

Chair's Summary

Conference on Preparedness, Berlin 11 June 2013

The participants welcomed the “Principles and Recommendations on Preparedness” which were presented as the result of the discussions in a series of informal meetings and workshops in Geneva from 2011 to 2013. The participants considered the “Principles” as a useful tool for the future work and discussions which express their renewed commitment to strengthening preparedness even if not all participants necessarily endorse every single recommendation.

The key note speech by USG/ERC Valerie Amos as well as the presentations by speakers from various stakeholder groups highlighted examples of successful preparedness measures that saved lives and money, thus underscoring the urgent need for more and better preparedness in times when the capacities of the international humanitarian system have reached their limits. The presentations equally demonstrated the importance of national ownership, high-level political buy-in and the necessary focus on building capacities at the local level.

Using the “Principles and Recommendations on Preparedness” as a reference document, the participants discussed preparedness in five working groups and formulated a series of key messages:

- Preparedness should be positioned within the broader post- 2015 agenda (MDGs, SDGs, HFA II, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, World Humanitarian Summit) and put on the agenda of these different consultation streams. The “Principles and Recommendations” can serve as a guideline to provide inputs to ensure indispensable elements of preparedness (including risk assessment, risk management and humanitarian issues) are adequately reflected in these processes.
- The humanitarian-development divide has to be bridged by integrating preparedness activities into longer term development processes. Good practices like multi-year CAPS or innovative funding approaches such as insurance schemes should be adapted to other contexts.
- Risk assessment is of overriding importance. All actors need to consider all the risks, understand hazards, vulnerabilities and assess capacities. As a consequence, all programs have to be risk-informed. In this regard, access to risk information should be made public by all countries.
- Assessments should be carried out in a joint way, integrating communities and local governments, NGOs and Resident Coordinators at local level. The “Common Framework for Capacity Development for Preparedness” should therefore be agreed upon soon and supported by all stakeholders.

- Local problems and local risks require local solutions. Participation and ownership of local communities are indispensable for their implementation. Local and indigenous knowledge should be taken into consideration equally well as new technical solutions. Existing tools like seasonal forecasts or harvest mid- to long term forecasts should be made available for the local level. Root causes and underlying risk factors may not be forgotten.
- To the extent possible, the local level should be the starting point for prioritization and coordination of government and institutional activities. The cluster system needs to be linked to the local level, including linking the humanitarian funding mechanisms and the community level funding.
- Long term investments are needed to support local coping mechanisms. Stakeholders should invest more in building capacities at local and community level, with particular emphasis on local decision making.
- Resources, capacities and funding have to be commensurate with the assessed risks and necessary actions. There are still massive gaps in capacity and financial resources. Activities in disaster risk reduction and resilience should therefore be incentivized, e.g. by creating funding guidelines that stipulate the cooperation of stakeholders.
- Preparedness is advancing at the national level. However, innovations in funding for preparedness or stories of countries which made great progress are not well enough documented or not well enough known. Demonstration of results is of high importance: the more clearly results are articulated and reporting sharpened, the better donor counterparts, constituencies and agencies will be informed and be enabled to learn from good practices.
- Regional south-south and triangular cooperation, mainly between countries sharing risks of similar natures, has proven successful in many occasions for better capturing of good practices and transfers of technical knowledge; they should be further expanded.
- Mechanisms to ensure appropriate action upon early warning need to be put in place more systematically.
- The repercussions of climate change on preparedness should be discussed more in-depth. The same applies to the contribution people-centred social protection measures and engagement with the private sector can make to protecting livelihoods.
- Greater conceptual clarity around the notions of resilience, disaster risk reduction and preparedness is needed in order to arrive at a more collective risk management approach. However, these discussions should be led with a clear focus on facilitating concrete actions.

It became evident that a lot of important issues in the area of preparedness remain to be tackled. Preparedness being an issue that is not only of concern for donors or

humanitarian actors, a forum has to be identified where it can be dealt with best. In this regard, the chair proposed the establishment of a group of friends of preparedness that would embrace representatives of all interested stakeholders and expressed its willingness to actively work in such a group and play a prominent role, if this would be the wish of partners and stakeholders. After the summer break, the chair will approach stakeholders in Geneva respectively.