

Global Assessment Report
on Disaster Risk Reduction



Meso-Level Partnerships for
Disaster Risk Reduction and
Climate Change Adaptation

And how they address the underlying drivers of risk

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Meso Level Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation

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Practical experiences based on case studies in Afghanistan, Peru, Nepal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and El Salvador

Christian Aid, Practical Action and Tearfund

By Paul Venton

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1. Introduction

There is a danger that the building of widespread and deep-rooted resilience to deal with disaster and climate risks may be neglected. This is because most attention and progress under the theme of disaster risk management has been focused on early warning, disaster preparedness and emergency response¹. The setting up of institutions and legal frameworks at a national level has also been widely accomplished². But meanwhile the even larger challenges continue to grow unabated.

Social, economic and environmental trends³ continue to fuel the underlying drivers of risk: declining ecosystems, fragile rural livelihoods, weak urban governance and a lack of social protection. These are rarely tackled in a sustained way across sectors and levels of administration through a comprehensive integration of risk reduction and adaptation within development policy and planning. The resulting stealth-like growth in extensive risk is not yet being tackled aggressively. Consequently from a global perspective, risk is not being reduced⁴.

Improved governance inclusive of the poor is at the heart of a response that would

¹ UNISDR (2009)

² *ibid*

³ UNFCCC (2008)

⁴ CCD (2009 page 16)

hope to meet this challenge. As the Commission on Climate Change and Development (CCCCD) recognized, “What is required are forms of governance that reach seamlessly up and down among local, national, regional, and international levels to accelerate resilient development.”⁵ Within this system of inter-connected governance, in particular it is apparent that more effort is required in developing a stronger local grounding in support of efforts that address the underlying drivers of risk that prevent sustainable development.

This was referred to as “the missing link” in the Disaster Risk Reduction Global Assessment Report for 2009⁶ that was responsible for holding back progress in addressing the disaster risk–poverty nexus in the context of climate change.

Currently the poor, who are widely acknowledged as the worst affected by climate and disaster risk, are most excluded from political processes. Without altering this, disasters and the impacts of climate change will not be avoided. Unfortunately there are well-justified fears that the emerging climate change adaptation agenda is, like much of the disaster risk reduction experience that has come beforehand, mainly a top-down effort rather than an integrated top-down and bottom-up one⁷.

It is apparent then that identifying examples and means to connect people and institutions in partnerships will be fundamentally important for progress. The context for this is where national level government acknowledges the role of local decision-making and resource allocation and the voice of civil society, including the most vulnerable. So cases where sustainable local processes have emerged tend to be where national governments have decentralized both responsibilities and resources and where this has come about due to and in support of local demands for action.

Meso level partnership forums

Appropriate forums are needed for partnerships between stakeholders, including civil society and vulnerable groups, to be formed. If those worst affected by climate change and disaster are to have a meaningful voice in determining resource allocation, such forums may be able to reach those most in need. Such a forum will need to be conducive to⁸:

- Representative stakeholder participation – based on accessibility and inclusive of vulnerable groups and CSOs, bearing in mind that for CSOs to contribute effectively in such spaces calls for serious capacity⁹.
- Consensus building processes;
- Responsive, action-oriented, equitable and fair decision-making;
- Mutual accountability, and;
- Building of relationships based on trust developed over time

The research presented here seeks to draw attention to the interface between national and community/local levels, and between civil society and government referred to as

⁵ CCCD (2009 page 24)

⁶ UNISDR (2009 pages 14-15)

⁷ CCCD (2009 page 20)

⁸ Based on Foti (2008) and Ensor and Berger (2009 page 2)

⁹ CARE (2009 page 5)

meso-level partnership forums within this report. Other stakeholders are important within these partnerships but were not explicitly explored in this research. Two basic assumptions made are:

1. National government, even in the context of decentralisation, commonly struggles to reduce vulnerability at a local level through disaster risk reduction and adaptation strategies and approaches.
2. Likewise, community-level experience on needs, vulnerabilities and capacities struggles to influence development decision-making and resource allocation at the level of national prioritisation on a significant scale.

Projects and programmes derived and implemented at the community and local level in isolation from the wider policy and governance landscape are likely to be effective in only a relatively narrow sense in relation to conditions of vulnerability. This is because underlying drivers of risk are often created or ignored due to circumstances and reasons far removed from local community influence. For example, the degradation of a forest environment may be related to charcoal production as an alternative income source for the poor. In this instance the reasons for poverty and a lack of an alternative more sustainable livelihood option is fuelling the context of risk. Local people at the community-level though are unlikely to have the means or will to change behaviour in the absence of some form of incentive. The incentive will vary depending on context, but could be related to sustainable land management training and tools, improved livelihood prospects, land tenure reform or their long-term security.

In addition to concerns over community and local level ability to overcome underlying drivers of risk, when such activities are NGO driven, as is commonly the case, challenges associated with sustainability and scale also emerge.

However in communities and groups that are engaged in their own governance, the capacity to shape and respond to shocks, threats and changes can better lead to a more sustainable path of development. Conversely, without the ability to engage in governance, people are likely to be buffeted by forces outside their control¹⁰. Engagement in local governance is not only a 'win' for local citizens, it creates mutual benefits through delivering more effective development policy and planning by reflecting local realities. So good governance is fundamentally important to deal with all manner of issues, including the risk of disaster and climate change through opportunities for improved resilience.

The focus of research

This research investigated examples where civil society organisations partnered and engaged with government authorities so as to facilitate the needs and perspectives of vulnerable groups in development decision-making processes. Simultaneously the significance of such partnerships as spaces conducive towards addressing the drivers of risk was considered. Special emphasis was placed on partnership forums that operated between the local and national levels, as these were felt to be highly strategic and yet less well understood and documented.

¹⁰ Ensor and Berger (2009 page 2)

This was all undertaken while recognising that any formal mechanisms for linking the policies and institutions concerned with adaptation, disaster risk reduction and development, and for engaging community actors, were likely to be rudimentary¹¹.

The case studies include:

Afghanistan: Towards forming Meso Level Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction in Afghanistan by Tearfund

Peru: Opportunity to Strengthen the Resilience of Rural Livelihoods through Engagement in Local Participatory Budgeting by Practical Action

Nepal: Mobilised communities, inspired local leaders and a suitable policy context: Is this sufficient for the protection of fragile rural livelihoods in Nepal? By Practical Action

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Including Forest Communities in the UN-REDD Process by Christian Aid

El Salvador: Supporting San Francisco Menendez's Vision for a Safer City by Christian Aid

2. Methodology

2.1 Background

During the first quarter of 2010, Action Aid, Christian Aid, Oxfam and Tearfund wished to explore whether there was a need to develop a clearer understanding of the links between national government policy and practice and its influence over community and local level climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. This would be so as to inform and develop policy recommendations for national government and donor institutions aimed at enhancing the success of local action. The overarching motivation for such an investigation was to continue to find the most effective ways to support the most vulnerable on the frontline of disaster and climate change impacts. The group undertook a desk-based scoping exercise on this subject, which was completed in March 2010.

The scoping exercise emphasised the importance of partnerships for adaptation and disaster risk reduction at the meso level, while going some way to identify the characteristics to look for within such partnerships. In particular, a theme that ran throughout the scoping exercise regarding the blending of top-down and bottom-up agendas through meso level partnership was most evident in terms of information flows. It was felt that information had (or should have) mutual benefits to all groups and could be a route through which to seek solutions.

Findings from the scoping exercise culminated in the recommendation to the NGO consortium, now comprising Christian Aid, Plan, Practical Action and Tearfund due to shifting levels of engagement on this research between agencies, to undertake field research on meso level partnerships for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation with their local partner organisations. A methodology to accomplish this was established.

The findings of this research are the basis of this report.

¹¹ UNISDR (2009)

2.2 Research aim

The research's overall aim was to develop policy guidance for national governments and donors to improve the delivery of successful disaster risk reduction and adaptation at the community level through meso level partnerships.

The hypothesis of the research was that meso level partnerships open space for local issues to influence policy and planning, and thus tackle the underlying drivers of risk.

2.3 Schedule of activities

A summary of the activities undertaken between May and October 2010 included:

Phase 1: Identification of meso level partnerships for risk reduction

Task 1: Draw up list of local partners

Task 2: Outreach to local partners

Task 3: Analysis of feedback by NGO consortium

Phase 2: Detailed investigation of selected meso level partnerships

Task 1: Design and agree local partner specific methodology

Task 2: Desk-based research on national governance and policy landscape

Task 3: Engage key stakeholders within selected partnerships

Task 4: Design detailed questionnaire for key stakeholders based on a sample questionnaire template (see *Annex B*)

Task 5: Partnership research

Task 6: Analysis of data

Task 7: Report

Research was undertaken in nine countries. However, at this stage five have been presented in this report. The full list of countries are listed below, with those in bold representing countries with case studies included in this report:

- **Afghanistan** (Tearfund)
- Brazil (Tearfund)
- **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (Christian Aid)
- **El Salvador** (Christian Aid)
- India (Christian Aid)
- Mali (Tearfund)
- **Nepal** (Practical Action)
- **Peru** (Practical Action)
- Philippines (Plan)

The information provided in the case studies is based on the views of the interviewees: It is primary research. If any other source of information has been used, this has been referenced.

Annex C provides details of the field research undertaken in the five case study countries.

2.4 Limitations

The present analysis was limited in some respects:

- Data collection relied on partner capacity to deliver the research on time and to tight deadlines. All these factors contributed to limited and varying depth in the data that was submitted for analysis.
- Out of nine countries who contributed data to the research, five provided sufficient amounts of qualitative data of suitable depth for analysis.
- Primary source information was complimented by additional reference materials from credible sources in the data analysis which covered information gaps. This information is referenced and available in the bibliography.

2.5 Next steps

The process and findings in relation to the case studies presented in this report, and based on the experiences of the research undertaken in the other countries also, will act as a platform for an expansion of research with local partners. This will be based on action research, whereby ongoing support to the functioning of meso level partnerships will be the basis of active learning. Indeed the process of undertaking the research in support of this report has already been valued by several local and international NGOs.

3. Tackling Underlying Drivers of Risk through Partnerships

3.1 Introduction

The case studies included in this report demonstrate the importance of the governance context for opening up space where multi-stakeholder partnerships at the meso level can form. Through these partnerships civil society organisations, representing vulnerable groups, are better able to open up pathways to reduce the drivers of risk. Meso-level partnerships make it possible for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation to gain the necessary traction that is required to overcome current socio-economic and environmental trends that are increasing risk.

