

# **Strengthening National and Local Response and Risk Management Capacity: Towards More Effective International Support and Investment**

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## **Problem Statement**

As seen in the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) Regional Consultations to date,<sup>i</sup> there is increasing consensus that in responding to mounting disaster risk and increasingly protracted conflicts and displacement it will be important to recognise the limitations of international humanitarian action, and to invest more in strengthening national and local response and disaster risk management (DRM) capacity. By national and local actors, this paper specifically refers to *national/State institutions*, including national disaster management authorities (NDMAs), line ministries and sub-national institutions and *local organisations*, specifically National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (hereafter, National Societies) and national non-governmental organisations (NNGOs).

Until now there has been a lack of robust evidence for policy makers on “what works?” in efforts to strengthen humanitarian response and DRM capacity at the national and local levels. This has resulted in international capacity-development assistance that tends to be fragmented, short-term and technically-oriented, and which places insufficient emphasis on issues such as integration, functional capacity and ownership, which are critical building blocks of sustainable DRM systems. Drawing on the findings of a major multi-country research programme, this paper sets out the emerging evidence on international support and investments in strengthening national and local response and risk management capacity, its policy implications for the WHS and the work needed to operationalise this important agenda through the development of practical recommendations and political commitments in the run up to Summit.

Developed as part of the work of the WHS Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risk Thematic Team and the Localising Preparedness and Response Working Group, this paper has been prepared to inform the second face-to-face meeting of the thematic teams in Bonn, Germany and the ALNAP Global Forum in New York, USA.

## **The Evidence**

This paper draws on a major two-year, six-country research programme on National and Local Capacity-Building for Disaster Risk Management,<sup>ii</sup> as well as programme learning, research and evidence syntheses from across the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (hereafter, Movement)<sup>iii</sup> and the wider humanitarian, DRM and development communities.<sup>iv</sup> Its preliminary findings highlight the following principles as essential to effective DRM capacity-development interventions:

- Flexibility and adaptability;
- Attention to comprehensive planning;
- Ownership and partnership;
- Interaction across scale and between actors;
- Attention to functional<sup>v</sup>, as opposed to solely technical, capacity-development; and
- Contribution to disaster resilience

Overall, the initial findings<sup>vi</sup> can be distilled into the following key points:

- There is still a predominant focus on preparedness and response, with less attention paid to developing capacity for risk reduction and even less on recovery
- Capacity-development is generally narrowly conceived of as the provision of equipment and training aimed at enhancing technical knowledge rather than developing functional capacity
- In contexts with weak or fragile governance and institutions there is a strong need for technical DRM know-how and acceptance of partial successes
- Practices on the ground often differ from established good practice, with capacity needs assessments not always done, particularly prior to project design
- The sustainability of capacity-development interventions is insufficiently addressed, with exit strategies and/or sustainability planning rarely done
- Gender is rarely considered
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) understanding is weak, with the focus typically on activities and output indicators, not outcomes or impact, whilst programmes are generally not externally evaluated
- Programmes are too short – typically only 1-2 years in duration

It should be noted here that in conflict situations the interventions that have been studied have not been targeted on or adapted to conflict-affected areas. Instead, the presence or absence of conflict is usually simply conceived of as a risk for or enabler of standard-type capacity-development interventions. International agencies are willing to work in these environments for humanitarian response (where there is a need to act in order to save lives and livelihoods), but, perhaps understandably, seem less willing to undertake DRM capacity-development work in such locations. Given projections of the increasing co-location of conflict and disasters, this poses challenging questions for the humanitarian community,<sup>vii</sup> with concomitant policy implications for the WHS.

### **Policy Implications and Potential Recommendations**

This evidence provides a useful starting point for developing recommendations for the WHS targeted at the international policy level. Building on this evidence, this section sets-out four key areas within which recommendation for the WHS on international support and investment may be developed. Within each area the key policy implications and related potential recommendations are detailed.

#### **1. *Developing a long-term strategic vision for national and local response and DRM systems:***

- With current international support and investments in national and local capacity fragmented, there is a need to better define a long-term vision of what a comprehensive and effective national response and DRM system in a given country would look like. This work should seek to build on recent efforts to develop locally-owned multi-stakeholder platforms for strengthening response and DRM coordination systems, operations, policies and laws, for example the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium (NRRC),<sup>viii</sup> amongst others. Such an approach enables integration across scales, coordination between actors and avoids fragmentation, facilitating a more inclusive humanitarian system whilst mitigating donor concerns around fragmentation and associated increases in transaction costs
- This vision should be holistic, focussing not just on preparedness, response and the reduction of existing risk, but also on capacity for preventing risk accumulation through

public and private investments, timely early response activities and large-scale sustainable recovery and reconstruction interventions

