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 6
HFA Priority 2: Identifying, assessing and monitoring risk and enhancing early warning

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.

Local weather-monitoring and early-warning systems are vital in enabling communities to understand and react to climate-related risk and environmental change. Where they don't exist, they should be developed. Where they already exist, they should be improved and linked to local, sub-national and national systems. They also need to be more user-friendly for decision-makers and affected communities. Many of the resources currently being used and developed to raise awareness and early-warning systems in villages still use inaccessible language and data. There is an urgent need for visual materials that translate complex data and information into understandable concepts with clear recommendations for action.

Implementing HFA Priority 2 requires collecting disaster risk-reduction data, the use of risk maps, systems of indicators of risk and vulnerability, data and statistical loss information. It also requires developing early-warning systems that are people-centred and well-integrated into decision-making processes.[1]

Where are the gaps?

- There is no standard methodology for developing risk maps and emergency plans at local levels.
- Data and analysis used by different national and local institutions are often not compatible in their scale, zoning criteria, symbols and projections.
- There is limited monitoring of micro-climates.
- Lack of incentives to maintain community radio systems.
- Limited national-level broadcasting capacity for radio warning systems, resulting in regularly blocked frequencies.
- Incomplete coverage of remote communities for risk-mapping and linking into area-wide warning systems.
- No appreciation of special requirements (for example – in schools or for elderly people).

What are the potential solutions?

- Review the availability of risk-related data and the capacities for their collection and use.
- Establish an initiative for countrywide risk assessments and analysis.
- Assess capacities and strengthen early-warning systems.
- Develop communication and dissemination mechanisms for disaster-risk information and early warning.

What can we do?

- Raise the awareness of colleagues/other community members of the need for better risk information; of the importance of better communication between communities and local government; and of community organisation around early warning.

Policy Monitoring Toolkit, see:
Chapter 3, Tool 6: Mapping partners and target audiences

- Get information on what data is available, including meteorological data, regional risk maps and community vulnerability, and identify gaps.
- Demand a local or nationwide initiative for risk assessment and analysis, with a common standard for data collection, sharing and assessment of hazard and vulnerability data.
- Make relevant community-level information available to local government, including village maps and survey results; in particular, provide gender-disaggregated data.

Policy Monitoring Toolkit, see:
Chapter 6, Tool 24: Analysing data sets

Community-based monitoring systems in the Philippines (ELDIS)[2]
Growing demand for a regular source of up-to-date information that is disaggregated at the community level has led to the creation of a community-based monitoring system (CBMS). This system is intended to address data requirements for development planning and monitoring at all geopolitical levels, and is currently being implemented in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal, Vietnam, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Benin, Ghana, India, and Lao PDR, and has just started in Indonesia. The network aims to provide the national and local governments with up-to-date information for policy-making and programme implementation.

- Identify gaps in data at community level and raise the visibility of these, through local platforms and in meetings with government representatives.
- Establish relationships with national meteorological and other relevant institutions to highlight the gaps.

Policy Monitoring Toolkit, see:
Chapter 3: A network agreement

- Link up with other organisations and communities to produce a critical number of vulnerability assessments at community level to present to local government.
- Review census data to expose existing vulnerabilities on the basis of information on health, age and livelihoods.
- Advocate for the participation of community representatives in planning forums for early-warning systems to ensure indigenous knowledge is taken into consideration.

Policy Monitoring Toolkit, see:
Chapter 6: Gathering evidence on policy information
Conclusion: Using policy evidence to advocate for change

How do we do know what is happening?[2]
The following questions are in line with UNISDR's *Words into Action* and can be used as indicators of progress.

- Have risk assessments been done at national or local level? Do they identify hazards and vulnerabilities? Is the information available to all decision-makers, budget-holders, and communities?
- Have local leaders or community representatives been involved in the assessments of vulnerabilities and the development of early-warning systems?
- Are people-centred, early-warning systems in place for the country's major hazards? Have they been tested with potentially affected communities?
- When warnings are issued, do people know what to do? Do they have access to safer places? Are they able to protect their key assets?

Community Movement of Matagalpa (MCM), Nicaragua
Christian Aid partner MCM supports communities in developing simple early warning systems for floods and in being prepared to react. These initiatives are successful as the following quote shows, but need to be linked in better with national and provincial early warning systems: 'As we are prepared, we know we will have time and we know what to do. If there was a flood, then we know we'll have to get the family who live on the other side of the river out first. We've put markers in the river, sticks and stones to measure the height of the water. So when the river has risen above the marker then that's our signal to act. But the problem is that everyone has their own land, which is away from the house so we may not find them, but hopefully in an emergency they will listen to the radio. We are part of the Emergency Committee which is responsible for getting people to evacuate. We have a coordinator, a health brigade, counsellor and a first-aider.'
Maritza Sevilla, leader of the Cooperative Council in Nuevo Amanecer, Nicaragua

ENDNOTES

1 UNISDR, *Word into Action*, consultation paper 2006.
2 C M Reyes, *Community-based monitoring systems in the Philippines*, Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) Programme, 2005. See www.eldis.org/static/DOC18203.htm
3 UN/ISDR, *Words Into Action,* consultation paper, 2007. See: www.unisdr.org