The drivers of risk that are described in relation to the case studies are:

- Absence of social protection
- Fragile rural livelihoods
- Ecosystem decline
- Weak urban governance

As will be seen, these drivers of risk are found to overlap with one another.

3.2 Absence of social protection

There are important and growing links between disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and social protection. The focus of attention is on the poor in each case, predominantly because of their more acute vulnerability. Clearly then there are going to be overlaps. By this logic therefore, a lack of social protection will have consequences in terms of increased vulnerability to disaster and climate change.

The relationship between poverty and vulnerability is highly contextualized. For instance, livelihood activities and behaviour are the consequence of a myriad of various influences that any individual, household and collective group must process. The consideration of risks, benefits and options within this process is inherent, even if not formalised.

In terms of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, opportunities to adjust activities, for example through the use of alternative agricultural practices or safer cost-effective home building, are missing. This is due to gaps in knowledge and technical experience. Furthermore, such needs are only likely to increase on account of the current social, economic and environmental trends and therefore the changing risk patterns. For instance, climate change may well affect the productivity among rural communities with impacts on livelihoods and income.

However, through engagement in partnerships, especially between civil society and government, opportunities may arise to blend risk reduction within areas that support social protection aims too for mutual benefit and streamlined planning. These can expand the more prevalent relationship between disasters and social protection that is dominated by the provision of aid following a disaster. Wherever local groups and their representatives (e.g. community leaders, coalitions, civil society organisations etc) can have their voices heard and thereby attempt to influence decision-making, there is more likelihood that aspects of social protection (such as the protection of livelihoods) in the context of disaster and climate risks will meet real needs. And as a consequence climate and disaster resilient livelihoods among populations living in areas of higher risk may be better supported.

Through partnership another aspect of social protection may be accomplished: transformation of social relations. By proactively challenging discriminatory approaches adaptive capacity is built¹². A multi-stakeholder forum at the meso level provides a sound basis for testing out such aspirations in practice.

Case study partnership links with means to address an absence of social protection
All of the partnerships as described in the case studies touch on aspects that strengthen social protection. This is because of the close links between poverty, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and an absence of social protection, particularly in relation to rural livelihoods among marginalized and remote communities.

Of particular relevance though are the case studies from Afghanistan and Peru.

In the Afghanistan case study a Disaster Risk Reduction Consortium of NGOs along with the Afghanistan Red Crescent Society and UN agencies are supporting the links between village and district authorities. Through this process local voices are being strengthened and opportunities are opening that facilitate increased awareness and resource allocation to protect rural livelihoods in the face of extreme vulnerability.

In the Peru case study the opportunity for local citizens to participate in development decision-making, including budgeting is opening space for improved social protection. Blending disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation within local development plans through this process has provided mutual benefits for some rural communities.

¹² Davies et al. (2008)

3.3 Fragile rural livelihoods¹³

Fragile rural livelihoods have some strong correlation with aspects of an absence of social protection. These two drivers of risk are complementary, as is already apparent from the above section.

There are several factors that contribute to create conditions where rural livelihoods can be described as fragile resulting in poverty and thus increased vulnerability to disaster and climate change impacts. Similarly disaster and climate change related impacts can then deepen poverty and increase the fragility of livelihoods even more. The relationship between these issues is a vicious circle.

Furthermore where conditions of poverty among rural communities exist, which is commonplace in many countries, a range of other negative factors including a lack of political participation underpins these conditions.

Specifically, rural livelihoods are often heavily dependent on agriculture and natural resources. They are particularly climate sensitive. Then because of limited access to productive assets such as land, labour, fertilizers, irrigation, infrastructure or financial services, rural communities are vulnerable to even small shocks and stresses. Choices and options for managing conditions are limited. This means that many are forced to sell assets for short-term benefit and borrow money leading to debt burdens. All of which tends to result in deeper long-term fragility.

To counteract this, helpful disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation activities are often based upon natural resource management, infrastructure development and livelihood generation. Wherever these activities are underpinned by opportunities to engage in multi stakeholder partnerships based on the long-term management of risk, fragile rural livelihoods can be strengthened and the vicious cycle of poverty and risk broken.

Case study partnership links with means to address fragile rural livelihoods

Four of the five case studies have strong links with measures addressing fragile rural livelihoods: these are Nepal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Peru and Afghanistan.

Of particular relevance is the case study from Nepal.

In the Nepal case study rural communities that have struggled with varied threats against the sustainability of their predominantly agricultural based livelihoods have been mobilized and represented in District Development Committees. Through the process of integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into wider livelihood security, the fragility of agricultural livelihoods has been reduced. Furthermore this model is being transferred across districts, taking advantage of a conducive enabling environment.

3.4 Ecosystem decline

Continuing in a cascade of inter-dependent relationships among the drivers of risk, ecosystem decline has a strong overlap with fragile rural livelihoods.

¹³ Based on UNISDR (2009, Chapter 4)

The relevance of ecosystems at a community/ local level is clear and direct in many instances, especially in rural areas. As has been mentioned, good natural resources management and conservation can help address many of the challenges faced by poor people trying to cope with disaster and climate change impacts. For instance, examples from China and Korea demonstrate particularly vigorous approaches to engaging communities in forest management as a part of flood risk reduction measures¹⁴. Indeed such examples illustrating the significance of the links between environmental management, climate change and disaster risk reduction are becoming clearer and more widespread¹⁵. Reflecting these connections, some 56 per cent (283 out of 501) of the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) projects reviewed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)¹⁶ had significant natural resource components. To a large extent natural resources underpin adaptation.

In contrast then, the degradation of ecosystems results in a context of greater vulnerability. This is true locally and indirectly also affects the global context.

However, managing the provision of ecosystem services (e.g. livelihood support, clean drinking water, buffering of hazard impacts, global biodiversity benefits and many more) is complicated. While the benefits may appear obvious, many people often share them over the long term. Ensuring that individual private interests in the short-term do not degrade the wider social benefits over the long-term requires effective institutional, legal and administrative systems backed up with resources and political support¹⁷.

Because of the similarities, the conditions that support ecosystems are also conducive to enhanced disaster risk reduction and adaptation. Indeed work has been undertaken to integrate disaster risk reduction and adaptation within frameworks such as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). These are all governance issues¹⁸.

In particular understanding how natural resource-dependent people cope with climate change in the context of wider livelihood influences is critical to formulating valid theory and adaptation frameworks, which are able to contribute to policy delivery, governance and development instruments¹⁹.

Climate change could provide the context that facilitates new approaches to address old problems, and in response the protection of ecosystems could be a key focus for a pathway towards more sustainable development.

Case study partnership links with means to address ecosystem decline

¹⁴ GAR (2009 page 151)

¹⁵ ProAct Network (2008) and the work of the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction

¹⁶ IIED (2009)

¹⁷ GAR (2009 page 164)

¹⁸ see GAR (2009 page 164) for 'Environmental governance' and 'Integrated planning'

¹⁹ Osbahr (2008 pages 1-2)

The functioning of the partnerships within the case studies from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador and Afghanistan are all influenced by the degradation in the environment. Each partnership is connected with processes linked to the remedy of this driver of risk.

Of particular relevance is the case study from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo case study a working group is in the process of being established with the purpose of representing local forest dwellers in the national UN-REDD programme. This programme seeks to protect the forests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to their global significance in the fight against climate change.

3.5 Weak urban governance

Often on account of fragile rural livelihoods becoming unviable, migration on a temporary or permanent basis to small, medium and large urban centres is commonplace. Urbanisation is a well-recognised trend.

The pace of growth among many such urban centres is outstripping the typically limited financial and technical capacity or inclination for municipal governments to keep up. Informal settlements, often in less desirable and consequently more hazardous locations such as steep slopes, river basins or exposed coastal areas, fall outside of any formal support mechanisms. Therefore governance among such populations is characteristically weak.

In such a circumstance not only are risks high, but the means to reduce or prevent risk through engagement in decision making is missing. Furthermore, when disaster strikes the lack of prioritisation of disaster management planning among the more marginalized (or simply unrecognized) residents results in less effective response measures.

Case study partnership links with means to address weak urban governance

The case study from the small or medium sized urban centre²⁰ of San Francisco Menendez in El Salvador represents a note worthy governance context within the country. Here accountability towards local citizens has met with organised local committees, with positive results aimed at vulnerability reduction.

4. Afghanistan

Towards forming Meso Level Partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction in Afghanistan

Abstract

This case study highlights the many pressures that have led to people's vulnerability in Afghanistan, including insecurity and poor governance. It also explains that the deficiencies in the national disaster risk reduction policy landscape have prevented adequate support from reaching the fledgling provincial disaster management

²⁰ Far more people live in small and medium urban centres in low- and middle-income countries than in mega-cities.

committees. Consequently some humanitarian agencies are attempting to fill the gap between community and province to further risk reduction goals by supporting the relevant partnerships. But this role is not devoid of dilemmas.

Drivers of risk being tackled through the case study partnership

This case study relates to approaches conducive to the improvement in social protection and the strengthening of fragile rural livelihoods.

Background

Afghanistan suffers from considerable disaster losses. Around 400,000 people each year are seriously affected by natural disasters, such as droughts, floods, earthquakes and extreme weather conditions²¹. Also, the prolonged war has not only claimed lives, but it has also destroyed most Afghan state institutions (whose governing structures at every level have been only partially restored since 2002) and devastated the coping capacity and traditional authority structures of the local communities. The influx of aid, while crucial on humanitarian grounds, appears to have changed the nature of traditional approaches to prevent and deal with hardship, in particular with regard to the undermining of *Hashar* (working together for social benefits). Further, natural resources in Afghanistan have been severely degraded over recent years. With the population mostly depending on natural resources for their livelihoods, their vulnerability to disasters has increased dramatically.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) some 6.6 million Afghans do not meet minimum food requirements. With more than half the population under 18 years of age the unemployment rate in 2008 was at 35% with 36% of the population living below the poverty line²². Arms supplied for decades by foreign patrons of armed groups are freely available. Recruiting fighters is incredibly cheap. Indeed, some families send their sons to join armed groups in return for the guarantee that they will be fed.

The ICRC has reported that the large number of refugees remains a major issue for the government of Afghanistan to address. Approximately 3 million refugees remain in Iran and Pakistan alone. But more than 5 million Afghans have returned to their country since 2002, and a further half million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have returned home²³.

