GNDR
Global Network of
Civil Society Organisations
for Disaster Reduction

100,000 Perceptions of Risk

Views from the Frontline 2019
Global Recommendations Report

Contents

Photo: Yvonne Etinosa/GNDR

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

03

Executive Summary

For decades governments, international institutions, civil society organisations and people living in at-risk communities have tried to prevent disasters. Global and national policies have come and gone. Yet time and again lives are still devastated by floods, storms, droughts, diseases, food shortages, poverty, conflict and pandemics.

Photo: Julia Lemos Lima/UNDRR

Views from the Frontline is the largest independent global review of risk from the perspective of those living on the front line. It is a systemic analysis from the local perspective. The project identifies and compares the perspectives of local communities, local government representatives and local civil society organisations (CSOs). Our information enables stakeholders to bridge the gap between policy and practice, and strengthen two-way communication between communities and local, national and global risk reduction decision makers. The collected **data** can be disaggregated by country, community, age, gender and disability.

In 2019, we published our Views from the Frontline **global report** based on the findings of our surveys with 119,000 people in 50 countries. As we reach the halfway mark of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, we now present seven global conclusions and eight advocacy messages to guide global decision making and strengthen disaster risk governance.

Risk is increasing. Covid-19, conflict, climate change, displacement, and food insecurity have increased exposure to negative shocks and stresses, pushed more people into poverty and reversed progress made on the Sustainable Development Goals and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
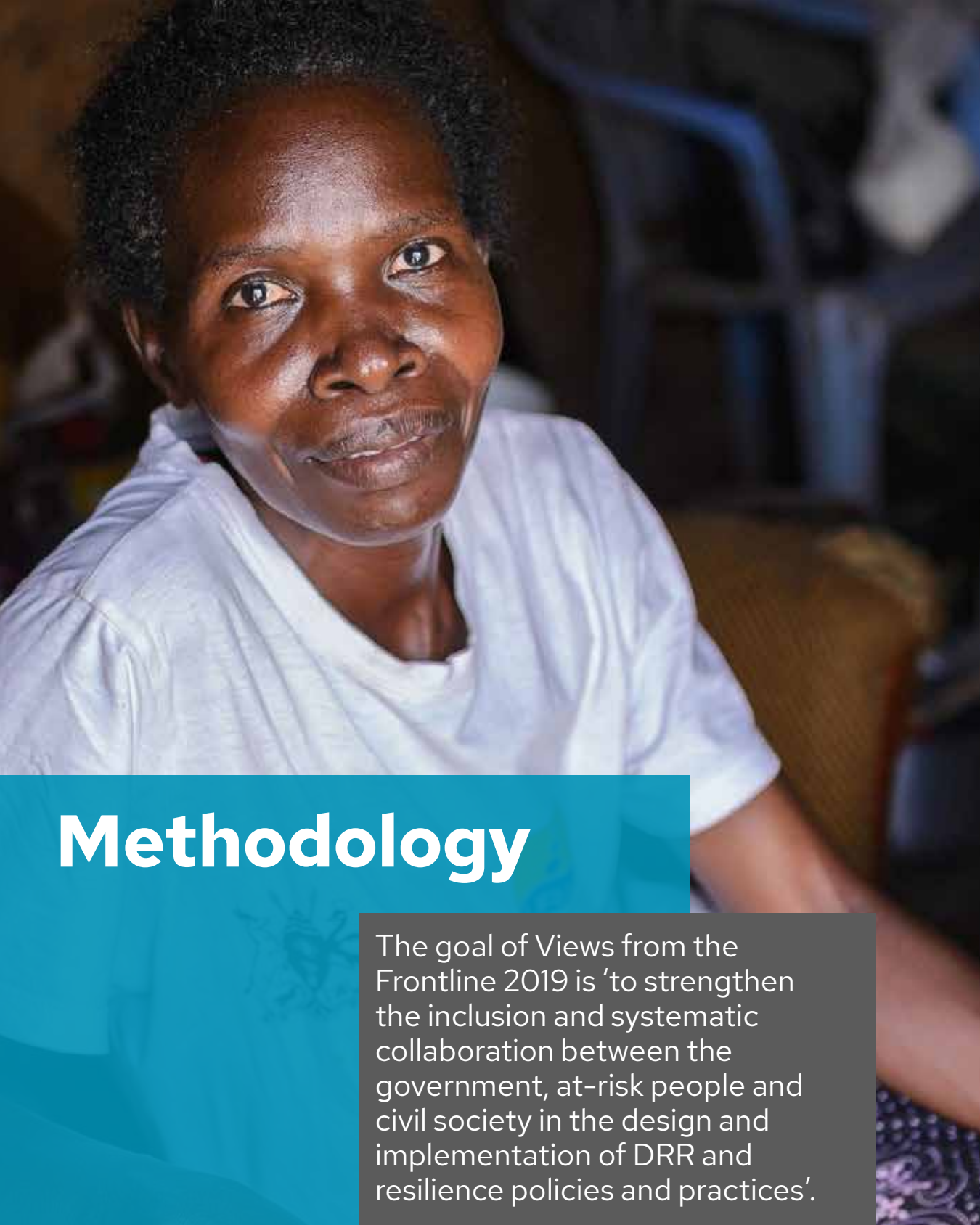
People on the front line of risk continue to highlight the urgent need to strengthen risk reduction measures. In 2022, an estimated 274 million people will face hunger, conflict and displacement because of disasters, climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic. Climate

"Our information enables stakeholders to bridge the gap between policy and practice, and strengthen two-way communication between communities and local, national and global risk reduction decision makers."

change is being described as a super risk driver by communities on the front line. Conflict is an example of the systemic and global connectedness of risk. An example highlighted by those on the front line is the cascading risk being created by the conflict in Ukraine, which is directly increasing levels of food insecurity across the middle east and parts of Africa, pushing more people into poverty and hunger.

The civil society organisations we have surveyed report that increased levels of risk are combined with a lack of localisation and a failure of the global community to meaningfully listen to those on the front line of risk and ensure resources for disaster risk reduction reach the local level. To address these systemic and cascading risks we must actively listen to communities on the front line of risk.

