

The Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG) Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change

Position Paper – December 2011

Drought

Early Warning – Early Action

Disclaimer

The following Position Paper for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (2011-2012) is a joint output of the IAWG Sub-Group for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change (DRR & CC). Given the nature of DRR & CC, it is appreciated that this Position Paper will evolve over time. While the Position Paper represents the broad sweep of opinion of IAWG agencies on DRR & CC issues, it does not necessarily represent the views of individual IAWG member agencies. Rather it provides a basis for shared learning, coordination and joint action.

Introduction:

Due to increasing frequency and severity of drought over the last twenty years coupled with growing pressure on the already fragile natural resource base, recovery from disasters is more difficult in the greater Horn of Africa. There is increased conflict over land and water, disruption of economic activity and alienation of young people who are poor and disillusioned. Food insecurity is an ever-present threat. Early warning systems alert an imminent crisis but current interventions and approaches do not address the core challenges. It is evident that aid response is too reactive and non-strategic. While early warning systems improve, the aid community needs to connect the dots between early warning and early action within an overall strategic and proactive response.

Engage with Change:

A sustainable approach must incorporate long-term priority areas such as infrastructure, environment investment programs, poverty alleviation, capacity development and service delivery. Embracing change must translate early warning into early action with a much deeper understanding of the complex changing environment faced by agro pastoralists. Long-term strategies by national governments, development agencies and affected communities are needed. The seminar emphasized that affected populations – including traditional pastoralists and herders, local communities, refugees and internally displaced persons – must be fully involved in designing, implementing and evaluating programmatic solutions to their problems that include achieving economic diversification and going beyond a traditional livestock based economy to build resilience. Several actors support this e.g. bolstering pastoralist resilience through improved trade and business practice and, where appropriate, alternative livelihoods.

Speaking with One Voice:

The political and structural foundation is in place which is essential to take forward an effective strategic and policy driven response. The Horn of Africa Summit, which took place in Nairobi 8-9 September 2011, agreed on a Declaration highlighting the importance of developing long term sustainable solutions to end drought and famine emergencies. Leaders from the Horn of Africa region committed to develop the Horn of Africa Regional Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Strategy Framework to reduce the impact of disasters in the region and create and support a Multi-donor Trust Fund for drought and other disasters anchored in the IGAD secretariat. A more effective means of reducing drought risk would be in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, the Africa Regional Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction and its Programme of Action as well as global and regional frameworks. African Heads of State are showing commitment to Disaster Risk Reduction by endorsing the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Programme of Action 2006-2015, giving a roadmap on how to reduce disaster risk in Africa.

Don't blame the rain

There is need for reliable information and systematic accounting of drought impact to inform risk reduction planning and the cost-effective allocation of resources for drought

risk management (e.g. IAWG DRR-CC Mapping). A greater understanding of changing economic, political and social contexts that engage all stakeholders is also needed e.g. by 2050, 50% of Kenyans will live in urban centers. A systematic recording of drought impacts will facilitate probabilistic modeling of drought risks and help governments adopt a proactive approach to drought risk management. Awareness, capacity development and knowledge management is essential to make informed decisions and take action to best protect people, property and livelihoods. International and National Drought Mitigation and Preparedness policies should address the drivers of drought risk, focusing on reducing vulnerability to drought.

Appreciation of all actors involved is essential (especially communities, local businesses, entrepreneurial drivers e.g. mpesa) alongside the efforts of the humanitarian sector, governments and donors. All actors need to understand the complexity of the challenges and opportunities in the region within the context of frequent disasters and climate change and respond in ways that add significant value to what is already working and improve what is not working. It is much too simple to 'blame the rain'. All stakeholders must embrace the challenges and opportunities in a holistic, open and inclusive way especially those most affected who must live with the consequences of success or failure. The ability of communities to reduce their vulnerability to drought is contingent on the wider environmental, economic and developmental situation in their area.

Engage with Disaster – Action Points in line with the HFA and the Africa Programme of Action (PoA) and the five main elements for a DRR Framework:

1. Policies and Governance for Drought Risk Reduction

- ✓ Drought risk reduction integrated into sustainable development and national investment planning.
- ✓ Building resilience is a collective effort by all stakeholders building sustainable relationships of skills, capacities, shared information and learning etc. and especially supporting the primary relationship of local people with local government.
- ✓ Basic services – Health, education – links to pastoral communities, better quality in rural centres, different needs in towns – as the UN Sec General said recently, the Horn of Africa needs a focus on Health and Water. This is correct for many good reasons. The basics have not changed for decades

2. Drought Risk Identification, impact assessment and early warning

- ✓ Drought early warning and early action monitoring systems strengthened, and drought impacts recorded more systematically.
- ✓ Drought risk reduction conceived in a holistic manner to avoid disconnect and shifting of cause and effect from one community or economic sector to another.
- ✓ Drought risk reduction and risk assessments that integrate existing natural resources and the effects of climate change bad practice on these resources.

3. Drought Awareness and knowledge management

- ✓ Frequent drought understood as the norm and not the exception due to climate change

- ✓ There are 100's of examples of support to adaptation. There is no one solution. Together they can help address the diversity of needs:

WHAT: Adaptation – alternative incomes less dependent on rainfall – or that better manage variable rainfall, population pressures, land fragmentation and urban contexts

WHERE: Adaptation – livelihoods programming for successful pastoralists, as well as those living in rural centres and peri-urban communities

WHO: Adaptation – rural and pastoral communities are increasingly diverse – options for youth, young men and women – caught between pastoral life and urban life

4. Reducing underlying factors of drought risk

- ✓ Comprehensive understanding of challenges and opportunities involving all stakeholders, especially including communities, local government, business etc.
- ✓ After decades of implementing standard responses we need to find options that promote adaptation in line with vulnerability reduction efforts we implement before drought strikes.
- ✓ Engage the roots of the problems – the structural issues

5. Effective drought mitigation and preparedness measures

- ✓ An understanding of resilience based on past, present and future trends
- ✓ Priority given to ex ante drought risk reduction and management and measures that reduce vulnerability and economic sectors to drought risk.
- ✓ We have seen that early warning does not trigger early action. This has to be addressed.
- ✓ Multi-sectoral mechanisms, community participation and resource availability be of central importance.
- ✓ Test all innovative solutions fully to avoid 'quick fix top down' planning