In short, the fabric of society has been severely tested in recent years on a number of fronts.

The top

Since 2002, the attempt to build a post-Taliban Afghan government has resulted in a highly centralised formal state coexisting with strong but fragmented informal power structures.²⁴ The Kabul government appoints most office-holders around the country

²¹ ICRC 'Plan 2010-2011 Afghanistan'

²² CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

²³ ICRC 'Plan 2010-2011 Afghanistan'

²⁴ Nixon, Hamish, *Subnational State-Building in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan Research & Evaluation Unit (April 2008).

(including provincial governors and line ministry staff) and has privileged access to external resources (such as foreign aid). Power in Afghanistan remains significantly decentralised or fragmented, however, especially in the security sector, the economy, and rural politics. The “meso” level between village and national government is where political relationships are most complex and least consolidated.

Historically, most governance functions in Afghanistan have been decentralised and diverse, with village-level councils (*jirgas*, *shuras*, or elders) and traditional leaders (*maliks*, *khans*, *arbabs*) handling local dispute resolution, enforcement of traditional codes, and representation to the national government. The conflict since 1979 undermined these traditional local authorities as well as substantially destroying the state.

Communities’ expectations of government services have been shaped by this history of decentralised autonomy, but also by the devastation of war (leading to widespread desire for a stronger government) and the experience of receiving aid from state and non-government agencies.²⁵

The Afghan government’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and National Development Strategy contain some reference to disaster risk reduction. However the overriding culture and prioritisation of approaches to deal with disaster is response oriented.

In 2003, the National Disaster Management Plan was established as a foundational document from which the then Transitional Government of Afghanistan could launch the beginnings of a new disaster management approach for the nation. However this focuses most attention on disaster response and preparedness, with very little weight of importance given to disaster risk reduction. Neither does it place emphasis upon the community level.

Consequently the work of national institutions responsible for disaster management policy, strategy and implementation are biased away from efforts that alleviate risk. They are starved of the resources and capacity required. Thus while the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) is leading the development of the UNISDR Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) with the purpose of integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into national policy, crucially it itself is supported by external agencies such as through the newly formed multi-stakeholder National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. Likewise this is an important partnership in relation to ANDMA’s support to the National Commission on Disaster Management (NCDM) and indeed to the outworking of all this to the Provincial levels too.

At the top tiers of government, we find a context where disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation is predominantly under-valued, and a system that is predominantly dependent on external aid and expertise.

The bottom

²⁵ E-mail comments from Joel Hafvenstein, Operations officer for Afghanistan, Disaster management team, Tearfund UK.

A group of local citizens in Khamab District, Jawzjan Province, took it upon themselves to put in place a small mitigation project to help alleviate the problems they were experiencing with flooding. About 700 simple wheelbarrows were locally made to carry 1200 sand bags and soil so as to build a 200m long dam. This was accomplished without any external resources.

The local government response to the community managed and resourced project to build themselves a dam is perhaps representative of much more widespread shortcomings and challenges. “When the local authorities visited this project”, explains the Major of Jawzjan, “they didn’t even encourage these poor communities regarding this innovation. So how can they get improved?” He continues, “Lack of personnel, lack of capacities and expertise, unavailability of required equipment and resources has made local government nothing but a symbol.”

For the Government of Afghanistan to provide services to its most vulnerable citizens is a rarity, both historically and today. As the situation in Khamab shows, a clear gap exists between local communities and the lowest tier of state authority. The local situation is compounded by the opinion that insecurity and corruption undermine attempts to make positive steps forward at scale across the country.

A local employee of an aid agency highlighted this. “Security is an essential issue to be dealt with. Otherwise decentralization and participation will just shift the central power to local commanders. Some authority has been given to some Governors who were former commanders. They have not helped the people, but they have helped themselves. Now each of them has a big amount of property in their area and Swiss bank accounts.”

Despite this context of poor governance, opportunities exist and progress in risk reduction is being accomplished. The void in the ability of many local governments to act in the interests of the people they represent is being filled in at least two important ways.

Firstly, in contrast to most of its other approaches, the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) is the Government of Afghanistan’s priority community empowerment mechanism. The NSP is executed by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), which is one of the main ministries with responsibilities that cover vulnerability and poverty reduction²⁶. The NSP aims to develop the ability of communities to plan, manage, and monitor their own reconstruction and development projects based on locally mobilized and externally provided resources. The NSP consists of four core elements:

1. A facilitated participatory planning process at the community level to assist with the establishment and strengthening of community institutions;
2. A system of direct block grant transfers to support the rehabilitation or development activities of such institutions;

²⁶ A new draft programme through the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development is called ILDG. It is geared towards funding for village and district councils through a budget allocated to the provincial level.

3. Capacity development to enhance the competence of communities for financial management, procurement, useful technical skills, and transparency; and
4. Activities that facilitate links to other institutions and programmes with available services and resources.

Community Development Councils (CDCs) have been established by the NSP almost everywhere in the country. The CDCs often mirror traditional authority structures, such as councils of community elders, albeit with rules that require female participation. CDCs have for the most part been credible representatives of local development needs and interests.²⁷

The disappointing part though is that, despite its potential, the NSP does not currently integrate disaster risk reduction or climate change adaptation. One option, for instance, would be to incorporate community risk assessment into the participatory planning process.

Secondly comes the work of NGOs, particularly those in the Disaster Risk Reduction Consortium (DRRC)²⁸, along with the Afghanistan Red Crescent Society and UN agencies. These organisations are filling some of the gaps in government capacity at a local level and they have a significant role to play in the capacity building of government agencies themselves.

Returning to the example of the mobilised community using their own ingenuity to construct a dam, it can be seen that the old tradition of *Hashar* is an essential aspect to be encouraged and nurtured alongside the physical implementation of projects. This is an easy fit with the establishment of NGO/ Afghanistan Red Crescent Society supported Community Disaster Management Committees and Community Development Councils.

Indeed it was the Khamab Disaster Management Committee (DMC) that was behind the building of the dam.

At the local level another local employee of an aid agency suggests that, “many civil servants look at “partnership” as an opportunity to make money.” So non-government agencies are trying to circumvent this situation by holding the funds themselves, but facilitating community-local government partnership to decide how they should be used. The external agency is pulling the strings.

The downside of this NGO approach is threefold. First, it clearly impacts sustainability (on account of short-term donor funding restrictions). Second, provision of external aid can result in the undermining of local capacity. Third, the lack of scale because NGO efforts are typically project and activity based rather than programmatic and policy orientated. Beyond these constraints, work is not necessarily unified across agencies. Furthermore transparency and accountability is equally important for

²⁷ E-mail comments from Joel Hafvenstein, Operations officer for Afghanistan, Disaster management team, Tearfund UK.

²⁸ Oxfam, Tearfund, Novib, NCA, SEEDS, Concern, CoAR, CARE, FOCUS, HELVETAS, Save the Children

NGOs, and yet they may not be the focus of as much attention and regulation as government.

The meso level partnership focus: Provincial Disaster Management Committees

The focus of our attention at the meso level, sitting between national and local issues described above, is on the Provincial Disaster Management Committee (PDMC). In particular reference is made to the work in Jawzjan Province.

Under the National Disaster Management Project, the PDMCs in eight of Afghanistan's thirty-four provinces have formulated their disaster management plans. According to national direction, these provincial plans are supposed to "assist the sectoral Ministries and government agencies to plan, implement and review their sectoral plans and achievements from a disaster risk reduction and post disaster management perspective."²⁹ Combined with an outreach to District Governors (representing their local constituents) and others, this is a framework that offers lots of potential: It encompasses pre, during and post disaster aspects, and it has links towards local realities.

However, despite the decentralisation principles, authority and budgets have not been adequately released from the centre. The provincial level is under resourced by government for disaster risk reduction, as would be expected based on the national level policy landscape regarding the subject. Wider still, provincial offices are lacking in trained staff. So even as provincial offices for disaster management are opened, significant challenges emerge as awareness issues, communication of responsibilities, shifting power dynamics, capacity building needs, all rise to the forefront.

Importantly, membership of a PDMC extends from government officials to include civil society, such as through community Shuras. Where present, NGOs, UN agencies and donors will also play an important role. Indeed at this point in Afghanistan's history, a critical one.

Representative structures

A PDMC does not have to be a model of frustration where remit is not matched by capability. The PDMC is a partnership. As such, by drawing on the members' strengths, the capacity of government authorities has increased, along with other partners.

In most cases the current provincial level practices still largely miss the necessary link with communities. Whereas some priorities are based on local requests, this is only occurring following an emergency; and during emergency the request is response. There is a need for a change in this paradigm. But such concepts are often thought to be only new and emerging within the country. This is unlikely. Afghans are probably traditionally resilient people; consider the tradition of *Hashar* and the forging of livelihoods in hazard prone contexts for hundreds of years. What is more likely is that the nature of the risks is changing, and the mindset of citizens and the authorities has been altered by aid.

²⁹ <http://www.andma.gov.af/sroot.aspx?info=333>
http://www.undp.org.af/WhoWeAre/UNDPinAfghanistan/Projects/psl/prj_ndmp.htm

This is a conundrum. Despite the potential aid has to undermine coping capacity, it has become absolutely imperative for the lives and livelihoods of so many in the country today. Good practice in the provision of external aid based on a long-term vision for a resilient society can be the only strategy that can bear fruit.

Entering this arena, the consortium of NGOs working on disaster risk reduction fully back the government's commitment to create institutional level capacity. But they recognise that there is currently a clear gap at the provincial government level to support communities' ability to plan and respond to their own disasters. An NGO consortium is in a unique position to coordinate its outreach to work alongside local government structures and community based organisations to develop disaster management plans; identifying hazards, reducing the risks, and increasing the communities' own capacities. These form the basis of good practice, and as such can be used to influence policy based on real grassroots experiences. In particular community disaster management committees can be linked through to the PDMC.

This was accomplished in Khamab District, Jawzjan Province. District Governors in some of the most vulnerable districts, including Khamab, have been trained by NGOs. Big differences in capability have been observed where district level training has occurred. Representing local groups, the District Governors have then been able to reflect views and suggestions stemming from community disaster management committees, village Shuras and CDCs for both response and longer-term solutions.

However funding, as has been mentioned, has always been a problem because provincial government does not have a suitable budget, and line ministries have to defer decisions to the national level. Responses are commonly "pending". However the PDMC is able to help facilitate the channelling of funds from donors for disaster risk reduction projects. Work is therefore dependent on external funds through NGOs, UN and other donors. But through such a system of interactions, district committees that formerly had never received a penny for their proposals have been able to implement risk reduction measures.