This report maps out recommendations for how our seven global conclusions (see next page) can be practically addressed and sets out eight key advocacy messages for all stakeholders to take forward.

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

05

Methodology

The goal of Views from the Frontline 2019 is 'to strengthen the inclusion and systematic collaboration between the government, at-risk people and civil society in the design and implementation of DRR and resilience policies and practices'.

Views from the Frontline was implemented in 750 at-risk communities in 50 countries across Asia, the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. 15 communities from each country were purposefully selected based on the geo-political setting, hazard and risk profiles, and socio-economic vulnerabilities. The selection of the most-at-risk communities was done by identifying the interconnectedness of disasters, impacts of climate change and underlying vulnerabilities.

The data collected includes the responses of 119,000 people and captures their perceptions of:

1. Existing and emerging risks

2. Risk governance structures

3. Suggested mechanisms to reduce the impacts of disaster risks

4. Perceived factors preventing the inclusion of marginalised people in resilience processes

5. The degree of coherence adopted at the local level between DRR, climate change and eco-based disaster risk management approaches

6. Differences in the perceptions of civil society organisations, communities most at risk and local governments (to help to identify gaps between policy, practice and action)

Communities subsequently used the data and findings to collectively develop local action plans to address the main threats identified.

At the national level our findings were analysed and conclusions drawn out about trends in risk and vulnerability, as well as policy gaps. National advocacy plans were then developed by a multi stakeholder group in each country along with the key recommendations.

GNDR then thematically analysed the global trends in challenges and recommendations. We used this to develop our global conclusions report and offer practical recommendations to strengthen risk governance in the second half of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction global implementation.

Photo: Jjumba Martin/GNDR

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

07

Global conclusions

Data analysis of the perspective of communities in 50 countries highlights seven key conclusions:

1
Complex threats require a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach

2
Communities are still excluded from decision making and participation is poorly planned

3
Poor governance means a lack of accountability for risk governance

4
There is still a lack of local funding for DRR

5
We are still facing an information gap on risk at the local level

6
Development is not yet risk-informed

7
Nature-based solutions are not being prioritised

Photo: Homeline Media/UNDRR

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

09

CONCLUSION 1

Complex threats require a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach

Floods are the most common threat faced by the communities. The impact of floods on communities most at risk is severe: loss of lives, poor health, loss of livelihoods and livestock, and damage to crops and buildings. Communities stated that maintaining access to education and healthcare is particularly important and they are concerned that debt may hamper efforts to reduce the impact of floods.

Risk is systemic, complex and ever changing. There is a clear need for integrated planning solutions to build the resilience of communities. Covid-19, climate change and the conflict in Ukraine have highlighted the systemic nature of risk and the interconnectedness of vulnerabilities.

These shocks and stressors have caused cascading negative social, economic and environmental impact and have (re)produced and intensified secondary crises such as food security, unemployment, and gender-based violence.

From this we have learnt that disaster prevention and risk governance require an integrated approach with structural and non-structural measures, rather than a single approach. It must include a whole-of-society approach where local communities are meaningfully engaged in decision making. Plus a whole-of-government approach where risk reduction is integrated across all levels of governance. Only then will risk be meaningfully managed and shocks and stressors prevented from becoming disasters.

1

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

11

Communities are still excluded from decision making and participation is poorly planned

Local knowledge, capacities and decision making are essential for effective risk management and disaster prevention. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction specifically highlights this: Article 7 states that 'Governments should engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards'. However this is still not happening.

Our Views from the Frontline data from Pakistan shows that more than half of local government officials surveyed admitted that they never involve communities in consultations and eight out of 10 people with

disabilities, and almost all women, said that they have never been included in risk governance processes.

Excluding communities means their own knowledge of their vulnerabilities are not considered, meaning action taken to address a threat may be less effective. Here, civil society organisations have an important role in conveenning the whole-of-society approach. Even within a community, different groups have different priorities. For example, women may have different roles to men; indigenous people may place higher value on their cultural heritage; and farmers and pastoralists may have different views on the use of ecosystems around them. Governments must facilitate communities and grassroots organisations to meaningfully engage in decision-making processes and disaster risk reduction programmes in a systematic way so that the diversity of these views can be captured, local knowledge applied and no-one is left behind.[1]

Target E of the Sendai Framework calls for the development of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020. Community inclusion is essential to ensure that strategies are not only in place but effectively address real needs. For example, in the Namwongo community in Kampala, Uganda, local governments representatives and community members identified very different threats. The government highlighted ash fall and traffic congestion as key threats, yet the community focused on climate change, and conflict and insecurity. Any local development plan that didn't take these issues into account would not effectively respond to the needs of the people it is developed for.

When exploring why exclusion persists, poor planning of participation came back as the most common perceived cause. Those on the front line of risk report that governments fail to take into account people's work and childcare commitments and farmers' seasonal calendars, as well as age and ethnic and religious differences - factors that would ensure the meaningful participation of all stakeholders. Timing, lack of convenience, and accessibility are some of the key barriers to participation in consultations on resilience plans and actions highlighted by communities most at risk. For example, in Odisha, India, persons with disabilities highlighted the challenges of reaching the location of local government meetings. One individual said it takes two hours and several modes of transport to get to the meetings.

Similarly, women are often excluded from the process of consultation because the timings of meetings clash with taking care of their household work and children. The result is that those on the front line of risk feel their knowledge, expertise and recommendations are an afterthought and not prioritised or valued.

Furthermore, when taking this from the local to the national level, those on the front line of risk feel their voice is completely lost. Whilst civil society organisations play a crucial role in connecting communities with decision makers, local and national civil society organisations rarely have a permanent seat at national level. At the same time, many civil society organisations don't know about disaster risk reduction policies, budget and commitments made by their government and what their role is. Many feel that the space of civil society is shrinking and further curtailing the opportunities to amplify the voice of the communities. Government decision makers rarely see civil society organisations as credible institutions. For example, in Zambia civil society is being excluded from critical debates - instead there is an increase in arrests when they try to speak out.

