

Why Disaster Risk Reduction?

A case for the agriculture sector

Agriculture is perhaps the most disaster-sensitive sector. Communities that are dependent on agriculture are increasingly vulnerable to harvest losses, destroyed plantations, salinization, and loss of livestock due to disaster and disease. As sector that is heavily dependent on natural phenomena, largely uninsured and (in India) not technology driven, the agriculture can derive great benefit from even minimal investment in disaster preparedness. The magnitude of hazardous threats faced by this sector calls for a need to make agri-dependent communities even more aware than other communities about their risks and the ways they can reduce them.

What we can do to support agriculture to develop their Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies?

1. Identify the type, frequency and severity of potential disasters (disaster mapping). Community participation will ensure accuracy of local information.
2. Ensure appropriate crop selection (test and introduce new varieties, encourage the planting of drought/saline/flood resistant crops and quick-growing crops) and alternate farming with animal breeding. Agriculture and Veterinary colleges play an important role in research and pilot programs in this regard.
3. Improve cropping systems and cultivation methods (crop diversification, intercropping, adjustment of cropping calendars, soil conservation).
4. Help in developing contingency crop planning (changing of cropping patterns to match late/early rains, availability of seed of drought, flood, salinity tolerant crop varieties, famine reserve crops etc.), promoting non-farm activities.

5. Promote post-harvest management (storage, food drying, food processing) keeping in mind the disaster profile of the area. Community based and government/private sector supported initiatives such as grain banks, locally managed food-processing units and market linkages can help efficient preservation and distribution of farm products.
6. Encourage the development of water control infrastructure -rainwater harvesting; water conservation techniques; afforestation/reforestation and agro-forestry. Technical Institutions and NGOs may take initiatives with the community on water management.
7. Assess the role of agriculture, livestock, fishery and forestry line departments in disaster risk preparedness and linkages with other relevant institutions.
8. Hold trainings on developing specific infrastructural measures like raised seeds beds, check dams, wind breaks, fire breaks; proofing of storage facilities; soil erosion control structures, routine clearing of drainage system; seed and fodder reserves; drought resilient strategic water points and developing traditional coping mechanisms.
9. Help farmers link with risk sharing and transfer instruments like crop/ livestock/ fishery insurance, compensation and calamity funds, micro-credit and cash transfers;
10. Promote livelihood diversification. This can include small-scale enterprise development, introducing new farming activities (small-scale livestock, fish ponds, new crops of higher market value).
11. Disseminate and demonstrate good practices for disaster risk reduction from sectoral and cross-sectoral perspectives to increase the resilience of existing farming systems.

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A project Implemented by Project Concern International.
With support from Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance.
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