

ActionAid International

Statement to the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction Geneva June 2007

ActionAid is an international anti-poverty agency working in over 40 countries taking sides with poor people to end poverty and injustice together. ActionAid International, is active in disaster risk reduction policy and programme work. The following recommendations outline our concern that the Hyogo Framework for Action is being implemented sporadically, often slowly and in some countries not at all. Below we have set out our recommendations for action.

What National Governments can do.

1. National governments must play a proactive role in promoting community champions of disaster risk reduction.

There is much to be learned from people exposed to hazards. Communities most vulnerable to natural hazards are the greatest practitioners of, and advocates for, disaster risk reduction. National and local government officials charged with Disaster Risk Reduction in their brief must exploit the opportunity to identify community champions.

2. Governments must put the right structures in place that can implement disaster risk reduction.

From the national to the regional to the local to the village level, governments cannot delay in providing the right framework so that disaster risk reduction can be properly resourced, so that the necessary capacity building can take place and so that knowledge from the very people who suffer the impacts of hazards can contribute in reducing risk to disasters.

3. National governments must invest financial and human resources in building up local government capacity on DRR.

Policies and legislation alone are not enough. Governments must put rhetoric into action and deliver on their promises made at the World Conference of Disaster Reduction, by ensuring that officials at the local government level are sufficiently trained in disaster risk reduction, they must also ensure that adequate funds to put policies into action are made available.

4. The local level is the key to success.

There must be more decentralisation of decision-making and much closer involvement of local government in decision making and implementing disaster risk reduction activities at the local level.

5. There must be greater investment in local analysis of risk and vulnerability to that risk.

The need to link local and traditional knowledge in a vulnerability analysis is essential. There is a wealth of experience in preparing and responding to disasters at the local level that must be captured when drafting policies and action plans for implementing DRR. All baseline surveys and subsequent assessments must include local and traditional knowledge.

What the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) can do.

The ISDR is in a unique and influential position and could do more to act as a catalyst for change.

6. ISDR to lobby governments for faster progress

The ISDR has direct access to key figures in national and regional institutions, yet it could do more to use this unique position to call for states to put their Hyogo commitments into practice faster. Progress has been too slow: two years have passed since the Framework for Action was signed in 2005. At least half the signatories have done nothing to make disaster risk reduction a reality.

7. ISDR to push for increased and targeted funding with the donor community.

The ISDR has the ear of lead donor governments, who are serious about funding disaster risk reduction initiatives. As such, ISDR could use its position to leverage more substantial funding on disaster risk reduction and to link up donors to countries that are particularly vulnerable.

8. Ensure the inclusion of the poorest and most marginalised in the development of indicators for progress.

The Framework for Action clearly states that the ISDR must develop SMART indicators to assist states in assessing their progress in implementing the Framework for Action. It is crucial that vulnerable people are consulted in the drafting process to ensure that any indicators developed have some meaning and relevance on the ground.

**How using education can build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.
(Pillar 3 HFA)**

9. Local, informal disaster risk reduction initiatives are the lifeblood of the Framework for Action commitments.

Local and regional authorities need not wait for formal curricula changes, they could already be making a real difference by acting now.

ActionAid is implementing a 7 country global project on DRR through schools. One of the areas we are working is in the Upper East Region of Ghana, with teachers who are educating primary school children of 6 -13 years on local risks and hazards, such as wind storms, flooding and drought. DRR is not yet part of the formal national curriculum, but is already being introduced at the local level, to prepare children for the future.

10. National education ministries should be open to learning from those with the real experience and knowledge: teachers, children, communities.

Education ministries should draw from local innovation on disaster risk reduction in adapting national curricula. Lessons on disaster issues must be relevant to local hazards.

11. The vulnerability of the girl child must not be ignored.

Girls are particularly at risk during times of emergency and their interests must be central to any disaster risk reduction plan. In Ghana, ActionAid's Participatory Vulnerability Analysis showed that bushfires were a particular hazard. It is girls who are traditionally tasked with collecting firewood. It is therefore girls who are most vulnerable to this hazard.

What can be done to adapt to climate change.

12. Disaster risk reduction offers a clear road map for governments planning climate change adaptation strategies

The impacts of a changing climate are being felt now. Natural disasters are killing more people and the poorest countries are being hit hardest - community-driven adaptation strategies are crucial to save lives and livelihoods

168 governments have signed up to an agreement to reduce the impact of disasters on populations - the Hyogo Framework for Action. This is a ready-made road map for governments and communities alike needing to adapt to a changing climate.

With adaptation to climate change an unavoidable truth, now is the time for all governments to take seriously their commitments to reducing the impact of disasters. We need action now - not in 2015. In Geneva, we'll see how many words have been turned into action.

Vulnerable people are innovative and adaptable. What is needed now is global and systematic governmental leadership to build on what is already happening in communities around the world.

June 2007

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