Knowledge sharing between civil society organisations and communities is happening but sporadically. There is also a lack of collaboration amongst civil society organisations meaning there isn't one unified voice to advocate for change. Civil society organisations have an important role in strengthening collaboration and coordination for risk governance.

2

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents   Executive Summary   Methodology   **Global conclusions**   Global recommendations   Key advocacy messages   Reflections and conclusions   13

Poor governance means a lack of accountability for risk governance

Whilst those on the front line of risk feel that there has been progress made in making sure there are structures and mechanisms in place to manage disaster risk, often there is no dedicated human resource available at the local level to carry out the disaster risk reduction work. Governments assign this responsibility to people who are already doing other jobs, which creates a lack of clarity around who is accountable for risk reduction action. As a result, communities report that there is a significant lack of competency and required know-how at the local level.

There is also a severe lack of resources reaching local level government for disaster risk reduction. As a result, local communities can miss critical interactions with their designated government representative on the design of disaster risk reduction activities. This reinforces the essential need for a whole-of-government approach - where government at all levels and all departments are aligned in risk reduction approaches and finance reaches the local level.

3

There is still a lack of local funding for DRR

Those on the front line of risk report that funding is still not reaching the local level and decision making on how funding should be allocated is not meaningfully including local leaders. There is a persistent lack of mechanisms in place for funds to be devolved to the local level.

Eight out of 10 community members say they cannot access or have limited access to funds. For example, Nepal's legislation on disaster risk reduction allows for ample allocation of budget to the local level for local resilience building, however communities still don't feel they have access to this budget. Governments and international organisations have failed to meet the commitments outlined in the Grand Bargain commitments.

4

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents   Executive Summary   Methodology   **Global conclusions**   Global recommendations   Key advocacy messages   Reflections and conclusions   **15**

CONCLUSION 5

We are still facing an information gap on risk at the local level

Communities feel that they still do not have access to risk information and are not involved in co-producing knowledge on risk. Even if the information exists, the communities are not aware of it and have not been involved in developing it.

For example, in Nigeria three in four people surveyed do not feel they receive any information from the government on disaster risk reduction actions. However, more than half of the government representatives feel that the information is shared with the community.

Furthermore, communities highlighted that the information that is shared by the government mainly relates to disaster preparedness and early warnings, with little about risk reduction and resilience building.

Risk information is generated by government bodies but they fail to meaningfully integrate local knowledge. The methods of communicating risk information are not reaching those living on the front line of risk. Whilst many governments are increasing their efforts to engage citizens - and the use of new technologies can enable more systematic sharing of disaster risk assessments, plans and activities - the most remote and vulnerable are still being left behind in technological advancements.

CONCLUSION 6

Development is not yet risk-informed

Those on the front line of risk report that development is not risk-informed. New development initiatives are contributing new risks as they do not take into account emerging future risk. Gains in progress being made against the Sustainable Development Goals are being reversed as the changing global risk profile undermines development. Therefore all development in policy and practice must be risk-informed and effectively address the interrelated needs, vulnerabilities and capacity of communities most at risk.

For example, the town of Tillabéri in Niger experiences regular flooding caused in part by run-off rainwater from a deforested hill on the edge of town. A local organisation collaborated with the community, local government and other civil society organisations to secure land rights and undertake reforestation and anti-erosion activities.
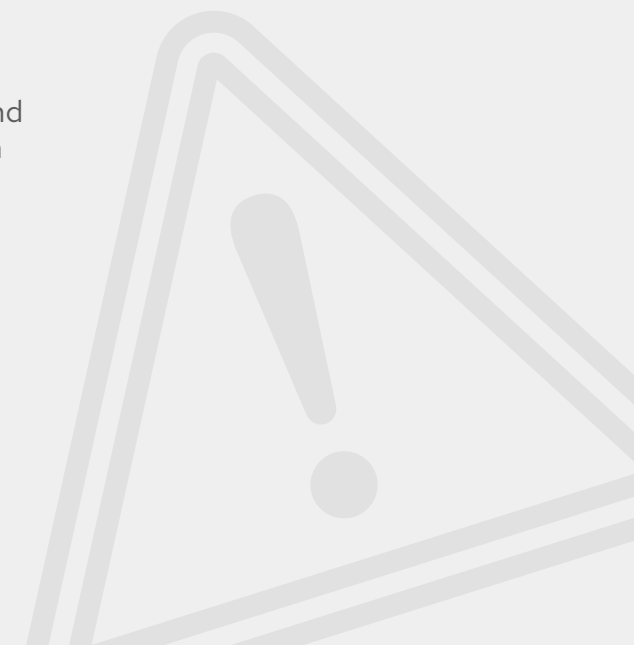
Flooding has been reduced, livelihoods have been created in animal husbandry, and the environment has been restored. But these local examples need to be supported to be scaled out.

One of the biggest challenges to risk-informed development is the way that funding is designated. The lack of coherence across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus means that cascading risks are not addressed effectively in a systematic and holistic approach. Communities find it particularly difficult to build resilience when recovering from disasters because of the mismatch between their long-term plans and the short-term availability of funding.

5

6

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

17

Nature-based solutions are not being prioritised

Those on the front line of risk feel that whilst there is global recognition that well-managed ecosystems act as a natural structure to prevent hazards, decision makers are not prioritising these approaches. Therefore, little progress has been made in mainstreaming nature-based approaches into disaster risk reduction policy and practice at the national level.

For example, natural bioshields can reduce the height and energy of tsunamis and cyclones in coastal areas. Well-maintained ecosystems can be critical for providing food, water and shelter, thereby increasing resilience.