For example, so as to respond to the recurrent flood and drought situation, the establishment of the Khamab District DMC by the Jawzjan PDMC resulted in several projects to protect communities and raise awareness, as well as the community implemented flood protection dam described earlier.

Similarly in Faizabad District a flood protection project comprising soft and hard measures has been designed and will soon be implemented. This project is based on a partnership between the INGO Tearfund, World Food Programme (WFP) and the PDMC.

Experience has been gained in the construction of retaining walls for floods, the development of irrigation systems for drought and the relocation of some people to safe areas. Through such experiences, the Jawzjan PDMC is able to promote at the national level the adoption of more cost effective approaches to manage disaster impacts besides response measures: A step towards influencing policy.

Summary remarks

NGOs and the Afghanistan Red Crescent Society have strong ties through community-level activities with vulnerable groups, and are thus in a position to attempt to represent such groups in meso level forums such as the PDMCs. However this representation can only occur in regard to the places where work is undertaken. This excludes many of the more insecure areas. Furthermore, the approaches adopted by the different agencies will vary.

The bottom line is that the scale of need across the country cannot be adequately covered without widespread decentralised governmental authority equipped with the necessary capacity and based on local good governance.

Pointing towards a path forward, already in Jawzjan Province there is a blending of the work by the District DMC and the Community Development Councils, developed by the NSP. This has the capability to ground disaster risk reduction within the context of people's lives. If the NSP opens opportunities for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation within its work, then regional CDCs that represent individual local CDCs could be a good option for furthering meso level partnership.

However before such opportunities can really take hold, and draw on the spirit of *Hashar*, security and governance has to improve. In the words of a local employee of an aid agency, "The primary things to focus and deal with are justice and to work with people, to share with them, to be very transparent. Now most of the people believe that this Government is corrupt, so they are not supporting it. The big questions that are usually asked by people in the country are: Where have the millions of dollars gone? And what impact has been left in place? Why are the families of Government officials living out of the country? Safe havens? Why not in Afghanistan? Is it an alert that the situation is getting worse? Millions of dollars flow in, but no change to poverty rates. Why? Government should be very clear and accountable to the people. Complaints should be dealt with seriously. Selling of key decision-making positions should be banned. Priority should be given to basic needs."

In the meantime the role of external agencies to facilitate and forge partnerships for risk reduction appears the only option. But even in this, agencies have to recognise that, "It takes time to build trust, whereas the loss of trust can take only an instant."³⁰

5. Peru

Opportunity to Strengthen the Resilience of Rural Livelihoods through Engagement in Local Participatory Budgeting

Abstract

This case study considers whether the opportunities for engagement in development planning and budgeting at the local and provincial level is leading to strengthened resilience among vulnerable groups.

Drivers of risk being tackled through the case study partnership

The drivers of risk that are addressed through the partnership presented here are the absence of social protection and fragile rural livelihoods.

³⁰ Margaret Hall, OCHA Afghanistan

Background

In Peru, it is legally required that local and provincial authorities should formulate comprehensive development plans and budgets in a participatory manner. As such the decentralised system is designed to take projects devised by communities and place them in the hands of the municipal government for delivery.

This presents clear opportunities for local issues and concerns with health, education, infrastructure, and livelihood support measures, to be addressed by local government. But is this working for all citizens and in particular leading to strengthened resilience among the vulnerable in light of disaster and climate risks?

The culture regarding disasters in the region is an important aspect. This appears to be strongly influenced by the devastating earthquake and avalanche that occurred in 1970. However, it still has not led to the adoption of preventative measures so that a similar event does not occur. Instead it has instilled an important but nevertheless rather more limited perspective: In the words of the Civil Defence Organisation of Ancash, “We must be prepared.”

In spite of this, the level of government support for civil defence is felt by its leadership to be low. So, even the response and preparedness functions of this organisation are under-funded.

As a consequence, plans for wider disaster risk reduction and resilience efforts are quickly de-prioritised and sidelined on the grounds that they are going to be too expensive. Not least because, other than poorly attended earthquake drills, structural measures and seismic safety are more dominant pre-conceptions of what constitutes risk management than the full range of options available. Soft measures and approaches that reduce risk through careful land use planning, for instance, are not given such weighting of importance and backed up with the necessary institutional mechanisms. Further the concept that investment is likely to be more cost effective than response is not widely recognised and therefore does not systematically influence decision-making.

In short, the Civil Defence Organisation of Ancash does not have an established structure for disaster risk management and this pervades throughout the functioning of urban and rural municipalities in the region.

More traction seems to have occurred in recent years in terms of climate change. This has been at the national political level and in relation to natural resources management. On the ground in Ancash though, there is little in the way of clearly defined climate change adaptation initiatives underway as a result.

Unfortunately, despite its merits, whereas opportunity does exist for participation within local development budgeting processes, the reality is that for the poorest and the most vulnerable this does not seem to equate with many examples of significant improvements. Indeed, the process itself can be physically and economically too distant to be accessed. Moreover if local plans are proposed, no doubt drawing on technical and financial assistance, then the outcomes are by no means guaranteed.

Thus the process can be frustrating, disappointing and possibly even damaging in terms of partnership ideals.

So two key challenges appear to limit the opportunity to capitalise on the local participatory budgeting to strengthen the resilience of rural livelihoods:

- Firstly, social protection in respect of disasters in Ancash. Peru places significantly more emphasis upon post disaster mechanisms than in terms of pre-disaster planning.
- Secondly, there is a capacity and organisational gap between vulnerable groups and the process of participation in local development budgeting itself.

These issues are expanded below.

The meso level partnership focus: Local Coordination Councils

As part of the decentralisation process it was established that the lower tier provincial municipalities, such as Yungay and Huaraz, must have opportunities for submitting ideas and projects within the framework of the higher tier State budget; in this case Ancash. Furthermore these ideas and projects should be open to proposals based on public participation.

In support of this concept and the local government authorities themselves, law sets out that there must be an impartial oversight type institution that provides technical assistance, control, verification and inspection functions regarding local development plans and programming. Thus, the Local Coordination Council (LCC) was formed to help the municipalities place priority through Local Participatory Budgeting (LPB) on appropriate projects that have an impact on the territory in question. The LCC and LPB can be considered as municipal administrative ‘spaces’. They have no budget, in order to underpin the facilitation of independent un-biased decision-making processes.

The structure of the provincial LCC consists of the provincial mayor (who presides over the LCC and the LPB), the mayors of the district municipalities, provincial councilmen and representatives of the civil society. Only members of the civil society who are acknowledged by the provincial municipality can participate.

In terms of procedure regarding local participatory budgeting and the engagement of civil society within the process to accomplish development projects, there are several stages.

At an administrative level there is a lot of prior coordination work. First with the mayor, the municipal manager and with invited organisations, before the municipal ordinance establishing the start of the LPB is issued. Then, in brief, projects are identified and submitted to establish a code under the National Public Investment System (SNIP). They are then prioritized, and some will be approved and formalised. Subsequently administrative procedures are followed to have the projects approved at a council meeting and then they are included in an initial opening budget. Next, the files are put together for the bidding, hiring and monitoring processes, followed by further administrative procedures.

Legal barriers are a problem, such as SNIP, which establishes that capacity building is not allowed and that investments cannot be made in social issues, only in infrastructure³¹. And despite this limitation in scope, even without ‘soft’ measures a challenge lies in establishing a coherent approach among all the potential projects such that they are mutually supportive.

So it is clear even from this summary that the process is taxing and presents challenges.

Deterrents to participation

For the most part the public has yet to take ownership of their place in the positive civil society-government partnership that is available through the budgeting process. This results in many shortcomings and missed opportunities. The LCC for Huaraz asserts, “The local government does not exclude people, if there is exclusion it is because they exclude themselves.” This is a strong statement. Is there more to it than this? Why is it that generally the public “exclude themselves” and observe local development, rather than actively participate?

Many challenges and deterrents to participation exist.

In the first place there may well be a lack of awareness. Efforts by the LCC to inform citizens of any upcoming LPB, such as the delivery of workshops across districts³², are all well and good. While definitely representing positive intentions, it is highly unlikely that they could be considered adequate.

Another example is the issue of willingness to participate in the process, as this has to be done on a voluntary basis. The implication is that individuals must put their own income-earning work aside and take time to identify the needs of their community and guide the development and articulation of plans and projects. Beyond this they must then be introduced and amended according to the taxing protocol outlined above. And the process can be very time consuming. It is no wonder that some incorrectly believe that representatives participate in the LPB because the mayor will reward them.

Then there is a lack of confidence in the system to deliver. As the municipality is the first institution to have links with society, ordinary citizens would believe, assume or hope that municipalities have been given certain authority. Therefore should they seek for something to be addressed or implemented and find that the municipality does not have the capacity to respond, it causes dissatisfaction. Similarly there is discontent due to a failure (real and perceived) to carry out what was agreed upon. Sometimes the failure is due to legitimate yet poorly understood delays. The impression given in either case is that the municipality is weak and it cannot meet the needs of society. This type of experience is bound to spread and influence common perceptions. And, for the most part, this is a regular outcome: projects derived through public participation do not necessarily materialise.

³¹ Furthermore, REMURPE is concerned that SNIP does not work for rural municipalities

³² For Yungay, decentralized workshops are held for greater awareness regarding the invitation to participate through the LPB. Meetings of task forces are also held, many of them with NGOs to strengthen ideas.

Compounding this disincentive to participate is the notion that with decentralisation of power and authority comes greater opportunities for corruption. Mayors and governors are thought to influence decisions to suit their agendas. These are unlikely to match with the needs of the more remote or marginalised groups.

Cutting through all these issues capacity of local representatives needs to be high. A project has to be viable. To name a couple, this calls for considerable technical capabilities and an awareness of wider contextual issues. For instance, all projects must comply with legal requirements regarding the projects' verification, the tendering of contracts and technical aspects.

Despite these barriers, participation must continue to be encouraged.

It is not so surprising then that generally the public take on the role of observers. The LCC for Huaraz goes on to say that, "We won't see a change [in public involvement] as long as we have the idea in our collective conscience that only government authorities are responsible for local development." But likewise it could be retorted that we won't see a change in public involvement as long as the wider community and the more vulnerable in particular are not provided with sufficient means to engage in the process, win support and recognise impacts.

