



Disaster Risk Reduction and the Post-2012 Framework

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Tearfund is a UK-based development agency. The following recommendations are based on our experience of working with communities and through partners in Latin America, Africa and Asia. This paper was produced in consultation with the Institute for Development Studies (IDS).

Disaster risk reduction (DRR)¹ and climate change adaptation have similar aims and mutual benefits. The relevance of DRR to the design and implementation of adaptation policies and measures cannot be over-emphasised. Climate change adaptation must build on and expand DRR, making use of the disaster risk management community's transferable, practical experience in addressing hazards, and building on existing policy frameworks such as the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, agreed by 168 governments in 2005.

1. DRR in the post-2012 framework

At UNFCCC COP 13 in December 2007, governments agreed that 'Enhanced action on adaptation' should include consideration of 'disaster reduction strategies' (see Section 1(c) in the Bali Action Plan). This formal recognition of the importance of disaster risk reduction for adaptation is highly welcome. Global climate change is increasing the risk of floods, droughts and severe storms², and if climate change adaptation policies and measures are to be efficient and effective they must build on and expand existing DRR efforts.

This paper is primarily aimed at governments negotiating on the post-2012 framework. Its purpose is to highlight the benefits of a more integrated approach to adaptation and DRR, and to increase the level of strategic coordination between climate change and DRR policy makers and experts. This could result in the following benefits:

- 1/ Reduction of climate-related losses, through more widespread implementation of DRR measures
- 2/ Increased effectiveness and sustainability of both adaptation and DRR approaches
- 3/ More efficient use of financial, human and natural resources.

2. Adaptation and DRR: similarities and differences

2.1 Similarities

Focus on hazards

Climate change adaptation and DRR have very similar aims in terms of seeking to build resilience in the face of hazards. They both aim to reduce people's vulnerability to hazards by improving methods to anticipate, resist, cope with and recover from their impact. In so doing, climate change adaptation clearly focuses on *climate-related hazards*, such as floods, droughts

¹ Disaster risk reduction is a preventative approach to disaster management that includes the technical, social or economic actions or measures used to reduce direct, indirect and intangible disaster losses.

² In its 4th Assessment Report, the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that rising global temperature will cause increasing drought in mid-latitudes and semi-arid low latitudes, hundreds of millions of people exposed to increased water stress, increased damage from storms, and millions more people experiencing coastal flooding each year.

and storms. The disaster risk management community has a long history of dealing with such events, and therefore a wealth of experience relevant to adaptation.

Mainstreaming

Both adaptation and DRR seek to build resilience to hazards in the context of sustainable development. Climate change adaptation requires the re-shaping and re-designing of development, social and economic practices to respond effectively to new or anticipated environmental changes. Likewise DRR seeks to influence development decision-making and protect development aspirations from environment-related risks. Both adaptation and DRR need to be ‘mainstreamed’ into national development plans, poverty reduction strategies and sectoral policies if these are to be sustainable.

Addressing root causes of risk

Poverty reduction and sustainable natural resource management are essential components of reducing vulnerability to climate change and hazards. Addressing poverty and underlying vulnerabilities is critical for effective climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Poverty and vulnerability are exacerbated by the interaction of a range of factors including globalization processes, demographic trends, economic development and trade patterns, urbanization, discrimination and limited local and national government capacity, all of which compound climate and disaster-related risk. In principle, both adaptation and DRR aims to address such macro-level influences. However, a shared challenge for the climate change and disaster risk management communities is ensuring that adaptation and DRR commonly addresses root causes of risk, not merely symptoms.

2.2. Differences

Time-scale

One of the essential differences between adaptation and DRR relates to a different perception of the nature and time-scale of the threat. DRR focuses on reducing foreseeable risks based on previous experience, whereas adaptation originates with environmental science predicting how climate change will be manifested in a particular region over a longer time period. Adaptation is therefore more dynamic and relies on affected populations having the capacity to evolve/make changes in response to changing climatic conditions. However, DRR is increasingly incorporating scientific advances and consequently is gaining a longer-term perspective. Indeed, it must, if DRR measures are to be sustainable in the face of climate change.

