordinated monitoring and review process by providing a ‘bottom-up’ perspective from people living and working at the frontline of disasters.
“IF WE DO NOT JOIN HANDS...”

Lawrence Temfwe leads a small NGO in central Zambia. The lives of the people he works with are typical of those at the frontline all over the world. They face multiple challenges of natural, social and economic disasters, drought, famine, floods, HIV/AIDS, growing unemployment and lack of basic services.

Lawrence challenges local and national authorities to take action. He also challenges local people to play their part. Lawrence strongly believes that national and local government, businesses, civil society, community associations and religious groups all need to recognize their roles and responsibilities. Only when they start to work together – listening to different perspectives, forming partnerships, involving everyone, building clear understanding of needs and resources and working together to secure them – will peoples’ lives improve: “If we do not join hands...” he says, “no one person or group can make change happen.”

The biennial review of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) taking place in Geneva in May 2011 calls for ‘increased investment in local action’. It makes this call against a backdrop of limited and fragmented implementation over the course of the framework.

We believe that the answer to the challenge of effective implementation of the HFA lies in Lawrence’s words: ‘If we do not join hands...’

VFL 2011 is about ‘local risk governance’

Findings from VFL 2009 and experience of community-based disaster risk reduction practitioners in the GNDR network, show that where local level people are included and able to participate, where local capacity is supported and capabilities maximised and strengthened, and where risk information is available and accountabilities are clear, then there can be real progress in accelerating implementation of risk reduction activity at the local level.

Local government is a critical link in the chain; coordinating government resources and cooperating with all local level stakeholders to reduce disaster risk. Information management, communication, consultation, coordination, decision-making and allocation of resources are some of the important aspects of ‘local risk governance’.

Indicators to identify progress in these areas were identified as a way for the VFL 2011 study to explore more deeply this area of ‘local risk governance’ at the frontline.

Twenty indicators of local risk governance in action

INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION
Participation
Gender
Children & Youth
Volunteers
Partnership

LOCAL CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY
Policies
Indigenous capacities
Planning
Financial Resources
Decentralisation
Expertise
Training
Information management
Governmental coordination

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY
Baselines
Monitoring and reporting
Participatory monitoring
Complaints procedures
Information gathering
Information dissemination

More information about these 20 indicators is provided in the VFL 2011 report
www.globalnetwork-dr.org/VFL2011
**Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction**

**VIEWS FROM THE FRONTLINE 2011**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**ACTION AT THE FRONTLINE**

**Key findings from VFL 2011**

57% of people feel disasters losses have increased over the last five years. 21% feel they have decreased.

- Respondents from 58 countries felt that disaster losses (lives, livelihoods & assets) had increased. Only 9 countries reported a decrease.
- Unless there is a massive scaling up of action at the local level the HFA will not achieve a substantial reduction in disaster losses by 2015.

Over 90 action at the Frontline case studies have been produced, many with supporting images and video, to provide valuable, practical contextual qualitative information about constraints, good practices and what is required to achieve a 'substantial reduction of losses’. These support findings from the quantitative data.

See ‘Actions at the Frontline’ videos at [http://www.globalnetwork-dr.org/acting-for-change.html](http://www.globalnetwork-dr.org/acting-for-change.html)

**People feel the situation is getting worse, not better.**

- Over 21% feel they have decreased.
- Respondents from 58 countries felt that disaster losses (lives, livelihoods & assets) had increased. Only 9 countries reported a decrease.
- Unless there is a massive scaling up of action at the local level the HFA will not achieve a substantial reduction in disaster losses by 2015.

Local risk governance scores: 2.4 out of 5

- ‘very limited / some activity but significant scope for improvement’
  - reaching the frontline – the gap is widening and VFL 2009 conclusion remains: “Clouds... but still little rain”
  - None of the 69 countries in VFL 2011 reported “substantial” progress at the local level, giving significantly lower ratings- similar to those in the VFL 2009 survey where the average score was 2.36.
  - 48 of the 82 national governments self-reported “substantial or comprehensive” progress on risk governance indicators in the GAR 2011, HFA Priority for Action 1 (giving a 3.4 rating out of 5).
  - In contrast, local governments self-reported 2.8 on local risk governance indicators – “very limited/some activity but significant scope for improvement.”

