Community-led policy monitoring for DRR

Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action at a local level

Ten practice notes for community-led policy monitoring for disaster risk reduction

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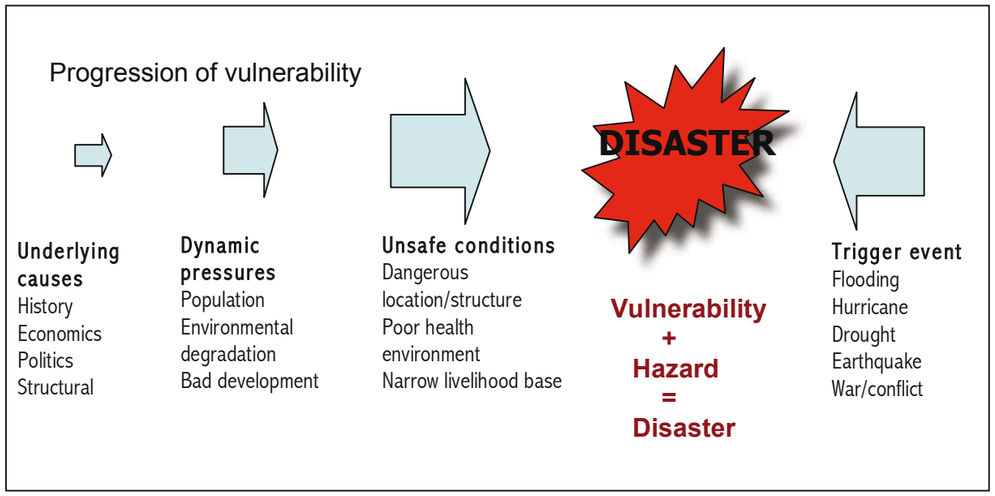
Note 3
Monitoring policies to reduce the risk of disasters

Reducing vulnerability
Disaster risk reduction is the attempt to reduce the vulnerability of people to disasters by using a holistic development approach. The diagram below illustrates that underlying structures and pressures in developing countries mean that people have weak livelihood strategies, experience a lack of participation in the political process, and have limited access to social and economic safety nets. This increases their vulnerability to disasters.



Community policy monitoring can address this by influencing policies at a local level to reduce communities' vulnerabilities to disasters. Christian Aid's findings from responding to previous emergencies[1] also reveal that where communities have been prepared through community organisation, more people survive. Therefore the role that community policy monitoring can play in strengthening civil society networks, forging links with local government and confidence in organising can also be invaluable if disasters strike.

Weak accountability in Malawi
As in most countries, DRR in Malawi is a new phenomenon. As highlighted in the *Malav Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, Malawi has previously focussed on disaster management. Programmes were implemented on disaster management through the Wo Bank-funded Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF), the European Union's Public Works Programme and other NGO programmes. However, although there is general recognitic for a 'bottom-up' approach in all these programmes, there are weak accountability syste in place – especially when it comes to institutional accountability to communities and grassroots capacities to hold institutions to account.[1]

While some tangible gains have been made in securing commitment to disaster risk reduction at an international and national level, a gap remains between the national and the local level. Where DRR is not seen as part and parcel of local development planning, local governments (at district or municipality level) may be reluctant to shoulder the added responsibilities. A shift is needed at the local level to persuade local governments of its relevance, to mainstream DRR into all development policies and projects and to hold local and national governments to account.

the need to integrate DRR into development, South India
In South India, the World Bank has been one of the biggest promoters and funders of th growing prawn-farming industry. While prawn farming has brought in foreign currency fr exports, it has resulted in the destruction of huge areas of coastal mangroves, plantatio and beach grass. Extensive research has shown that the destruction of these kinds of natural defence barriers increases people's vulnerability to disasters, such as flooding, h tides and tsunamis. Reports indicate that in the 2004 tsunami areas where dense mangroves had been preserved, such as Pichavaram and Muthupet in Tamil Nadu, suffered fewer human casualties and less damage to property than areas without mangroves.[1]

Communities can play a vital part in achieving this shift by identifying needs, organising into groups, enhancing their negotiating power with local leadership to influence public policy at the local level and advocating for the allocation of appropriate resources. In poor countries where resources are limited, difficult choices will need to be made by governments and international donors, and they will need to be convinced that these choices are both cost-effective and in the best interests of their country's development.

What are we addressing?

- Lack of political will and knowledge of the importance and benefits of DRR among national and local government officials.
- Government officials are unaware of the responsibilities they have to mainstream DRR and implement the Hyogo Framework Agreement (HFA).
- Lack of awareness among institutions, media and general public, of both DRR and the HFA.
- Lack of suitable training and campaign materials.
- Local knowledge and solutions being ignored.
- National resources available for DRR are not reaching local level – not being decentralised effectively.
- National and local government officials and institutions not working or communicating effectively with each other.

What would we like to achieve?

- Creation of empowered and knowledgeable local government officials and institutions who understand the importance and value of DRR within the wider HFA.
- Financial and technical resources available at the local level, to implement and mainstream DRR policies.
- Communities to have increased knowledge of DRR and implementation of livelihood strategies and disaster-reduction measures.
- Local communities clearly articulating their needs, concerns and knowledge of DRR, and being listened to and valued.