

## **The Participation of CARE Int. in the UN/ISDR Global Network of NGO's**

Geneva, 5-8 June 2007

### *Interest*

CARE International's humanitarian concern defines its interest in building safe and disaster-resilient communities and nations, as formulated in the 2005 UN/ISDR Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA). In view of the rapidly increasing numbers of people affected by disasters, especially in low-income countries, DRR figures as one of the top-priorities on the organization's agenda. Though the organization recognizes the intrinsically long-term nature of Disaster Risk Reduction, it considers DRR also an integral part of humanitarian assistance, particularly because of the organization's commitment to avoid recurrence of disasters similar to those that have made HA necessary.

### *Mainstreaming, stand-alone*

CARE considers DRR in the first place as a cross cutting issue in that all humanitarian and development activities will need to be planned and implemented with an appropriate understanding and consideration of the entire risk constellation in which these activities are undertaken. This implies that risk analyses need to be integrated at the initial stages of the project cycle and that the findings will be fully taken into account in all subsequent steps. This will lead to projects and programmes in the spectrum of relief, reconstruction and development that enable people to establish and structurally enhance their livelihoods, in a safe and disaster-resilient fashion.

In certain locations, CARE promotes explicit DRR programmes, particularly where development activities are structurally being undermined by disasters and where people's livelihoods are evidently under major threat of – specifically – natural disasters. In these cases, the linkage between poverty reduction and increased safety and resilience to disasters is so weak that explicit DRR strategies and programmes are justified and even preferred, at least for the short and medium term.

### *Experience*

The people at risk should fully participate in any DRR design and practices. The UN/ISDR realizes the complexity of this issue and attributes a major role to NGO's in this domain. The facilitation of local communities in identifying their areas of vulnerabilities, in determining their coping mechanisms and capacities to deal with hazards and in devising activities to enhance their resilience to disasters requires highly qualified, experienced and committed personnel. This is often the most limiting factor to

the effectiveness of DRR-related activities. For many years, CARE has played a front-line role in emergency relief and reconstruction, in more than 70 countries. Consequently, the organization has built up considerable knowledge and understanding of the underlying causal factors for vulnerability to disasters of any kind. Workers in the field have consistently collaborated with grass-root level communities and have developed the skills and the attitudes needed to effectively address the vulnerabilities of the people that make them and their communities prone to disasters. At those local levels, CARE has and maintains highly qualified and committed personnel who are capable to join the communities in devising culturally well-imbedded Disaster Risk Reduction strategies that build upon the capacities of the local communities and their networks.

Besides working at community levels, capacity building and policy design at higher levels is of equal importance. Civil society structures, local government organizations and local NGO's are all stakeholders of DRR processes and capacities need to be strengthened at these levels in order to enhance coordination mechanisms, technical support, preparedness and response infrastructures, education and legal issues, all of which are conditional to the effectiveness of DRR programming and action. However, capacity building of these stakeholders requires an ample understanding of the learning culture and styles at a particular location. This, again, requires highly qualified and experienced personnel, which is lacking too often. CARE attributes a particular status to these staff members and has been capable to maintain qualified capacity building personnel 'on the ground'.

#### *Toward a more systematic approach*

CARE recognizes the need for a more structural approach to DRR, within its own organization world-wide and among the various development partners. Though much has been done in harmonizing basic DRR concepts and approaches, particularly since the adoption of the UN - Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005, there is yet a great need to enhance understanding and application of these concepts and of accompanying tools and guidelines. Most importantly, these concepts, tools and guidelines need to be further tested and upgraded in the field, by experienced development actors from a broad variety of organizations.

CARE strongly supports the UN-ISDR initiative to establish a Global NGO network for disaster reduction. Indeed, this network will provide a platform for mutual learning and experience exchange. When properly managed, this process will result in a more structural approach of DRR at all levels and of a more effective implementation of the HFA with the objective to build safe and resilient communities and nations.

CARE emphasizes that DRR programming should take place at all levels, in all different directions. Though one of CARE's strength is to ensure community participation and bottom-up planning processes, the organization's mandate is not confined to working at grassroots levels. Instead, because of the strong and long-standing presence in the field, the organization has accumulated knowledge on and understanding of the causes of

vulnerability to disasters at many locations and among a wide variety of nations and communities, which enables the organization to effectively participate in DRR decision taking and advocacy processes at all echelon. Within the UN/ISDR – Global Network of NGO's CARE anticipates to give this mandate further substance, in direct collaboration with all main DRR stakeholders.