Nature-based, integrated DRR approaches have been successful in many parts of the world. For example, in Hinatuan in the Philippines, women are actively involved in restoring and managing mangrove forests, which serve as a buffer against storm surges and tsunamis. These mangrove areas also bring a wealth of crabs and shells, which can be used for food and extra income for these women, enhancing their resilience (Oxfam et al., 2014).
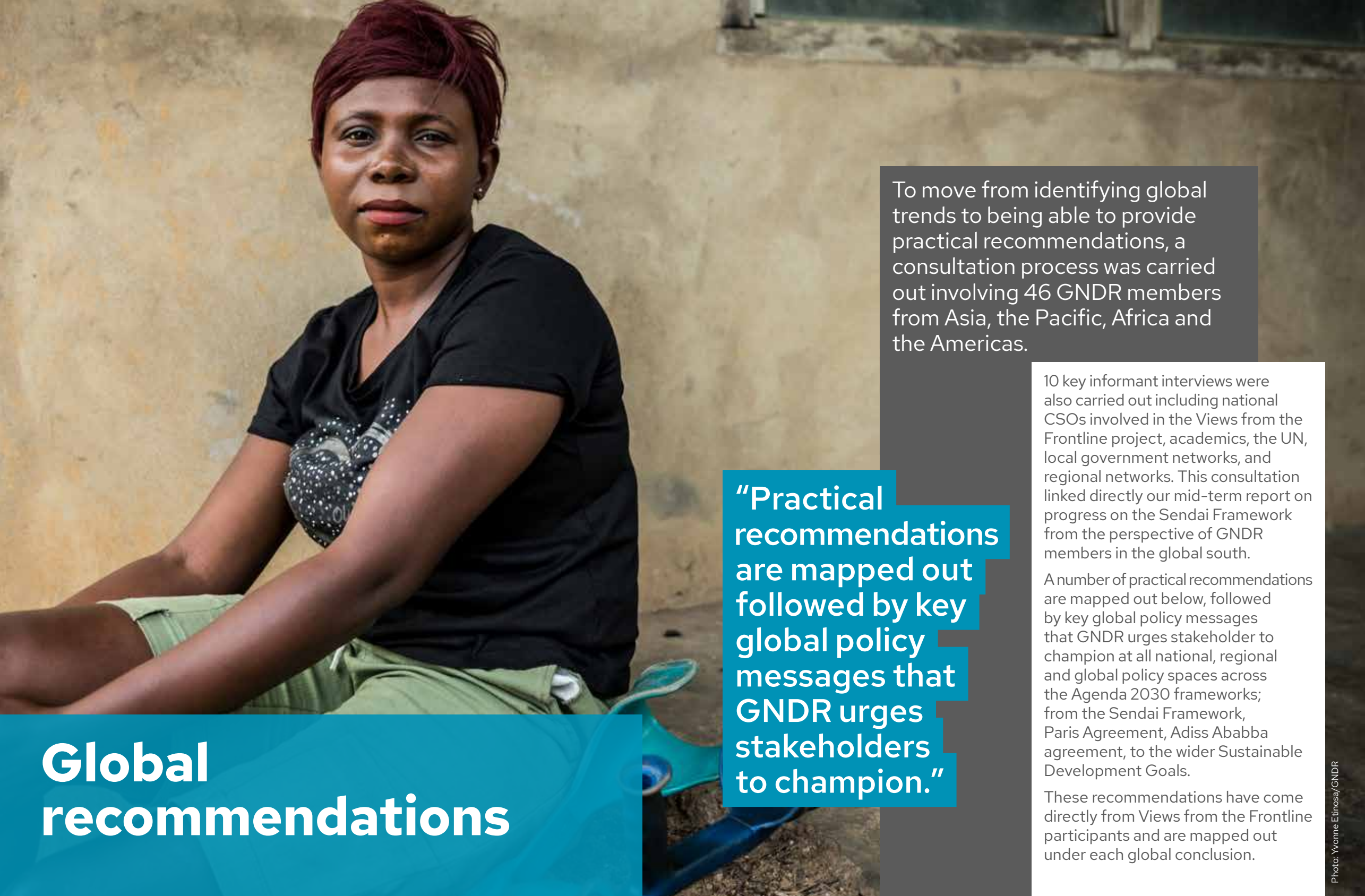
However, many people lack awareness of the opportunity that the ecosystems can offer. While ecosystems can protect communities from hazards, development initiatives often destroy these ecosystems. Views from the Frontline data shows the importance of ecosystem-based approaches to disaster reduction.

7

Photo: Jjumba Martin/GNDR

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

19

Global recommendations

To move from identifying global trends to being able to provide practical recommendations, a consultation process was carried out involving 46 GNDR members from Asia, the Pacific, Africa and the Americas.

10 key informant interviews were also carried out including national CSOs involved in the Views from the Frontline project, academics, the UN, local government networks, and regional networks. This consultation linked directly our mid-term report on progress on the Sendai Framework from the perspective of GNDR members in the global south.

A number of practical recommendations are mapped out below, followed by key global policy messages that GNDR urges stakeholder to champion at all national, regional and global policy spaces across the Agenda 2030 frameworks; from the Sendai Framework, Paris Agreement, Adiss Ababba agreement, to the wider Sustainable Development Goals.

These recommendations have come directly from Views from the Frontline participants and are mapped out under each global conclusion.

"Practical recommendations are mapped out followed by key global policy messages that GNDR urges stakeholders to champion."

Photo: Yvonne Etinosa/GNDR

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

21

Complex threats need integrated solutions

Photo: GNDR

Local data is needed

There is still a need for local, disaggregated data. With disasters becoming more complex, the identification of those most at risk desegregated by age, sex, and persons with disabilities is crucial to respond to need at the individual level.

Focus on lives, livelihoods and assets

Include both social and economic analyses of communities at risk before proposing preparedness and risk reduction actions. Keep lives, livelihoods and assets at the forefront of disaster protection.

Leverage formal and informal engagement mechanisms

Non-structural measures to address threats often rely on communities' abilities to gather together and identify solutions that they can carry out. Identify existing mechanisms for community engagement, whether these are formally established or informally created.

Communities find different avenues to collaborate, some of which can be unique to particular contexts. For example, in some communities faith-based organisations are the most trusted and so their role becomes crucial in community engagement and development.

Increase research in collaboration with science and academia

Bring together scientific/technical knowledge and local resilience practices. Blended learning can support communities most at risk to develop innovative solutions to reducing the complexity of disasters.

Civic education, awareness-raising and associations

Programmes that support communities' civic engagement play a key role in ensuring participation in decision-making spaces. These include awareness-raising activities, resilience education days, and incentives for fostering a culture of local associations.