**Local risk governance scores**

Ranking for VFL2011 questions

- 20,000 people in 69 countries responded to the VFL 2011 survey.
- The methodology for this is provided in the VFL2011 report [www.globalnetwork-dr.org/VFL2011](http://www.globalnetwork-dr.org/VFL2011)

**Texts from the Frontline**

Supported by specialists, txteagle, VFL 2011 piloted surveying people living in disaster-affected countries using internet and mobile phone technology.

36,000 people responded reinforcing the VFL headline finding that overall people view disaster losses as increasing.

Further market research is needed but with over 80% mobile phone access rates in many of the low, to low-middle income countries affected by disasters, and low costs compared with other forms of research, the VFL 2011 pilot points to strong potential for further use – not just in disaster response as seen in Haiti and Pakistan, but also for a wide range of risk reduction work, including dramatically increasing the scope and coverage of the Views from the Frontline programme.
**‘Joining hands’ at all levels will strengthen local risk governance**

’So will the day come when we begin working together as civil society and local governments? In reality we are all one community affected by the same disasters. This is a big question and its answer is simple in the presence of good intentions for building our societies and becoming stronger.’

Lebanon: VFL 2011

Clearly, all the structural causes of vulnerability cannot be resolved just at the local level. Institutions, organisations, people at all levels have a role to play. Discussions on reforming and strengthening local risk governance capabilities have to be set within the broader challenge of political reforms to national governance. Whilst there is no ‘one-size-fits-all countries’ solution, a growing body of evidence shows that optimising local and national resources for local-level disaster risk management requires commitment to participatory governance and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

In Central America recurrent disaster events have prompted governments to adopt principles of participation, partnership, devolving responsibilities to the lowest appropriate level and accountability in their approaches to disaster risk reduction.

World Disaster Report 2010 (available at www.ifrc.org)

Intuitively, we know we can achieve more by working together. Prioritising actions that result in dialogue, trust, mutual understanding and constructive relationships will help.

‘So if we believe that joining hands is the way forward, then enabling all those at the local level to work together – and to work effectively with national government – is an important goal.

Progress at the local level requires people to work together – international, national and local.

Working together requires effective local risk governance. Understanding and mapping the risks that endanger people provides an excellent the starting point for people to work together, build trust and mutual understanding.

Working in partnership to tackle these risks is the way forward.

We’re calling for nations to commit to undertaking this by 2013.’

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**Resources: LOW**

Mean scores for Local Risk Governance indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia / Eastern Europe</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Caucasus</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Africa</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Africa</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overall Local Risk Governance scores by region

Inadequate resource is a significant barrier to implementation of policies and plans.

‘Resources’ is the lowest scoring indicator at 2.1 for the entire sample. Allocation of financial resources is an indicator of political commitment. Not only communities but local government also reported markedly low progress in this area – this low score points to an urgent need for increasing direct investments in local action.

‘Local governments have no support from central government, so while responsibilities are decentralized they are not allocated sufficient resources’

Honduras: VFL 2011

Those who can influence government can shape decisions being made about resource allocation. Those most vulnerable have least influence and so their needs and priorities get ignored.

But, this is only part of the picture. A country’s ability to reduce disaster losses does not just depend on financial resources. ‘Action at the Frontline’ case studies indicate that optimising resources requires greater public awareness of risk and participation, which can increase public accountability and transparency. Building resilience is more a political than a financial challenge.

A specific womens’ study showed that women are often excluded from decision-making, but have important insights and contributions which should be included. A children’s and young people’s study highlighted a lack of education and awareness in these groups which must be addressed to promote participation. (see VFL2011 report www.globalnetwork-dr.org/VFL2011)
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DELIVERING ‘LOCAL RISK GOVERNANCE’: AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

While local risk governance is critical to accelerating risk reduction activity at the local level, dramatic changes are needed for this to take place systematically at the scale required to reverse the upwards trend in disaster losses. Actions in each of the three core aspects of local risk governance provide an Agenda for Change:

1. ENHANCE INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION
   - Political governance reforms: recognise rights of all groups (men, women, girls, boys and youth) to participate in disaster risk reduction decision-making and planning process through policy, legal and institutional provisions and in actually, not just on paper.
   - Administrative governance reforms: adopt partnership approaches in public policy implementation, for example through participatory risk assessments, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
   - Tie performance reviews and incentives, such as promotion in government service, to results achieved in implementing partnership approaches in public policy.
   - Decentralise local risk governance systems to the local appropriate administrative level, including clear, delegated authority, responsibilities and resources.