Bridging the gap between community and local government for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation

Rural municipalities struggle with competency and effectiveness, largely because they lack both financial and trained human resources. Under such circumstances it is difficult to overcome poverty. The complexity regarding the poverty-disaster nexus and the relationship between climate change impacts and the lives and livelihoods of the poor are an added stress on local capacity.

Local governments do not have a culture of prevention and risk reduction. Nor do they give sufficient priority to preparedness. This culture is probably a reflection of the concerns and attitudes of the general public.

It is not surprising then that the inclusion of risk management and climate change adaptation in local participatory budgeting has been negligible. The network of 800 urban³³ and rural municipalities of Peru (REMURPE) suggests that climate change should be included in municipal budget management. Despite some positive strides forward, the meaningful realisation of this is some way off. In terms of adaptation, the municipality of Yungay for example has been unable to go beyond the implementation of "some forestation projects". A key constraint is felt to be a disconnection between national level scientific knowledge and local planning, awareness and capacity.

Another key factor limiting the uptake of preventative measures, as mentioned earlier, is the perception that risk reduction and the strengthening of resilience is very costly. Of course cost is a genuine issue of concern, but not necessarily an insurmountable obstacle. For example, participants in the budgeting process are said to be more

³³ Where rural municipalities have become urbanised

concerned about infrastructure projects than risk reduction, as if the two were competing options. The LCC for Yungay states that before undertaking disaster and climate risk reduction, “It is necessary to place priority on basic sanitation projects first and then meet other needs.” Any sense that risk assessment that includes disaster and climate considerations has to be part of feasibility studies and design does not appear to have gained momentum. Regarding this example of meeting basic needs, it may indicate that more work is required to outline how disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation can support the cost effectiveness of sanitation projects. In fact applying a disaster and climate risk lens to proposals is probably essential for its appropriate functioning and management.

To introduce locally devised projects that address disaster and climate risks within a context such as this requires an extra dose of technical support and capacity building at both the community and the local government level. However unlike in many other circumstances, the channels are open.

That said the decentralised system has a lack of inherent safeguards to ensure that the voices of marginalised groups are heard. For instance, the LCC for Huaraz suggests that vulnerable groups do not need subsidising to support their integration within the development budgetary processes, but rather poverty reduction in general will lead to greater opportunities. Poverty reduction would probably help, but it is perhaps idealistic to assume that this will occur rapidly or even slowly and at all. Consequently, the INGO Practical Action works to ensure that the marginalised join this process while providing the community-based capacity building that is required.

An example of this is found among a rural community in Coyllur, Huaraz Province. Based on participatory decision-making among the farmers, better land management on the steep slopes and the introduction of low-cost irrigation techniques have reduced vulnerability to drought, erosion and landslides. Importantly, productivity has increased, with livelihood benefits. Throughout the development of the project, alliances have been made with several sectors of the provincial government of Huaraz and others. This has led to the gaining of the support of the local authorities. Now the improved techniques demonstrated in Coyllur are being promoted at District and Provincial levels for inclusion in the participatory budget process.

Key among the strategies to support participation is the need for vulnerable groups to become organised. Again drawing on the views of the LCC for Huaraz, if they were organised they could better exercise their full and active rights by bringing a joint voice to the various levels of government in order to attain greater investment. Instead vulnerable groups are often not acknowledged.

Encouragement to become organised and training in the procedures so that communities can participate effectively are both areas where the LCC for Yungay believes the municipality should provide support. In its absence, the work of NGOs is going to be important.

The need for strong local leadership and greater awareness

Among the network of 800 municipalities represented by REMURPE there are some very creative mayors who have improved the quality of citizen participation. Such leaders are crucial to aid the improved representation of the poor and the uptake of

measures that integrate risk reduction. However political turnover is another challenge. Rómulo Antúnez of REMURPE points out that many emblematic mayors may not be in the local government after elections.

So sustainable progress is perhaps dependent on a wider awareness and interest in strengthening resilience to deal with the risks that exist. An attitude that is shared by organised local groups and local government authorities.

Summary remarks

The disaster-related mindset of the people and the authorities represented in this case study is biased towards being responsive, rather than preventive. This stems from the major earthquake disaster of 1970 itself, and a sense that the costs of any measures to avoid or mitigate such an event would be restrictive.

There are several general deterrents to participation that limit participation in development decision making including budgeting processes. These include a general lack of awareness of the opportunities that exist, the lengthy and bureaucratic process and a disbelief that engagement will ‘pay off’ in terms of successful allocation of resources to the specific proposal made. Compounding these general aspects, as a consequence of the lack of prioritisation given to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, capacity in this area among local communities and authorities is weak. So the chances of these issues being integrated as part of a development plan are even less likely. Success has been achieved then where an external agency has intervened.

A long-term ambition, perhaps supported by the greater national level consideration being given to climate change impacts, would be a shift in attitudes so as to point development more towards the adoption of a culture of resilience. If this culture gained more traction, then the established opportunities through local participatory budgeting to enhance social protection would be invaluable.

6. Nepal

Mobilised Communities, Inspired Local Leaders and a Suitable Policy Context: Is this Sufficient for the Protection of Fragile Rural Livelihoods in Nepal?

Abstract

This case study highlights how inspired local government officials plus decentralised decision-making policy has provided an environment in which the positive value of community based actions could be recognized and incorporated into local planning. The case study also describes how this progress was initiated with local NGO support, but is now developing its own momentum.

Drivers of risk being tackled through the case study partnership

The thrust of attention in this case study relates to methods of reducing the fragility of rural livelihoods.

Background³⁴

³⁴ Based on UN (2010)

The villages of Megghauli and Pathihani in Chitwan district are near the Chitwan National Park, in the flood plains of the Inner Tarai region of south central Nepal. The communities depend on agriculture and livestock for survival, supplemented by resource gathering from a 'buffer zone' community forest area on the edge of the Park, set aside for just such local community use. All these sources of livelihood are threatened.

The rainy season and dry season, combined with poor land use and water management, results in floods and droughts, destroying crops and pushing people to rely more on the community forest for resources such as fodder, wood and water. Changing weather patterns associated with climate change have created water shortages for growing crops even during the monsoon period.

Meanwhile, these changing weather patterns, and a boom in invasive plants within the National Park, mean that wild animals are encroaching more and more on territory occupied and farmed by local people.

These issues experienced at the village level are affected by the wider policy landscape in Nepal.

At the national level, a draft disaster management act has been developed in recent years so as to update the existing one that had emphasised response activities³⁵. This new act is more closely aligned with the Hyogo Framework for Action and thus places greater emphasis upon disaster risk reduction. In principle it is therefore better able to address the realities of local development and risk-related experiences than its predecessor. Further, it lays out the institutional set up at national, district and the village / municipality level. The inclusion of the local level aspects is also an improvement on the existing legislation. However the new act has not yet been endorsed, on account of Parliament focusing upon the formation of a new constitution and peace building.

Nevertheless, in 2009 the Government of Nepal prepared a National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management. The strategy highlights how the national bodies for disaster management are to be decentralised through a series of disaster management committees at regional, district and local levels.

Importantly, based on local and district experiences and supported by the Local Governance Act (1999), the Ministry of Local Development has also recently encouraged the establishment of disaster management committees at the lowest tier of government administration. Indeed, the Ministry has encouraged the inclusion of disaster risk reduction as one of the evaluating criteria to measure local government performance. It is intended that this will encourage local government to raise the prioritisation of disaster risk reduction accordingly.

In most cases however national government policy has not resulted in satisfactory disaster risk reduction activities materialising on the ground.

³⁵ Natural Disaster Relief Act (1982, and amended in 1989 and 1992)

This case study considers a place where people's vulnerability has been reduced through the established institutional framework at the village and district levels. It explains how this is happening, and why.

The meso level partnership focus: District Disaster Management Committees

The governments' vulnerability assessment undertaken in 2005 identified 23 of the 75 districts in Nepal to be "high risk". This, along with the policy and strategy landscape that the country had been developing as already outlined, created a context more conducive for the establishment of localised disaster risk reduction.

Chitwan became the first district to capitalise on the improved enabling environment. By building on a series of successive efforts to link disaster risk reduction within development planning, it developed a District Disaster Management Plan as an integral aspect of its wider development considerations. This was accomplished through a multiple stakeholder partnership: the District Disaster Management Committee.

However the disaster planning does not stop at this middle administrative tier. At the most localised level and echoing the district structure, Disaster Management Committees within Village Development Committees have been set up in some places to perform similar functions. The villages of Meghauri and Pathihani on the fringe of the Chitwan National Park are two such examples where such a system has been established. But in total, 59 Disaster Management Committees have now been formed within Village Development Committees and one municipality³⁶.

Through an interaction between the district and village level committees, the following has been accomplished:

- Greater awareness of risks among vulnerable communities through activities such as pre-monsoon workshops
- Early warning communications
- Improved livelihood security of vulnerable communities through
 - Improved cultivation in the dry season
 - Higher productivity levels
 - The safeguarding of crops
 - Irrigation schemes and culvert construction
 - Alternative income generation
- Development of long-term village level disaster management plans
- A greater ability at the village level to influence the disaster management planning at the district level
- Enhanced linkages between vulnerable groups and line agencies

So, the key question is, how was this accomplished?

While the policy and strategy context underpinned Chitwan District's progress, in practice there has been much more to it than that. Most importantly, coping with the

³⁶ This includes the extension of the work across Chitwan and into the neighbouring district of Nawalparasi.

multiple stresses demanded collaboration amongst a range of stakeholders. Progress in accomplishing a working partnership was thus fundamental.

The Chitwan District Disaster Management Committee is a multi-stakeholder representative body. Importantly, and as has been highlighted, it is not an autonomous entity but rather it is integral to the overall planning, implementation and monitoring mandate of the District Development Committee. As such the coordination of the partnership is the remit of the Chief District Officer, who chairs meetings.

On the face of it there appears to be a common agreement on the value of such a partnership between stakeholders. Regularly there is an appreciation that coordination through partnerships with multiple stakeholders is necessary for programme effectiveness. Therefore the *principle* of partnership is non-contentious.

For example, Balram Luitel, the disaster risk reduction ‘focal person’ on the District Development Committee in Chitwan states, “Disaster risk reduction is possible only if everybody joins hands and works based on their capacity and role.” And the message from a counterpart at the village development committee level³⁷ is equally supportive: “Partnership brings strength.”

In *practice* though it can be a major challenge to create common understanding of disaster risk reduction amidst competing interests and different approaches to disaster management.