Strengthen local risk assessments

The current practice of developing risk maps are limited to mapping hazards, and rarely portray vulnerabilities and their interconnectedness, community exposure and community capacities. Localised risks assessments are essential.

The process of the risk assessments should be strengthened with community participation and done regularly. All of this must be institutionalised, so that it does not become a one-off exercise that quickly becomes outdated. Government must prioritise allocating resources for this and using these local risk analyses to inform local development plans, policies and processes.

"The process of the risk assessments should be strengthened with community participation and done regularly."

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents   Executive Summary   Methodology   Global conclusions   **Global recommendations**   Key advocacy messages   Reflections and conclusions   **23**

Local leadership in programming

Various suggestions were made on this point. One is to adopt a 'street-level upwards' programme design for organisations working with partners on the ground: this includes planning for a period of co-creation of the project based on community priorities. Another recommendation was to make a conscious effort to level power relations by, for example, ensuring that consultation processes are structured so that everyone's input holds the same weight.

Adopt an 'adaptive management' approach

This approach refers to project plans that include a degree of flexibility to be adapted as consultations with community groups evolve. From a donor perspective this translates into increased flexibility in the project and the level of budget detail required from funded organisations so that activities and budget lines can shift according to community priorities. Moreover, funding should be granted on the condition that projects are co-designed with communities most at risk.

Strengthen and leverage local skills and knowledge

Capacity strengthening activities are an important part of working with many community groups. They should be bespoke services with needs jointly identified and tailored to increasing leadership capacities. Local knowledge should be leveraged for risk assessments and planning by governments and CSOs alike. International actors should consider approaching capacity strengthening more as a way to identify complementarities between local and international partners, instead of a way to 'pass on' one's own strengths to the other. This can ensure that local skills are effectively leveraged in national and international settings.

Adopt a human rights based approach to resilience

This idea rests on the understanding that communities most at risk have the power and capacity to fulfil their human rights and create change for themselves, their families and their communities. This can be done by planning for, and delivering, sensitisation activities on human rights, the rights-based approach and how to link risk to advocating for duty bearers to ensure these rights can be realised.

"Capacity strengthening activities are an important part of working with many community groups. They should be bespoke services with needs jointly identified and tailored to increasing leadership capacities."

Photo: Sarika Gulati

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

25

Include communities most at risk in decision making

2

Photo: Yvonne Etinosa/GNDR

Increase the decentralisation of decision making and institutionalise community engagement

Communities who face risks have knowledge and an in-depth understanding of the threats they face and the solutions to address them effectively. For effective risk management, communities must be included in the decision making processes.

Increase engagement and diversity among local representatives

A prominent role for local leaders (i.e. local government officials or other community leaders) is crucial, but how this can be achieved is still unclear. One recommendation is a more strategic engagement with mayors, with awareness-raising efforts directed at them as well as citizens, and efforts are made to understand local governments' needs and areas of support. Again, institutional incentives are needed to achieve a wider representation of community groups in local government structures.

Plan for everyone's active participation

It is essential that groups traditionally seen as more marginalised and vulnerable are involved in activities as active participants rather than as beneficiaries or potential victims of disasters.

Meaningfully listen to communities on the front line of risk

Disaster risk and resilience should be communicated from the lens of those affected by disasters: perspectives of communities at risk should be what CSOs bring to national and international fora.

Similarly, empathetic communication is required to ensure that local voices are listened to and that their message is remembered. Live connections with communities on social media is a good method to communicate local resilience. Mobile journalism[2] can also be used to share local voices. However, we must work to bridge the technology divide to ensure no-one is left behind.

> "Institutional incentives are needed to achieve a wider representation of community groups in local government structures."

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

27

For example, disaster training and simulations should give an active role to persons with disabilities or elderly groups, rather than viewing them as passive recipients of help. Empowering local women leaders is essential to enabling this whole of society approach and meaningful inclusion of all. Local women leaders are often left out from decision making, yet have the capacity and knowledge required for a holistic understanding of the risk and needs in the community.

The right structures and services should be in place to facilitate meaningful engagement of these groups (e.g. provide correct accommodation, offer child support if needed, and account for specific needs). This is connected to the rights-based approach and a shift in mindset is needed at all levels, from national and international actors to local CSOs to enable this.

"The right structures and services should be in place to facilitate meaningful engagement of these groups."

Photo: Sarika Gulati/GNDR

Address language and culture barriers

Individuals within a community might be part of different cultural groups, speak different languages, and experience different challenges. An initial mapping of community groups is a helpful tool to make participatory activities meaningful for all community members.

Equip CSOs to report local voices

Providing the space for CSOs to be able to share local voices is essential but it needs to come with providing tools and technology to support the gathering of community experiences. These could include platforms and networks for quick reporting (to allow CSOs to rapidly gather community experiences when it's needed), or providing technological support such as internet and phone coverage in remote areas. Knowledge banks can be a useful tool to further equip CSOs in their role as reporters. Support for data collection and the development of case studies is another way to equip CSOs to report local realities.

Provide support for participation

Local CSOs and community groups who operate on a low budget often find themselves having to decide whether their time and money should be spent in addressing their community's needs at present, or influence future plans and policies. Providing financial support to join consultations and engage in decision-making processes can be valuable for local organisations with time and budget constraints.

Give national and local CSOs a seat at the table

Local and national CSOs do not get the same opportunities to engage in decision-making processes as INGOs do. INGOs should support national and local CSOs in advocating for equal opportunities to join the decision-making table. At government level, biannual or quarterly dedicated moments could be organised, where grassroot and local organisations can bring their priorities up to the national level: forums and festivals can be ways to organise these exchanges.

"INGOs should support national and local CSOs in advocating for equal opportunities to join the decision-making table."

Strengthen national multi-stakeholder platforms

National resilience platforms are a key feature of stakeholder engagement. They provide a space for exchanging views and priorities with policymakers. This model is also being used for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals at country level, as well as other international agreements (Prescott and Stibbe, 2020). Such platforms can also become a space for community members to share their own experiences. The platform also becomes a media opportunity where news outlets can easily identify interesting stories to report on.