Exclusive elements

DRR expands beyond the remit of climate change adaptation, through addressing geological, technological and biological hazards. Similarly, adaptation moves outside the realm of most DRR experience, to address longer-term impacts of climatic change such as loss of biodiversity and spread of climate-sensitive disease. However, while adaptation and DRR do have some more exclusive elements, the majority of adaptation and DRR measures have mutual benefits, offsetting *both* climate and disaster-related risks.

3. Benefits of a joined-up approach

There are numerous benefits of adopting a more coordinated, integrated approach to climate change adaptation and DRR. These include:

Reduction in disaster losses

Risks associated with a changing climate are *additional* to an already fragile condition of disaster risk that has accumulated over many years, and continues to do so. Despite international plans of action (such as the Hyogo Framework for Action), global DRR measures are insufficient to address the scale of need. Climate change will ensure continued growth in disaster risks, combined with increased stresses on natural resources such as water and land. Closer collaboration between climate change and DRR policy makers and experts will help to reduce disaster losses, through more widespread implementation of DRR measures.

Increased effectiveness and sustainability

A lack of communication and collaboration between policy makers working on climate change and DRR can result in competing rather than complimentary agendas; complicated policy frameworks; missed opportunities for sharing tools, methodologies and approaches³ and missed opportunities for funding DRR in the context of the UNFCCC adaptation funds. Conversely, improved coordination will reduce administration burdens, make more efficient use of financial, human and natural resources, and, most importantly, increase the overall effectiveness and sustainability of efforts to address risk. It will also increase DRR policy makers' access to relevant climate information, and assist with its interpretation and application in DRR strategies and measures.

4. Recommendations

Climate change and DRR policy/decision makers and experts must communicate and collaborate with each other effectively to develop a comprehensive risk management approach to development at local, national, regional and international levels. Closer collaboration is particularly critical over the next two years as governments negotiate on adaptation under the UNFCCC. Governments have already agreed to build capacity '*for preventive measures, planning, preparedness and management of disasters relating to climate change*' (Decision 1/CP.10), and included DRR within the Bali Action Plan. Urgent action is now required to build on these agreements and develop the DRR aspects of the post-2012 framework. Governments negotiating under the UNFCCC should:

- Use the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) as a key reference point for current and post-2012 adaptation decisions, plans and programmes. (The HFA contains a set of goals, activity and policy measures related to DRR which are to be achieved by 2015).
- Ensure there is a strong focus on DRR within the adaptation pillar of the post-2012 framework, including an agreement to work with the disaster risk management community to ensure a joined-up approach to mainstreaming adaptation and DRR into development planning and programming
- Make DRR in the poorest, most vulnerable countries and communities a priority for funding through the Adaptation Fund and all new financing mechanisms established in the post-2012 framework
- Encourage on-going, systematic dialogue, information exchange and joint working between climate change and disaster reduction bodies, focal points and experts. This should include:
 - Mobilising DRR experts to work on adaptation and the post-2012 framework up to COP 15 and beyond
 - Hosting a workshop under the UNFCCC for climate change and DRR practitioners and experts to discuss synergies and joint working
 - Establishing inter-ministerial committees at national government level to ensure inter-sectoral, multi-stakeholder coordination
- Ensure adequate focus on the socio-economic and political dimensions of managing climate risks in consultation with the disaster risk management community; and ensure that adaptation is informed by successful community-based experiences in vulnerability reduction.

*For further information please contact Sarah La Trobe: sarah.latrobe@tearfund.org
Tel: +44 (0)20 8943 7962 Mob: +44 (0)7748156910*

³ For example, the DRR community has substantial, transferable experience in community-based approaches