Local authority leadership is frequently regarded as a cornerstone that can pull complex and seemingly competing interests together to accomplish a successful outcome. The Chief District Officer holds this responsibility for disaster risk reduction in Nepal. Through this person’s actions, a local environment conducive to disaster risk reduction can be capitalised on and nurtured, or hindered through lack of interest and will.

In Chitwan there is general recognition that local government leadership is ‘enlightened’. So this must account for much of the progress achieved.

The chairmanship of the District Disaster Management Committee by the Chief District Officer ensures participation and mobilization of agencies such as the army and police who are often important actors for emergency relief. But the functioning of the committee also has to incorporate the views of many others including the vulnerable, especially so as to strengthen local livelihoods in the face of risk. Traditionally, disaster has not been viewed from this perspective. Hinting at the barriers that need to be overcome, a Chief District Officer³⁸ states, “We are not that effective in overcoming discrimination.”

There has been a need to somehow open new channels of communication between district and village levels. The means to achieve this has been through the formation of the Disaster Management Committee at the village level as a platform for

³⁷ Kamu Prashad Chaudhari

³⁸ Hari Raj Panta, Chief District Officer, Nawalparasi

articulating local needs and forging links. Then the interaction between village and district committees has enabled local communities to lead implementation, while local and district authorities, and others have coordinated efforts and organized resources. For example, the District Development Committee is starting to allocate funds to the Village Development Committees for disaster management, to support long-term integrated disaster management.

However, strong local leadership alone has not been sufficient to facilitate progress.

Shortfalls in human and financial capacity

The policy and legal frameworks have helped to create the conditions for decentralised decision-making in relation to disaster risk reduction. This has been positive. Additionally when the new disaster management act comes into affect, the significance of the local level may be further strengthened. However, as is frequently the case, there is a shortfall in the financial and technical capacity to match the responsibility. In short, local government capacity is weak. Consequently as expectations are raised, the chance for disillusionment and frustration among local authorities and local citizens alike become higher.

The reality is that the accomplishments outlined in relation to the villages of Chitwan District have been based on the enabling environment context, including strong local leadership, but have only been possible through the support of NGOs and bilateral assistance. This is representative of much work in the country more broadly.

Local leadership, a strong policy context and good governance are all hugely important, but without the capacity to implement effective programming it will not progress.

So in this instance, firstly, the technical capacity of a consortium of local NGOs³⁹ was deployed to facilitate the strengthening of the partnership between and within Village and District Disaster Management Committees. This local NGO involvement was crucial, particularly at the village level.

For example, overcoming social barriers and engaging local people and other stakeholders in processes conducive to sustainable paths of development requires technical know how based on principles of participation. The basis of community ownership in Chitwan stemmed from participatory vulnerability assessment. This process identified a varied mix of factors that was resulting in high flood risk and crop failure in times of drought. But the process also built awareness.

From here discussions, trainings and workshops involving all stakeholders were facilitated by NGOs, in order to establish common understanding of hazards, vulnerabilities and their consequences. This built the support for cooperative actions.

Secondly, and with significant ramifications, the NGOs brought funds. Those with funds are clearly best able to get things done. But those with funds also have the greatest influence. In Chitwan, this has led to some interesting and important dynamics between local government and civil society organisations. On the whole

³⁹ Supported and trained by Practical Action and the District Development Committee

NGOs are considered to have initiated some good work and the relationship between the authorities and such groups is favourable. But any lack of NGO transparency and accountability undermines relations. Furthermore, on a personal level, the salary of civil servants is likely less than that of NGO counterparts, fuelling government dissatisfaction.

Aside from possessing resources that can be used to enhance development activities for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, there is another dynamic regarding the relationship between government and NGOs that is raised in Chitwan. This relates not so much to the amount of funding but to the nature of the funds.

A partnership that is facilitated by an agency that has a funding pot designed for a specific purpose and a limited timeframe can be constrained in its scope to develop programmatic approaches. In the words of a Chief District Officer⁴⁰, “For government we are bound to maintain interest because we are bound by policies. NGOs are not bound by policy to work for disaster risk reduction. They work when they have resources and leave when they have not.” A strong policy context is not enough. Being dependent upon others for funding is not conducive to long-term planning: Sustainability concerns emerge.

Summary remarks

Where communities are mobilized and can identify and voice their needs, the bottom-up approach meets a dead-end in the absence of an enabling environment that allows voices to be heard and acted upon at national government level. In Nepal, inspired local government officials plus relevant policy provided an environment in which the positive value of community based actions could be recognized and incorporated into local planning. However to facilitate this process, NGO funds and technical capacity have been crucial.

So in Chitwan the multiple stakeholder partnerships in the form of the Disaster Management Committees are both local government *and*, with INGO assistance, local NGO led. It’s hard to say whether local government officials would have been so inspired towards disaster risk reduction without the opportunity to capitalize on the NGO financial and technical capacity.

Local losses through flood and drought have been catalysts for change in Nepal. The policy context has helped create an enabling environment. And, NGOs have provided assistance. They have all played their part and in doing so have demonstrated accomplishments on the ground in reducing risk and protecting livelihoods. There have clearly been benefits.

This good practice in a few places has inspired uptake elsewhere. The accomplishments in Meghauli and Pathihani in Chitwan have been catalysts for action – now extending to 59 Village Development Committees and one municipality. Awareness among local governments has been improved. Indeed, in Nawalparasi a District Disaster Management Plan has now been integrated within development planning. Furthermore, other districts too are pursuing a similar path.

⁴⁰ Hari Raj Panta, Chief District Officer, Nawalparasi

To date, this expansion has been happening in the presence of external aid. At some point, based on capacity building, sharing of experiences and demonstrable benefits, this could create sufficient momentum for strong local leaders to find ways forward using their own means.

7. Democratic Republic of the Congo

Including Forest Communities in the UN-REDD Process

Abstract

This case study highlights the limited ability of local impoverished rural populations to overcome problems related to the destructive use of forests and protected areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The partnership that is described is attempting to represent the voice of the poor and vulnerable by ensuring that their perspectives influence the work of UN-REDD.

Drivers of risk being tackled through the case study partnership

As well as the clear connection with ecosystem decline in relation to the forests, this case study also demonstrates the links this has with fragile rural livelihoods.

Background

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) tropical forest is the second most extensive in the world. High and closed canopy rainforest combined with open forests and woodlands cover a total of about 2 million km². The Congolese forests store about 140Gt CO², or about three years of accumulated global emissions.

The population of the DRC is estimated at about 62 million inhabitants, of whom 70% live in rural areas (over 40 million people). The DRC contains the highest rural population densities among the countries of the Congo Basin, and poverty levels are high. Poverty is connected with the widespread practice of slash and burn agriculture. This results in the establishment of permanent cropland in place of forest, in deforestation and land degradation. Furthermore, 85% of the energy consumed in the DRC is from wood, largely in the form of charcoal. Other factors that contribute to the degradation of the environment include urbanisation, waste disposal, unsustainable fishing, harvesting of non-wood products, commercial hunting, the introduction of non-native species and commercial logging.

The DRC's forests contain about 80 species of trees with commercial value. Logging in the DRC began in the Lower Congo in the 1890s. The first industrial logging companies arrived in 1930 in the Bas-Congo and Bandundu region. An initial order governing the logging was declared in 1949. Since 1960, concessions were awarded throughout the central basin, mainly along the Congo River and its tributaries, up to Kisangani in the northeast. The main logging areas now include parts of Eastern provinces of Equateur and Bandundu, which are usually near the Congo River and its major tributaries. The Government of DRC has conflicting agendas in its aspirations to support reductions in green house gas emissions on the one hand and its promotion of industrial logging on the other.

In terms of overall impacts on land degradation, annual deforestation is approximately 400,000 to 500,000 ha. The situation is more alarming around major cities and in

densely populated areas.

Due to the unfavourable political environment, characterized by instability and conflict, an inadequate institutional and legal framework compounds the situation, making it harder to find solutions.

At a local level, the main bottlenecks limiting the possibilities for local producers to change their behaviours that degrade the land and forests are the lack of training, education and awareness on the sustainable management of natural resources and alternative activities for income generation. Poverty, lack of good governance in land and forests management (despite policy and law), and the deficit in basic infrastructure that does not allow these producers to consider new perspectives for their livelihood, exacerbates these behaviours.

Furthermore, it should be noted that very few local producers are organized into local development initiatives. This continues to marginalize them from policy-making forums working on the development of land and forest sectors. Despite the vast numbers of rural people, the local voice is not strong.

Clearly, the natural forest habitat is where many different conflicting interests come together, all of which need reconciling. The lack of an operational framework for dialogue involving all stakeholders in the areas of land and forest (administration, private operators, NGOs, rural producers, lobbyists, educators and researchers) has been a major handicap to the development of a uniform policy of management of land and forests. The establishment of frameworks for cooperation at national, provincial and local levels are essential to guarantee a decentralized management of natural resources in the country.

The UN-REDD Programme must operate in this context. The Programme is the United Nations collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) in developing countries. It was created in response to the UNFCCC decision on REDD at the 13th UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP 13) and the Bali Action Plan.

Recognition that deforestation and forest degradation account for some 17 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions globally, and that there is more carbon in the world's forests than in its atmosphere, has brought new attention to how forests are used and cared for. When forests are removed or degraded, emissions are created and carbon sinks are lost. Until recently, avoided deforestation as a climate strategy was unpopular. However in recent years, recognition has grown that the emission reductions needed to avoid catastrophic climate change are so large that they will not be achieved without reducing forest loss and degradation. The Stern Review on the economics of climate change noted that 'Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries' (REDD) could be a cost-effective route. So REDD became more popular.⁴¹

REDD is an effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest

⁴¹ Catula and Mayers (2009)

in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. “REDD+” goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks⁴².

The meso level partnership focus: Representing the voice of local civil society in national processes through the Working Group Climate REDD

The process of establishing the creation of the civil society “Working Group Climate REDD” (GTCR) began in January 2009 in support of the Readiness Preparation Proposal for REDD, and it is still underway.

As it stands the GTCR is a national platform representing about 700 networks and organizations of civil society, and it has aspirations to consolidate and establish provincial and local representation in the future. It provides a framework for dialogue, exchange, awareness and technical capacity of civil society actors to jointly address the challenges of fighting against climate change and its consequences. To this end, the GTCR has the delicate task of coordinating, guiding and promoting the initiatives of civil society on climate change and REDD.

