Changing the way we work before, during and after disasters

The World Humanitarian Summit offers an important opportunity to improve not only the way we respond with humanitarian action, but also how we undertake development and build resilience so as to minimise humanitarian need. Disasters and crises are inseparable from issues of poverty, poor governance, and environmental degradation. Time and time again we have seen poor construction and corruption lead to floods; inappropriate land use planning generate landslides; and lack of land rights exacerbate conflicts. By strengthening community resilience we have the opportunity to reduce the humanitarian burden of disasters when they do hit. With the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Agenda 2030, and the Paris Agreement, we must work to align these policies so that all actions before, during and after disasters, build resilience to future crises.

1. Strengthen community resilience before disasters

**WHY IS THIS NEEDED?** Prevention is better than response - it saves lives, money and losses. There are some preparedness activities which require focused resources. These include strengthening community early warning systems and building local capacities to respond to disasters. But resilience is a long-term investment that needs to be mainstreamed into development rather than solely drawn from short term humanitarian funds. Resilience building must take a multi hazard approach to potential threats due to the complex and changing context we live in. It must build resilience to not just large-scale, but also small-scale threats as the majority of disasters are small scale and localised, and over time this extensive risk concentrates and reconfigures into intensive risk, which is more difficult and expensive to address.

**HOW ARE GNDR MEMBERS DOING THIS?**
Sorasora village in Bolivia suffers from water scarcity, which has in the past threatened livestock and crops. Drought and regular freezes further exacerbate this, prompting many young men to migrate to cities for alternative job opportunities. The Apachita Foundation and the Candelaria Centre for Women worked with the remaining women in the community to build their capacities to construct wells from local materials. These wells were deep enough to avoid the drought and the freeze, and now provide water for entire families. With the new wells, there has been enough water to look after livestock and agricultural productivity has increased. This resilience building has strengthened community members’ preparedness for future droughts.

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<th>WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NOW?</th>
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<td>Allocate 5% of Overseas Development Assistance to specific DRR activities</td>
<td>Implement programmes that reduce vulnerability of marginalised groups</td>
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<td>Integrate resilience into all public and private investments through the roll out of resilience markers and assessments</td>
<td>Build civil society organisations’ capacities to collaborate and enhance resilience</td>
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To make humanitarian action more effective we must...
2 Build on local capacities and knowledge during disasters

**WHY IS THIS NEEDED?** Local people at the frontline are often the first responders, and sometimes the only responders as many disasters do not trigger international or even national response. GNDR’s 365disasters campaign has recorded a disaster a day for a year and has highlighted the vast number of small scale disasters that are not acknowledged by mainstream media. Communities understand the complex contexts in which they live, including poverty, informality and fragility. The primary bearers of risk have learnt over time what works and what needs to be prioritised. GNDR’s *Frontline* programme captures local perspectives on risks and offers insights for all stakeholders on the priorities on the ground. By ignoring the knowledge and capacities of communities, humanitarian response risks being ineffective and a waste of money. We need to optimise available resources by building on existing sources of resilience.

**HOW ARE GNDR MEMBERS DOING THIS?**

Immediately following the 2010 cold lava flow in Gempol, Indonesia, the government wanted to relocate community members to what they had deemed as lower-risk ground. However, many people chose not to relocate as the new settlements offered inappropriate alternative livelihoods. Over generations, community members had learnt to live in harmony with the risks they face and relocating meant losing their livelihoods. Yakkum Emergency Unit, a local NGO, created a locally-led Disaster Taskforce to feed community perspectives into government decision making that has helped ensure the government’s initiatives take into account the realities on the ground. This local capacity ensured that community voices were heard and that decisions did not create future humanitarian crises.

**WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NOW?**

- **Empower local people by ensuring 20% of humanitarian funding goes directly to southern based CSOs and by building local leadership**
- **Share local perspectives on risk and resilience through our *Frontline* Programme**
- **Design humanitarian response actions based on priority needs and capacities of communities**
- **Connect national and local civil society organisations with other stakeholders**

**GNDR WILL...**

- Advocate for the use of post-disaster causal analysis to capture lessons learnt about development strengths and deficiencies
- Utilise local knowledge and lessons learnt to ensure rebuilding reduces future risk
- Develop blended funding mechanisms to connect recovery and development resources
- Monitor resilience realities at the local level via the collection of high quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data

3 Build back better after disasters

**WHY IS THIS NEEDED?** Too often reconstruction and recovery simply reconfigures previous risk or creates new risk by building back without considering all potential future threats. We must use the investment, energy, and momentum after a disaster to change the way we build, live and work, so that lives and livelihoods become more resilient. This requires us to systematically learn from the disasters we experience; we must uncover the root causes so we can address these deficiencies in order to prevent future disasters. It also requires us to bridge the humanitarian-development divide by identifying shared longer-term resilience goals rather than short-term recovery objectives and accessing to long-term funding so that these goals can be achieved.

**HOW ARE GNDR MEMBERS DOING THIS?**

Following the April 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) has organised trainings on resilient recovery so as to ensure future risk is reduced. This involves sharing learnings on traditional building methods, enforcement of building codes and successful local governance mechanisms.

**WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NOW?**

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**OUR NETWORK MEMBERS**, as independent development actors, have the comparative advantage to strengthen community resilience to reduce the humanitarian burden.

To talk to us about partnerships, email info@gndr.org Read more about our programmes at www.gndr.org