



“Clouds but little rain...”

7000 people
48 countries
400 organisations
and counting...

By bringing together the views of over 7,000 local government officials, civil society organisations and community representatives from 48 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas, *Views from the Frontline (VFL)* is the largest independent, global assessment ever undertaken of disaster reduction at the local level.

With a wry but wise smile, Bishop Donald Mtetemala, a development worker for over 25 years and head of an East African development organisation, looked to the sky and explained:

“The people I work with every day see many clouds – international initiatives and plans, but very little rain – actual change at the frontline”.

This image sums up the challenge of turning the HFA into practical, sustainable activity at the frontline where people at-risk live, eat and work.

Six things people at the frontline are saying...

1. Nationally-formulated policies are not generating widespread systemic changes in local practices.
2. Resources are scarce and considered one of the main constraints to progress... but there are also resources at local level which remain untapped.
3. The foundation for building resilience is people’s awareness and understanding of the risks that they face.
4. Climate change provides an opportunity to address underlying risk factors, raise external resources and political commitment for building resilience.
5. Turning policy into practice requires finding the appropriate balance between top-down and bottom-up engagement.
6. VFL 2009 has proven itself as an important first step towards building a global constituency and architecture to measure the effectiveness of DRR policy interventions at the local level.

Views from the Frontline A local perspective of progress towards implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, June 2009

10 core recommendations emerging from the VFL findings:

1. Reorient HFA implementation strategies to support a proactive and systematic deepening of engagement with at-risk communities, including participation of most vulnerable groups.
2. Recognise the right of at-risk women, men and children to engage in decision-making and planning processes - participation must be clearly defined and explicitly recognised through policy, legal and institutional provisions.
3. Undertake participatory local hazard-vulnerability assessments and associated risk mapping as strategic entry points to raising critical awareness and understanding of risk and to building relationships among different actors. Set specific time-bound targets with clear responsibilities and delegated authority in support of these assessments. Teach children to do this too, using schools as important local centres for community action for disaster risk reduction.
4. Use local disaster risk knowledge to inform local programming and action planning of principal development sectors; risk considerations should become routine in all development investment planning and programming.
5. Decentralise authority and resources to appropriate administrative levels in support of local multi-stakeholder partnerships (including equitable representation from most vulnerable); to coordinate and manage risk reduction, poverty alleviation, development and climate adaptation policy execution.
6. Develop innovative financial strategies for supporting local level initiatives and partnerships, including direct local level access to disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation trust funds and technical resources.
7. Extend VFL's geographical coverage and modify indicator metrics to incorporate climate adaptation characteristics ahead of Global Platform-DRR 2011 as a means to independently audit disaster risk and climate adaptation progress.
8. Maximise the potential of existing traditional social networks and investigate potential of social networking and internet-based communications innovations as approaches to communicating and sharing information, raising critical awareness, building broad-based constituencies and coalitions, and mobilising social demand for DRR.
9. Invest in networks at all levels that improve the exchange of good practice and learning, promote civil society harmonisation and coordination, and foster dialogue and collaboration between state and non-state actors.
10. Carry out reform of the humanitarian response system, making it one committed to engaging with and strengthening local and national preparedness and response / recovery capacities, and one that bases programme interventions on assessments of people's own perceived priority needs in relation to their capacities and vulnerabilities

To read the VFL report, a summary version, online views, VFL country specific reports, and lots more see www.globalnetwork-dr.org