The partnership is thus the primary interlocutor supporting civil society negotiations with the national government body.

However, the vision and goals of GTCR are not yet formalised through a partnership agreement, and thus the functioning and structure of GTCR is not well known even by its members. It is a partnership in its infancy.

Most recently GTCR is experiencing difficulties in maintaining and formalising itself as an independent body capable of drawing on the collective expertise and experience of its members to participate in the REDD process on behalf of vulnerable communities. For example, the commission in charge of the preparation of the protocol governing GTCR held a plenary meeting on 11 August 2010. However, instead of proposing the text of the agreement for approval, a step backwards was taken as the nature of GTCR itself was deliberated.

The concern by members of GTCR is that a mood to shape the partnership into an autonomous body, rather than a collection of existing independent networks and organisations, opens the path for interference in its mandate. Its current members denounce this because they fear that such a move would constrain the network in its desire to represent vulnerable communities.

Concerns stem from a general sense that the onus is on civil society to be heard, not on government authorities to listen.

Nevertheless, since its inception GTCR has been working to develop its representation, legitimacy, transparency and operational effectiveness to coordinate the country’s entire civil society perspectives in relation to REDD. The leadership and coordination responsibility associated with this task has been entrusted to the Natural Resources Network (NRN-DRC; “Réseau Ressources Naturelles RRN-RDC”)⁴³.

⁴² www.un-redd.org

⁴³ The NRN has a delegate in the national committee, which held its first official meeting in August 2010. It should also be noted that the civil society has two representatives who sit in the negotiating

Even though the GTCR is undergoing a maturing process and is being shaped by high-level interests, it already has a background in the following fields:

- Monitoring natural resources
- Governance and transparency
- Human rights, rights of indigenous populations and local communities
- Outreach and awareness raising (forest code, mining, etc.)
- Advocacy, lobbying and research in the climate and forestry sector
- Conservation and sustainable management of natural resources
- Information, education and communication
- Legality and traceability of natural resources
- Participative mapping and geographic information system

And since its inception, it has performed the following activities:

- Establishment of transient structures at national and provincial level: Kinshasa, Mbandaka, Low - Congo, Eastern Province, North Kivu and Katanga
- Public awareness on the process in these provinces and the establishment of focal points of GTCR
- Writing pilot projects to submit to the Congo Basin Forest Fund
- Strengthening the capacity of indigenous peoples and local communities on REDD process
- Enhancement of Congolese civil society to develop a policy and legal framework ensuring the sustainable management of forest resources based on respect for rights and traditional practices of forest peoples.
- Advocacy activities are currently in process on the following issues: Participatory zoning taking into account aspects related to conservation by the Forest Code and the reduction of the privilege granted to industrial exploitation; the need for clarification of customary rights and making enforcement of forestry law; maintaining the moratorium during the assembly of the REDD strategy for at least 10 years; etc

Economic influence over the working group partnership

Funding is required for the partnership to function, and to achieve its goals. This is independent of the work undertaken by its members. To date the GTCR has been supported in its activities by international NGOs (e.g. the Rainforest Foundation Norway) and via a small grant from the World Bank. However, whereas the initial understanding was to create a framework for exchange and training of stakeholders to support local communities and indigenous peoples in relation to REDD, now that the National Coordination (NC) REDD is pushing the GTCR to become an autonomous entity, drawing on the substantial funding through the REDD mechanism, that has become available. There are concerns though that this will undermine the independence of the civil society group as it is constrained by its dependence on national funds.

For real impact on the lives of forest inhabitants, GTCR members feel strongly that bilateral and multilateral aid should go through the structures that have already

group and participate in all the COP meetings. These two representatives are accountable to civil society through GTCR.

demonstrated their ability to work with local indigenous people. Not through a newly established GTCR that has a potential conflict of interest between its masters and its desire to represent the grassroots issues.

As a consequence of the state of flux GTCR is in, its structure, leadership, working methods and goals are all under-developed and the focus of scrutiny and concern even among its members. Ideally, its current members would need the establishment of a strong, acceptable framework for the partnership, based on good governance, as a necessary next step before funding channels can be opened.

Challenges in representing local populations

Unfortunately, the limited ability of local impoverished populations to overcome problems related to the destructive use of forests and protected areas, their lack of information and appropriate training, and their weak capacity to organize themselves, all constitute a major handicap for the assertion of rights at the level of policy formation. This is why, amongst other issues, NGOs and other civil society organizations are focused on the establishment of a full and fair legal framework and its promotion through awareness raising activities and advocacy.

Although in general the national networks of NGOs are becoming better organized, resources and expertise do remain extremely limited. This is especially true in relation to climate change and the need to support initiatives of local communities in both carbon sequestration through reforestation, conservation of biodiversity and in climate change adaptation capacity building of local populations. Clearly this has knock-on implications in terms of the effectiveness of GTCR itself as an intermediary between local realities and national strategies.

Further, the groups that have closest ties with local communities and that can best represent local perceptions regarding mechanisms for arresting forest degradation and deforestation are not engaged in GTCR.

The upshot of this is that despite its purpose to represent local people within REDD, the GTCR is yet to engage with communities in a meaningful way to support awareness raising and, through appropriate representation, engagement in REDD on an appropriate scale. Instead only isolated initiatives have occurred. This may also be due to the infancy of the group and its resultant lack of clarity, purpose and funding.

Perhaps then stemming from its origins, there appears to be a current lack of downward accountability within GTCR – a situation only set to solidify if the concerns over national funding streams materialise.

The influence of power dynamics over the functioning of the working group

GTCR came about as a response to the need for civil society participation in the REDD process. Therefore the need for community and local level inputs, as represented through the civil society working group, was a top-down requirement. This fact appears to be a significant influence over the functioning of the group and also relates to the funding dilemma already described.

For instance, the Government of DRC believes that a trusting relationship is instilled

between GTCR and NC-REDD that bodes well for future cooperation⁴⁴. GTCR itself endorses this perspective, while including the Ministry of Environment as another positive relationship. This is a strong basis for progress - but must also be proven by results in terms of how civil society actually influences REDD in practice.

In this regard the GTCR wants to go beyond its negotiation remit and beyond the coordination and exchange of information. It wants to focus on action and results with advocacy to influence policy dialogues for the rights and interests of communities. This is probably at loggerheads with the protocol proposed at the national level. The GTCR also aims to promote the communities' participation in studies and encourage the support of communities by the members of the GTCR on initiatives / activities that help to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on vulnerable populations in the context of sustainable development and the fight against poverty.

As this agenda takes shape, how will this affect the nature of the relationship between GTCR and NC-REDD? Opinions are divided.

GTCR will not be a true partnership if it is a resonant platform for the authorities to impose their policies or agenda without taking into account the realities of the lives of local and indigenous people. Partnership is based on equal rights. A constraint as these issues are managed is that due to the complexity associated with such a wide range of organisations and networks within GTCR, combined with its lack of an agreed protocol, confusion may arise or deepen. This presents a risk that events stemming from national authority direction may overtake the proper alignment and functioning of the partnership itself, based on the desires of the group as a whole.

The reality today is that GTCR has some way to go in establishing its representation credentials for the communities most vulnerable to the affects of deforestation, degradation and climate change. Currently, for instance, at the local government level the importance of GTCR is very low since local authorities are still under-informed of its existence.

Capacity needs

In addition to the various pressures already described, the functioning of the working group partnership itself requires considerable capacity. For example, respondents suggest that the following extensive criteria all highlight the qualities necessary in a partnership: Participation, transparency, unity, communication, sharing, fair allocation of responsibilities, competence, efficiency, sound financial management, timeliness, fair representation, co-development of strategy (etc), agreement on roles. In many respects the essence of good governance. GTCR has to manage these aspects across its several hundred different members.

Groups and partnerships clearly need collective efforts and capable leaders to help pull these strands of an effective partnership together. In particular what can be learned from the GTCR experience to date is that leaders must give cohesion to the group, and during the early stages a strong vision of the partnership will be paramount.

⁴⁴ Government of DRC (2010, page 20)

Aside from the internal capacity needs of the group, climate change training is required within GTCR.

Further, NC-REDD aims at setting up 11 provincial REDD focal points by the end of 2012. This is an appropriate and important strategy. The provincial focal points would be intended to support the building of the national strategy by ensuring its link with local stakeholders, and will supervise geographical and sector-based pilot projects located in their area. To accomplish this, however, the focal points capacities will need to be built and enhanced progressively⁴⁵.

Currently, the State technical service responsible for the management of land and forests are poorly equipped in knowledge and tools regarding the sustainable use of resources. Moreover, they show a deficit of manpower and training to carry out awareness raising activities on legislation and regulatory acts, as well as for law enforcement. Clearly then civil society organizations will be fundamental stakeholders involved in defining and implementing the provincial and national strategies at a local level. In this capacity, the National Coordination REDD is working closely with the GTCR. However, provincial and local coordination has not yet taken shape, as all these actions require a proper structure as well as significant financial and logistical support.

Summary remarks

GTCR is a national civil society group that primarily engages with high-level processes. It is not a multi-stakeholder platform with a clear function that operates at a level between the local and the national in the promotion of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. However, it does represent the voice of the poor and vulnerable and seeks to ensure that these perspectives influence the work of REDD. However GTCR originated out of the REDD process, as opposed to a grass-roots movement, and consequently it seems that it is struggling to connect itself with local issues in relation to forest degradation and deforestation.

8. El Salvador

Supporting San Francisco Menendez's Vision for a Safer City

Abstract

This case study highlights how action has been taken by the local government of a small urban centre to reduce risk through partnership with various stakeholders, including local communities. This action has come about due to an acknowledgement of vulnerability on account of environmental degradation, disaster and climate change risks.

Drivers of risk being tackled through the case study partnership

Overcoming weak urban governance linked with an acknowledgement of the threats associated with ecosystem decline is the basis of how drivers of risk are being tackled.

Background

⁴⁵ Government of DRC (2010, page 19)

In the last 15 years El Salvador has suffered the effects of a severe episode of ENSO (El Niño - Southern Oscillation). The country has also been impacted by numerous disasters, such as Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and two earthquakes in 2001. There are also countless smaller localised events: fires, landslides and mudslides, drought and floods that affect communities on a regular basis and accumulate to account for significant losses.