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

29

Strengthen government accountability for good governance on risk management

Photo: Jjumba Martin/GNDR

3

Strengthen local democratic structures

Local democratic structures are the main entry point for community resilience. Processes that define the roles and responsibilities of elected officials and citizens, that provide mechanisms for monitoring and accountability, as well as platforms for citizen participation, are some of the core elements of these structures. Identifying gaps and working to strengthen local authorities is a first step to building local resilience. National laws should be reviewed with the aim of clearly identifying responsibilities for resilience building and the distribution of roles across levels and sectors. Resilience plans and standard operating procedures for risk management should be integrated in local government development plans.

Strengthen monitoring, accountability and transparency

These are key aspects of good governance and should be strengthened at the local level. Legal mechanisms for raising concerns and holding the government accountable should be established in all localities. This provides a space for communities, governments and local CSOs to jointly assess if plans and policies reflect the needs of people most at risk and effectively build their resilience. Public reviews of local and national plans should be held, to allow for community groups to feed back on the effectiveness of the actions planned by the government.

Empower community members to complement local government roles

Individuals and households can play an important part in strengthening resilience in addition to local government actions. There should be mechanisms for community members to individually understand their vulnerabilities and plan ways to cope with and adapt to the threats they might face. For example, local governments could encourage each household to develop their own specific guidance on disaster preparedness (e.g. defining specific actions households need to take when different levels of early warnings are issued). Supporting individual resilience is a strong component of creating community resilience.

Strengthen the role of CSOs as facilitators

Local CSOs are best placed to facilitate interaction between communities and their governments. If national targets for community engagement are included in resilience plans and translated into specific responsibilities at the local level, CSOs can support local authorities in ensuring these targets are reached. Moreover, CSOs can provide technical advice to support local governments where strong expertise on resilience building is lacking.

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

31

Close the information gap

4

Photo: Yvonne Etinosa/GNDR

Identify gaps in the flow of information

There may be many reasons why information doesn't reach communities, and having a clear map of how information flows between national and local level is essential to identify possible gaps. In some contexts, actions could be needed to ensure that local leaders pass on information in a timely manner. In others, information may not flow effectively because of its potential negative consequences.

For example, risk assessments on a locality may damage potential investments in that area: addressing the information gap in this context requires tailored actions to maintain the value of such areas.

> "Risk information needs to be delivered in a way that allows communities to take action on it."

Make information actionable and accessible

The importance of effective risk communication is widely accepted, but not enough is being done to address it. Risk information needs to be delivered in a way that allows communities to take action on it. An essential element of this is the availability of localised information on hazards, vulnerability, capacity and community resilience; often reports are given at a scale that is not useful for communities to take action.

Strengthening impact-based forecasting approaches and forecast-based action is essential to ensure that information flows and action is taken. Online information portals, live risk monitoring platforms, and e-government initiatives should be supported - with the understanding that online should not become the only way of disseminating information (considering the digital divide that still exists around the world).

Leverage communications experts

Information should be designed in a way that influences the behaviours and attitudes of people. Communications expertise can be leveraged for disseminating information widely through mass media engagement, and development of awareness-raising material. Governments may consider partnering with telecommunications companies and local media to leverage their expertise. Local platforms should be integrated in communications plans (e.g. village bank meetings, church gatherings, community radios, etc).

Support local awareness-raising

This includes supporting local organisations to roll out awareness-raising sessions at community level on policies and plans for resilience, early warning systems, prevention measures, etc. CSOs can help identify trustworthy sources of information on various aspects of resilience.

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents   Executive Summary   Methodology   Global conclusions   **Global recommendations**   Key advocacy messages   Reflections and conclusions   **33**

Increase availability of finance for disaster risk reduction at the local level

5

Photo: Jjumba Martin/GNDR

Commit to devolve funding to local actors

Following the Grand Bargain commitments and other pledges to increase funding directly to local actors, more needs to be done to achieve them. International funding structures should be reviewed and compliance requirements simplified: this is an important step to encourage local actors to apply for funding. INGOs could take the role of guarantors with their local partners to address donors' risk aversion. Funding regulations should be reviewed to ensure that grassroots organisations can easily receive financial support. National governments can devise mechanisms to devolve more budgets to local authorities. Specific grants could be designed for local governments wishing to implement resilience measures; resilience innovation funds to local governments can also be a way to devolve budgets downwards. Where development budgets are the responsibility of local authorities, increased awareness of risk-informed approaches to development could help integrate resilience at the local level. Businesses' corporate social responsibility contributions could be channelled towards funding for local resilience. INGOs should strengthen local organisations' capacities for project design, fundraising and implementation, with the aim of fully equipping communities to roll out their own resilience activities.

Identify innovative approaches to local funding

It is important to identify transferable lessons learned on innovation in local funding that can be replicated. These include building funding mechanisms and income-generating activities into local projects. Saving groups, micro-grants and micro-insurance are just some examples of this. Resilience building loans or cooperative-managed grants can also be effective tools to increase local funding. The design of bankable projects (Ellis and Pillay, 2017) is another approach to generate funding locally. Seed funding for piloting bankable projects and other income-generating programmes can be used to prove their validity and cost-effectiveness.

Champion collaboration over competition

Competition among local groups and CSOs is often a natural result of scarce resources available at the local level. However, collaboration is a success factor in accessing resources, especially for local organisations and essential for community level resilience. Championing collaboration over competition should be a priority for CSOs at all levels: CSOs should outline the benefits of collaboration and define a set of principles to foster collaboration, level power dynamics and leverage local leadership.

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents   Executive Summary   Methodology   Global conclusions   **Global recommendations**   Key advocacy messages   Reflections and conclusions   35

Make sure all development is risk-informed

6

Photo: Jjumba Martin/GNDR

Diversify your champions of resilience

Risk-informed development needs to be cross-sectoral by nature, and hence it requires identifying champions from sectors we may interact with less frequently. These should be individuals who are supportive of your policy asks or activities, but also individuals who can provide support to your actions - including financial support. Funding from unconventional sectors can result in increased links and connections within that sphere of work.

