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 9
HFA Priority 5: Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

The issues highlighted under each of the five aims are not intended to be a comprehensive list, but to provide a starting point for considering what needs to be done to effectively implement the HFA within a specific local or national context.

There are a number of different approaches and tools available to monitor, advocate and ensure commitment to implementing five key areas of the Hyogo Framework for Action. These notes suggest the following steps and the highlighted sections contain reference to the relevant sections of the Christian Aid's policy monitoring toolkit.

HFA Priority 5 is concerned with the operational abilities of nations to respond to disasters, including stakeholders' abilities for planning, preparedness, public understanding and communication. The two main objectives of strengthening disaster preparedness are:

- reducing or avoiding damage from impending and potential future hazard risks
- being ready to assist those affected by disasters and protect their lives, assets and livelihoods.

Progress on HFA Priorities 1 to 4 (see Notes 5 to 8) needs to be made for these objectives to be developed effectively. For example, improved vulnerability analysis and hazard monitoring (Priority 2) provide the tools necessary for effective preparedness and contingency planning. Priority 5 requires a common understanding of disaster risks and of roles and responsibilities for the different activities of disaster preparedness.

Where are the gaps?
Many countries face severe gaps in their disaster preparedness and response capacity, including:

- lack of coordination and cooperation within and between government departments
- limited communication and coordination between government, civil society, private service providers and affected populations
- highly centralised emergency response planning and responsibilities, with limited authority and response capacity delegated to local levels
- limited legal basis that gives authority to organisations to act
- lack of comprehensive preparedness plans.

What are the potential solutions?
The UN/ISDR recommends that states can undertake the following actions to support strengthened disaster preparedness mechanisms in their countries:

- Assess existing disaster preparedness capacities and mechanisms.
- Review management and coordination structures for preparedness and response.
- Develop realistic and effective contingency plans and response readiness, including evacuation plans and regular reviews and rehearsals of these.
- Allocate specific funding for preparedness and an emergency fund for response.

- Develop a better understanding of who is vulnerable and why; and how indigenous coping mechanisms can be used to strengthen resilience of disaster-prone communities.

What can we do?

- Find out and assess whether data collected and used in planning is disaggregated by gender, age, relevant cultural/ethnic indicators etc (reflecting a people-centred approach).
- Map all relevant groups, government bodies and technical institutions involved in relief and response in your area; identify lead agencies for each hazard or disaster situation.
- Demand access to provincial, district and local preparedness plans, including budget allocations.
- Conduct community-risk and capacity assessments and share the findings and data with local government authorities.

Policy Monitoring Toolkit, see:
Chapter 6, Tool 24: Analysing data Tool 25: Social mapping

- Develop community-preparedness plans and provide first-response training to communities, in coordination with government bodies to present models of success.

Community-based preparedness in Orissa, India[1]
To prepare for future natural disasters in Orissa, Christian Aid partner Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) has set up a Disaster Mitigation Training Centre at Banamalipur in Khurda district. It provides a seven-phase training programme, spread over a year, for its members, which includes disaster awareness, Disaster Mitigation Task Force formation, capacity building, income-generation programmes, measures for disaster mitigation, advocacy, lobbying, creation and upkeep of data banks.

After completing the training, the members set up Disaster Mitigation Task Forces in their villages, which in turn run training programmes on disaster warning, rescue and evacuation. Villagers also learned about contingency planning, first aid, medical help, sanitation and relief operations. CASA's efforts to coordinate with many government bodies and other organisations at village, *gram panchayat*, block, district and state levels, helped avoid duplication, competition and conflict.

- Find examples of successfully implemented disaster-preparedness plans from other regions in the country and distribute information to relevant individuals and bodies.
- Involve media, in particular local radio stations, in all mapping and planning exercises.

How do we know what is happening?[2]
The UN/ISDR has developed a detailed set of indicators to assess the level of preparedness for response. The following questions are only a few examples that may be of priority for many local communities:

- Do all organisations, personnel and volunteers possess the mandate, resources and technical ability to achieve preparedness for effective disaster response?
- Has an assessment of disaster preparedness capacities and mechanisms been undertaken at the local level, and responsibility for implementation of recommendations assigned and resourced?
- Have preparedness plans and contingency plans for the major risks been prepared and disseminated at the local level?
- Are roles and responsibilities of individuals and organisations clear at all levels?

ENDNOTES

1 Christian Aid, *Facing up to the Storm. How local communities can cope with disaster: lessons from Orissa and Gujarat,* 2003
2 UN/ISDR, *Words into Action*, 2007. See: www.unisdr.org