2. DEVELOP LOCAL CAPACITY AND PERFORMANCE
   - Undertake nationwide periodic climate-sensitive vulnerability / capacity assessments at the local level; with participation from civil society and high-risk groups.
   - Develop information management systems; collating, mapping and disseminating local risk information, which is triangulated and cross-checked with national and regional information.
   - Strengthen knowledge-sharing networks, fostering lateral and vertical exchange of good practices, lessons learnt and connecting local indigenous and scientific knowledge.
   - Disseminate outside specialist knowledge such as flood maps and climate forecasts in forms and language that are culturally appropriate and through accessible local media.
   - Run public awareness and media campaigns to promote widespread dissemination of risk information and raise awareness among at-risk citizens and key stakeholder groups.
   - Utilise the local risk knowledge of women, girls, boys, youth and men to inform planning and investment decisions within principal development sectors including finance and planning, trade and industry, transport, energy, agriculture, environment, health, education, urban planning.
   - Conduct institutional capacity assessment, development and training for local state and non-state actors in disaster risk reduction, using participatory approaches.
   - Adopt innovative financial strategies such as community risk reduction and adaptation funds to provide sustained support for institutional capacity building of local actors.
   - Provide adequate dedicated programme budgets at district and municipal levels in support of DRR activities.

3. ENABLE GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY
   - Set the right to information about risk and risk reduction rights and obligations in public policy and legislation. Publicise these regularly.
   - Audit disaster risk reduction progress regularly through multi-level multi-stakeholder monitoring, reporting and verification systems with active involvement of citizens and civil society.
   - Set specific, time-bound local-level targets, baselines, commitment and responsibilities.
   - Develop relevant DRR codes and standards (inclusive of informal sector) accompanied by appropriate compliance and enforcement mechanisms.
   - Establish and use transparent complaints mechanisms, which are accessible to the general public.

BUT IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT THE LOCAL LEVEL...

Whilst many aspects of local risk governance depend on local level actions, coherent approaches through collaborative actions at national, regional and international levels are needed to enable and support local activity:

- Develop national DRR implementation strategies to ensure coherent and complementary approaches, unlocking synergies between different actions and actors, especially at the local scale.
- Strengthen networks and alliances at all levels that promote civil society harmonisation, information exchange, coordination and joint actions.
- Develop common local level resilience frameworks, associated tools and implementation guidelines for joint climate and disaster risk assessment, coordination, planning, implementation and monitoring.
- Establish and use resource coordination mechanisms that foster collaborative working across sectors and programmes through inter-disciplinary multi-sectoral coalitions (e.g. climate change, poverty alleviation, food security, etc.).
- Promote coordination between line departments/ministries (e.g. health, education, agriculture, water, urban planning, etc.) to avoid competition for funding and to break down “silos” in governments.
WHAT CAN I DO?

Calls for improved local risk governance are not new. It’s not the first time recommendations have been made for local level action. Facts, figures, case studies and quotes emphasising the need for partnerships, accountability, transparency and investments in local capacity and capability have been shared before…

**So, how can VFL 2011 lead to change?**

Everyone involved in Views from the Frontline calls for commitment at all levels to dramatically accelerate frontline action before 2013.

‘Guidelines and benchmarks are very important. Stakeholders involved in disaster management, especially disaster preparedness need to have mission and vision for their efforts, they need to formulate short term and long term plans with a tangible outcome.’

*Malaysia: VFL 2011*

Here’s our invitation to you:

**Progress at the local level requires people to ‘join hands’ and work together - international, national and local.**

**Working together requires effective local risk governance; starting by forging local partnerships to understand and map the risks that endanger people.**

**We call on countries to commit to undertaking participatory risk assessments and risk mapping programmes by 2013 – supported by international institutions, national governments, local government, civil society organisations, private enterprise and community organisations.**

**Working in partnership to tackle the risks that are identified is the way forward.**

More detailed invitations to commitments by each stakeholder are provided in the VFL 2011 report www.globalnetwork-dr.org/VFL2011
Views from the Frontline brings the voices of those at the frontline – those whose lives and livelihoods are impacted by disasters, into the heart of the debate, identifying key steps needed to scale up. Through UN system organisations and NGOs, we are grateful to the 50,000 people who participated in the face-to-face survey and pilot internet and mobile phone technology survey, and all who have supported the programme financially and otherwise.

www.globalnetwork-dr.org