Moreover, the cross-cutting nature of resilience allows for it to be integrated in different sectors' agendas: CSOs should carry out an analysis of government priorities and identify areas where the case for integrating resilience can be made.

Encourage risk and impact assessments in development plans

Resilience practitioners can provide methodologies and models to embed risk and impact assessments in all development activities. Several countries already have structures for environmental impact assessments of development projects: these assessments should be strengthened and complemented with a risk component, to measure the risk a project is likely to exacerbate or create in a community.[3] International actors should include disaster risk evaluations in their development assistance and make it a mandatory field in project proposals.

Increase knowledge

A full understanding of risk-informed development is still lacking in many areas. There needs to be more awareness across sectors and departments of the importance of mainstreaming risk as a cross-cutting issue.

Increased investment in public policy research on risk-informed development should be encouraged. This should be connected with more effective tools for risk analysis and participatory development planning at the local level, where there should be a clear understanding of all sectors and their contribution to disaster risk.

Leverage windows of opportunity

When resilience is not a top priority, it is important to identify potential windows of opportunity and how to leverage them. One example is the current Covid-19 pandemic and the opportunity it offers for some countries to build back better: how can recovery from this disaster be a conduit for increased resilience and risk-informed development overall?

> **"Risk-informed development needs to be cross-sectoral by nature, and hence it requires identifying champions from sectors we may interact with less frequently."**

Photo: Jjumba Martin/GNDR

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

37

Prioritise nature-based solutions

7

Photo: Homeline Media/UNDRR

Conduct policy reviews

Increased global attention on ecosystem-based approaches to resilience provides an opportunity to review older national policies and identify areas where effectiveness can be increased with nature-based solutions. Advisory boards of scientists, professionals and community members can support the identification of effective nature-based solutions in each sector.[4] Embedding environmental protection in national legislation is an effective tool for increasing awareness of the danger of environmental degradation.

Financial institutions could create mechanisms (eg. bonds, incentives) to support the uptake of nature conservation by individuals and businesses.

"Embedding environmental protection in national legislation is an effective tool for increasing awareness of the danger of environmental degradation."

Distribute responsibilities at all levels

The benefits of utilising ecosystem-based approaches for resilience can be seen at both national and local levels. It is therefore important that responsibilities for this are shared between national and local governments, and that communities have the ability to participate in environmental management activities in their locality, for example by joining nature conservation groups that act and advocate for environmental protection. The involvement of community members could also be encouraged through volunteering opportunities.

Communicate the benefits of nature-based solutions

Use media channels, art, or community discussions to highlight environmental conservation activities in your area, and showcase the biodiversity that exists in your region and how it may be in danger of being lost. Nature-based solutions education can also be integrated into school curriculums and youth groups' initiatives.[5]

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents   Executive Summary   Methodology   Global conclusions   **Global recommendations**   Key advocacy messages   Reflections and conclusions   **39**

Photo: Gulati/GNDR

Key advocacy messages

Following on from the practical recommendations mapped out, we asked GNDR members in the global south to reflect on the Views from the Frontline conclusions and the progress - or lack of - in achieving the targets set out in 2015 in the Sendai Framework.

Here, communities on the front line of risk shared eight recurrent advocacy messages. GNDR urges all stakeholders to champion these advocacy messages at the local, national, regional and global level.

The key issues highlighted included the need for:

1. Systemic analysis to deal with complex disasters, including conflict and climate change
2. Localisation
3. Accessible funds and information
4. Strengthened governance systems
5. Equal participation of women and youth in decision making processes

Within this eight specific advocacy messages have been developed.

Listen to communities

- Our primary call is to listen to the community, to those on the front line of risk, the first responders; those living in communities on the front line of risk have the local knowledge, expertise, and capacity to significantly strengthen risk governance in policy and practice
- Meaningfully include local leaders in the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework
- Institutionalise including community voice, knowledge and recommendations in decision making; avoid tokenistic inclusion and empower local voice to lead decision making
- Promote the analysis of the systemic nature of risk and risk-informed development from the perspective of the communities most at risk; within this, promote local knowledge, nature-based solutions and ecosystem protection

1

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

41

Invest at the local level

- Prioritise making sure risk reduction finance (both public and private) reaches the local level

- Hold both national governments and donor states accountable for making sure finance reaches the local level

- Empower and finance locally-led, grassroots action for risk reduction

- Include local leaders in decision making spaces at local, national, and global levels

- Meaningfully include local leaders in deciding how risk reduction budgets are spent at the local level

- Listen to local voices on how climate change is a super driver of risk and integrate climate-related hazards and their impacts in local DRR planning; integrate both mitigation and adaptation in risk reduction planning

- Prioritise prevention and empower local-level leaders to adopt nature-based solutions

Improve coordination and coherence: enable civil society to lead the coordination and coherence required for risk-informed development

- Recognise the systemic nature of risk and adopt a coherent approach across all global frameworks for effective risk-informed development, risk reduction and resilience building for communities most at risk

- Recognise the role that civil society organisations have to lead collaboration; accept and strengthen the role of local CSOs in convening an all-of-society approach to effectively achieve the Sendai Framework commitments

- Specifically utilise the capacity civil society organisations and networks have to collect and disseminate two-way knowledge exchanges

- Support civil society organisations to work with government delegations on integrating DRR road maps and national adaptation plans

- Link DRR decision making to climate change negotiations, specifically to loss and damage, and the need for the global north to increase financial support to the global south

- Incorporate the understanding of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 6th Report into the strategy for implementing the second half of the Sendai Framework for Action

- Strengthen the harmonisation of all 2030 agendas and in particular work to meaningfully integrate risk-informed development across the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, and the Sustainable Development Goals

Empower women leaders: recognise and tackle gender inequality as a driver of risk

- Recognise gender inequality as a barrier to achieving the Sendai Framework targets and invest in action to meaningfully tackle gender inequality for strengthened disaster risk reduction

- Empower women leaders to meaningfully engage in disaster risk reduction at all levels