Major disasters in particular, such as Mitch, provided an opportunity for civil society organizations to come together and draft a law on Prevention and Mitigation of Disasters and Civil Protection. The law called for the establishment of a disaster risk management strategy from an ecological perspective. However the law of Civil Protection that was eventually approved (in 2005) had, from a civil society perspective, important deficiencies⁴⁶ because it focused on emergency response. Nevertheless a mood for policy reform to support improvements in disaster management was consolidated.

Through the Civil Protection Law, in 2006 government structures for managing disasters, emphasizing emergency response but including risk reduction, were established. They stretched from national to community level.

The meso level partnership focus: Municipal Commission for Civil Protection

In El Salvador the state institution that has the closest relationship to communities is the municipality and, therefore, this is the institution that has the most direct impact on local development. Thus, formed as part of the overall national structure, the Municipal Commission for Civil Protection (MCCP) has some special significance. MCCP's are led by the Mayor and comprise municipal officials, representatives of government ministries and a community leader.

The city and municipality of San Francisco Menendez is located in the south of Ahuachapan, in the Paz River Basin, a territory vulnerable to floods and droughts. With a population of a little over 50,000 people, it can be considered a small or medium sized urban centre. In general, such places in developing countries are typically characterised by weak and poorly resourced local governments, large backlogs in the provision of infrastructure, little investment capacity, and limited technical capacity and knowledge in managing urban development in general and disaster risk reduction in particular⁴⁷.

San Francisco Menendez however has been making strides to reduce risk, particularly in relation to climate change. The political will exists, based on an acknowledgement of its vulnerability. The city is a special case in El Salvador in this regard.

Some positive models of governance appear to be underpinning this. Partnerships are being forged that stretch from local communities in high-risk areas through to trans-boundary water resource management dialogue with neighbouring municipalities of Guatemala. So while the municipality of San Francisco Menendez is the main focus,

⁴⁶ Efforts to strengthen it were finally shelved. Then in 2009 the Permanent Bureau of Risk Management-MPGR (a national advocacy space comprising numerous civil society organisations) with other networks presented to the Legislature a proposal for an Ecological Risk Management Policy. This is still under discussion in Parliament.

⁴⁷ UNISDR (2009, page 104-5)

this case also illustrates interconnectedness issues that stretch from the scale of the municipality's vulnerable residents to the city's more distant neighbours.

At the core is a willingness among local government officials to address the risks that exist. There is a vision for the municipality as exercised through local government that is based on the strengthening of communities and an improvement in the environment. This stems from an attempt to undo El Salvador's socio-economic development path that has been characterized by natural resource exploitation aggravating vulnerability to natural hazards.

At the highest level of its direct interface with various actors, the municipality is part of the Bi-National Programme for Joint Development Alliances for the border municipalities of Guatemala and El Salvador. Similarly, working through the Alianzas Consortium of various institutions, links have been established with the municipalities of Guatemala to discuss issues around the protection of the Paz river basin and disaster risk reduction.

A little closer to home, the municipality participates in the southern micro region of the Ahuachapan, where several different municipalities participate, including San Francisco Menendez. The objective of this space is to mobilize the municipal development processes, establishing joint policies and plans in relation to issues that include disaster risk reduction.

However of particular interest is the engagement of the municipal authorities with local issues and local community organisations.

The general public is mainly unaware of disaster and climate risks and how these relate to and influence planning. So the city's engagement with communities requires competency, clear communications and established mechanisms. In this regard the Communal Civil Protection Commission (CCPC), that comprises local groups such as churches, community development associations, youth groups and others, is the lowest tier of the national disaster management architecture. It is the main link between community and municipality on the subject of disaster and climate risks.

To engage with the CCPC and other local groups, requires an active capacity building of the local government technical teams through the work of the MCCP. Indicating this commitment, field visit log books and notes from workshops are the basis of weekly meetings; ensuring that activities are followed up and not forgotten. Similarly, there is an open forum each month in which communities are presented with the advances and results of annual planning. This indicates a culture of accountability and openness.

Practical accomplishments so far include some small demonstration projects for adaptation in high-risk communities. Plus there is the more general uptake of methods to improve the resilience of the municipality in light of disaster and climate risks. For example efforts to support the inclusion of environmental impact considerations regarding local land use plans. This specific plan pays attention to coastal zone risks, and seeks to relocate vulnerable communities from exposed locations.

Summary remarks

The local government has recognised the links between environmental degradation, the risk of disaster and climate change impacts, and is motivated to act. In support of taking steps towards addressing this it has demonstrated aspects of good governance. This has been the bedrock.

While efforts have been made, much of the work actually accomplished in terms of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation has only been feasible because of NGO support and financing, including in partnership with DIPECHO. Likewise the local government has been able to capitalise on the awareness raising and other activities undertaken by NGOs, such as UNES, among large segments of society. The capacity building, awareness raising, disaster preparedness, advocacy on socio-economic concerns and the implementation of pilot adaptation projects are all supported by NGO and CSO aid. A challenge for San Francisco Menendez then is to develop and sustain its own capacity.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Research conclusions

The research presented here examines the interface between national and community/local levels and between civil society, government, and other stakeholders, where they come together in partnership. Drawing on five case studies it has been possible to see the range of factors that influence the effectiveness of these meso-level partnerships and the wider enabling environment for effective climate sensitive DRR.

Whilst interesting issues and learning from each of the case studies have emerged that might be specific to these particular contexts, three overarching conclusions can be drawn from across the cases: 1) That strengthening local government capacity to integrate DRR and CCA into development planning is key; 2) That ‘soft’ process-based activities, such as building partnerships between civil society and government, are vital for delivering effective DRR and 3) That local communities need support to organize and strengthen their voice in local development and DRR.

These conclusions are in many ways overlapping and interdependent. They will be explored here and include recommendations to donors, governments and INGOs looking at the best way to support and implement effective disaster risk reduction.

1) Local governments need increased capacity and technical support to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation within local development planning.

This research shows that DRR work at the national level has tended to focus on disaster preparedness, emergency response and the setting up of institutions and legal frameworks. For example, this is the case in Afghanistan, Peru and El Salvador. The existence of national level government policies supporting disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, even if deficient or weakly implemented, can be seen to be important in opening up some space for advancement in these areas. Where government decision-making for development generally and disaster risk

management specifically has been decentralized, local authorities are often not given the necessary resources and capacity to implement DRR effectively.

As the research shows, the necessity to strengthen the capacity of local authorities is very evident. Local ‘enlightened’ leadership, where corruption issues are seen to be addressed and trust between stakeholders built, is also highly valuable. Building the capacity and technical expertise of local government authorities, and supporting ‘enlightened’ local leadership would reinforce the ability of local government authorities in other key areas, like participating in and supporting partnership forums with organised civil society groups.

Recommendation:

Donors and national governments should support capacity building and ongoing technical expertise for the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation within local development planning.

- Donors and national governments should allocate funding support for capacity building and the provision of technical expertise in local development planning processes.
- Partnerships between local government and civil society with a specific focus on capacity building on DRR and CCA should be encouraged and financially supported.

2) Partnerships between civil society and government are vital for effective DRR. The relationships and process-based approaches to DRR need to be valued as a core element of effective DRR.

There is a general emphasis on infrastructure over ‘soft’ measures and risk assessment as the basis of decision-making. For example, in the case of Peru, only infrastructure projects can be proposed as part of the participatory budgeting process, which obviously limits the potential to undertake other aspects relevant to DRR and CCA like the formation of networks. Amongst other shortcomings, this hinders the process-oriented benefits of partnerships such as in relation to transforming social relationships.

The case studies also all highlight the significant role played at the local level by INGOs, their country offices and their development partners. They are commonly filling gaps between local communities and the lowest tier of authority, such as in Nepal. From the research presented, such agencies appear to be a key catalyst for the creation of relationships and dialogue in meso-level partnerships.

Recommendation:

Donors, national governments and INGOs should strengthen partnerships between civil society and government by valuing relationships, partnerships and process-based approaches to DRR, as a core element of effective DRR.

- Donors should value the DRR activities that engage local government and civil society actors and should finance and support these activities.
- National government should support national level dialogue on DRR and

encourage local government and civil society relationships that strengthen local DRR activities.

- Local government should engage in and support relationships with civil society.
- Civil society organisations should be encouraged and supported to engage in relationship- building partnerships and incorporate these as part of their DRR projects and livelihoods work.

3) Local communities and civil society groups need to be supported to become organised so as to increase their collective voice in local development.

The benefits of meso-level partnerships that join civil society and government authorities together are very apparent in the case studies. Such partnerships offer opportunities for addressing the drivers of risk. Encouragingly the case studies emphasize that progress is being made, partnerships are valued and they are leading to demonstrable impacts.

The case studies included in this report highlight the importance of the governance context for opening up space where multi-stakeholder partnerships at the meso level can form. For example, in Afghanistan the governance is poor, and so the work with the authorities is driven by the DRR consortium – but this has its drawbacks as explained in the case study. In San Francisco Menendez, by way of an alternative example, the governance is strong and this has resulted in some useful collaborations between community groups, and the municipal authority. Through these partnerships civil society organisations, often representing vulnerable or marginalised groups, are better able to open up pathways to reduce the drivers of risk.

The case studies, including Afghanistan, also indicate that in the absence of a context of good governance, progress is still possible, but this has to be based on NGO interventions. However, the consequence of this is that uptake of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by local communities and authorities tend to be isolated and short-term. The challenge in the absence of good governance is to create momentum based on recognisable benefits and improved capacity among local stakeholders to sustain action and increase its scale.

This can be difficult when an INGO or one of its partners is providing the finance to accomplish the tasks in a way that undermines the ownership and accountability of DRR programmes to the local government. In such circumstances efforts must be made to ensure that local leadership and local government capacity are built through support to local level civil society and the partnerships with local government at this meso-level.

The research emphasises the importance of mobilising local communities. Only then can they be heard coherently, gain more power to encourage involvement and participation in local government processes and for government to listen to them. This was clearly the case in Peru. So this leads very clearly to the recommendations that successful DRR requires the support of multiple civil society actors as part of these meso-level partnerships.

Recommendation:

Donors and national governments should support local communities and civil society groups to become organized so as to increase their collective voice in local development.

- Donors and national governments should support local community organizations to coordinate themselves and build capacity on DRR and CCA. This support should be financial and political, in terms of valuing coordinated community groups and their role in DRR and development.
- National and local government authorities should ensure a clear role for local community organizations working with ‘at risk’ communities and on DRR in local development planning

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List of Annexes

Annex A: Acronyms

Annex B: Questionnaire template

Annex C: Field research