- Recognise paragraph 36[6] in the Sendai Framework that focuses on inclusion and the barriers that persist to the meaningful inclusion of women at all levels of risk reduction decision making in both policy and practice

2

3

4

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

43

Strengthen DRR governance in conflict affected states

- Those on the front line of disaster risk in fragile states specifically call on the global community to implement risk governance

- Support conflict-affected and fragile states to implement disaster risk reduction governance, policy, and plans

- Invest in understanding which conflict-affected states do not meaningfully include DRR governance; understand the barriers and identify solutions

- Specifically understand how risk reduction finance can reach the local level in fragile states and what the international community needs to do to ensure this happens

Involve children and youth in disaster risk reduction

- Recognise the importance of multi-generational action for risk reduction

- Reflect on paragraph 36 of the Sendai Framework and understand why young people feel that they are not yet meaningfully included in decision making and work to address this

- Meaningfully include children and youth leaders in all levels of disaster risk reduction decision making and continue to prioritise education on risk reduction and resilience

Learn from Covid-19

- Understand and address the weakness in governance that Covid-19 demonstrated

- Recognise the specific failures of risk governance and increase the number of UN Member States equipped with quality multi-stakeholder DRR governance body/arrangements that include civil society representation and adequately reflects all parts of society

- Learn from the social, economic and political elements of risk reduction highlighted by the pandemic

- Include biological disasters, such as pandemics in the Sendai Framework going forward

- Work to ensure everyone has access to the Covid-19 vaccine

Integrate inclusion across all levels and transition from seeing inclusion as a standalone topic

- Recognise the intersectional dynamics of marginalisation in relation to risk

- Recognise paragraph 36 in the Sendai Framework that focuses on inclusion and understand why inclusion is not felt to have been successfully mainstreamed across all areas of the Sendai Framework

- Meaningfully integrate inclusion across all areas of the Sendai Framework

5 6 7 8

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

45

> "The Covid-19 pandemic has brought governance to the forefront of resilience discourse and it has been a key element of recovery and building back better plans for many countries"

Reflections and conclusions

Both the survey responses and the interviews highlighted some umbrella recommendations which can be applied for more than one conclusion. They identify some common trends across the global conclusions report, and suggest areas for further research on how to address them.

One clear commonality is the importance of local leadership as a key solution to the issue of community engagement. But some also suggested taking this a step further forward and focusing on community engagement that builds on local leadership but also goes beyond it. In some instances, the engagement of local leaders does not automatically translate into engagement of the broader community: information can be slow to move from local leaders to various community groups, and input to plans and policies from local leaders might miss the priorities of some societal groups. Emphasis on leadership by women was recommended at the local level.

Another common trend identified by respondents was weak governance systems. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought governance to the forefront of resilience discourse and it has been a key element of recovery and building back better plans for many countries (ECLAC, 2020; Luis Burón B. 2020).

Photo: Yvonne Etinosa/GNDR

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions   47

Resilience policies are not up to date in many countries, despite the presence of good stimuli and guidance for policy review.[6] More efforts need to be made to ensure that disaster risk governance structures are reviewed and improved, to better reflect the systemic nature of risk and the need for increased local to national integration. Whilst in some countries governance systems are devolved, these systems are often devoid of the required capacities and human and financial resources.

Increased international pressure and funding allocation for resilience building would help create the momentum needed for policy change: the combination of these two elements can be seen at work in the climate change sphere, where governments have committed to review and update climate change adaptation and mitigation policies to be able to access resources from international funding mechanisms (UNFCCC, 2021).

It is important to note, however, that international pressure and conditionalities attached to funding risk reinforcing a one-size-fits-all approach to governance.

This needs to be cautiously considered and mechanisms should be devised that strengthen governance systems while at the same time accounting for unique contexts and existing national structures.

Increased international pressure needs to be accompanied by political engagement around resilience at the national level. This must include policies, plans and budget that reaches the local level and leaves no one behind. One emerging recommendation for national and international civil society organisations is to double their efforts to sensitise and mobilise citizens to demand more action from their government.

Advocacy and the mobilisation of citizens are key drivers of change: examples were given in relation to the introduction of climate change in the political agenda; the increasing attention on human rights and transparency issues around the world; as well as previous experiences of getting the attention of decision-makers focused on DRR/M issues in certain countries.

Leveraging the neutral nature of resilience building was also highlighted as an emerging recommendation.

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

49

Several interviewees recognised the value of resilience not being a politicised issue, and identified this as an opportunity for improving civil society engagement with national governments. Resilience is seen by many as an area where government and civil society can collaborate, which may result in stronger mutual understanding and trust. This is linked to the belief that spill-over effects from this improved relationship can be leveraged as entry points for collaboration over more politicised issues.

Overall, these recommendations are based on the underlying element of trust and dialogue between a government and its communities. Identifying approaches that aim to build trust and dialogue need to be at the heart of all our efforts to strengthen resilience policies at the local and national level.

Finally, it is important to note that the global conclusions and practical recommendations have been co-developed with local actors, those on the front line of risk, and experts. The GNDR strategy champions local voices, lived experiences and recommendations from those on the front line of risk. These priorities guide our advocacy messages at this important stocktaking moment of the Agenda 2030 frameworks, across the Sendai Framework, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. We urge all stakeholders to support GNDR to take these messages forward to the Global and Regional Platforms for DRR, the High Level Political Forum in 2022 and 2023, COP 27 and COP 28, and the UN General Assembly 2022 and 2023.

Endnotes

1 More on inclusive governance and the challenges of it can be found at this OECD webpage.

2 For a definition of mobile journalism, please see Podger, C. 2021.

3 Strategic Environmental Assessments could provide a model to replicate in this area (see Rodriguez Fortun, P. 2020)

4 PEDRR is a good source for knowledge and information on nature-based solutions.

5 One example of this is the Green Schoolyard Movement (Green Schoolyards America, 2015).

6 First and foremost, Target E of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Photo: Jeremy Kruis/UNDRR

100,000 Perceptions of Risk
Views from the Frontline 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Methodology

Global conclusions

Global recommendations

Key advocacy messages

Reflections and conclusions

51

GNDR Global Network of
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