- In accordance with the principles of aid effectiveness (Paris 2005 and Busan 2011), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) (2015) and Good Humanitarian Donorship (2003), this vision should come from the State, as well as at-risk and affected communities and people themselves, represented, for example, by the National Society and civil society advocacy platforms. The CADRI Country Support Guidelines<sup>ix</sup> and the IFRC National Society Development Framework are important starting points here, although such planning should harness the efforts of agencies beyond the UN and Red Cross systems, particularly multilateral development banks, international NGOs and the private sector
- There is a need to reconcile understandings of humanitarian effectiveness with understandings of aid effectiveness – the humanitarian imperative to meet the needs of affected people now should not undermine the long-term vision. International efforts should seek to enable States to assume their responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of their populations through their own capacities, the auxiliary role of National Societies and the contribution of civil society and private sector actors, with coordinated supplementary support from international agencies where necessary
- International efforts should seek to mainstream activities into national development plans, pursue secondments into NDMAs and relevant government departments,<sup>x</sup> as well as local organisations, and only to augment national and local capacity in the response phase where necessary. Better understanding national and local capacities can not only ensure international assistance is relevant and of added-value but also helps to identify gaps in national DRM systems which require focused capacity-development support<sup>xi</sup>
- Learning from successes in development cooperation, there is also potential to embrace the language and approach of “systems strengthening” and/or “sector-wide approaches”, as well as learning from successes achieved through the use of applied or problem-driven political economy analysis<sup>xii</sup>

## **2. Developing dedicated capacity-strengthening expertise within the humanitarian sector:**

- It is important to highlight that capacity-strengthening is not the core function of most humanitarian agencies (spare the IFRC), yet is too large to development actors (particularly UNDP and the World Bank) alone
- Greater investment is therefore needed in capacity-development expertise in the humanitarian field, building on the work of IFRC, CADRI, the World Bank/GFDRR, the International Recovery Platform and recent civil society initiatives such as the START Network’s Disaster Emergencies and Preparedness Programme and the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, amongst others
- One specific focus of this should be M&E of DRM capacity-development, with future financing for programmes made contingent on capacity needs assessments, baselines and the set-up of robust M&E systems
- In-line with discussion of conflict situations above, greater attention is needed to differences in context, as specific knowledge and skills are required to support institutional development of response and DRM capacity in different regions, countries and crisis contexts, with varying levels of income and capacity and differing hazard profiles, including the presence or absence of violence or armed conflict

### **3. *Moving to longer-term and more flexible programmes focused on outcome-level results:***

- In 2003 the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative emphasised the need to ‘strengthen the capacity of affected countries and local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises’<sup>xiii</sup>. At present, however, international assistance for the capacity strengthening tends to be short-term and focussed on measuring activities and outputs related to the provision of technical training and workshops or physical equipment
- Instead, the evidence suggests that programmes need to focus on change at the outcome level, which will require longer-term and more flexible financing and programme approaches. New institutional capacity-development programmes should be 3-6 years duration at minimum, and not the currently prevailing 1-2 year duration. Financing should be tied to specific results at the outcome level
- Donors and international agencies should consider setting annual quantitative financing targets for national and local capacity-development, or allocating a percentage of each international humanitarian appeal to strengthening local preparedness and response capacity. Such a model could build on the recommendations put forward for such mechanisms at the regional level in the West and Central and East and Southern Africa regional consultations
- Cost-benefit analysis of different investment/programme models should be pursued by international agencies and donors to help make the economic case for longer-term, more flexible and strategic support<sup>xiv</sup>
- Beyond ODA, there is a need for national and local humanitarian actors to integrate financially into the emerging opportunities presented by private sector development and active citizenship. The experience of the Kenya Red Cross in the Kenyans for Kenya initiative, working with the local private sector to raise over USD 8.5m in response to the 2011 drought emergency<sup>xv</sup> is an example ripe for replication in similar contexts
- States and national institutions should also dedicate locally-mobilised revenues for national response and DRM systems-strengthening. By adequately resourcing domestic DRM institutions and avoiding excessive financial reliance on international donors, Governments will be poised to more fully steer humanitarian action within their territories

### **4. *Placing greater emphasis on functional capacity and sustainability***

- The sustainability of capacity-development interventions should be given much greater attention, with exit strategies considered a core component of all support
- Attention should be focussed on support for functional capacity, not as an end in itself but as a means to achieve (technical) humanitarian delivery. For example, to delivery effective cash transfer programmes or to strengthen institutional preparedness for response, training is unlikely to be enough. Efforts need to focus on leadership, management, internal communication and support systems such as finance and human resources
- There is a need for greater attention to perceptions which undermine support for national and local actors. Here, questions of financial transparency, integrity and accountability are critical. The challenge of corruption, including amongst national, local *and* international institutions, must be addressed more openly for systemic change to be made a reality

- While human resources are not the only issue, experience in the Philippines show the great value of establishing a cadre of DRM professionals nationally, as turnover is less of a problem when viewed at the system level
- Where robust national and local response and DRM capacities have been developed it is important that mechanisms are in place to sustain them, for example through national or regional deployment. Examples of success here include the Red Cross and Red Crescent National and Regional Disaster Response Teams (NDRTs and RDRTs) and the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) Emergency Response Teams.<sup>xvi</sup> Recommendations in this area should be linked to the planned research for the WHS on strengthening national and regional deployable capacities and the on-going IFRC Global Tools Review
- Finally, simply because a country has reached middle-income status it is not a reason for donors to move on and to only focus on low-income and/or conflict-affected states – the majority of the world’s poor live in these countries and there are significant pockets of cyclical and conflict-related vulnerability<sup>xvii</sup>

### **Developing and Verifying Recommendations**

The following consultations are proposed as a means to develop, hone and verify recommendations for the WHS on how to make the international humanitarian system more effective and enabling in its support for sustainable national and local response and DRM capacity. It is envisaged that these consultations and the resulting recommendations will be focussed around the four key areas of policy implications and potential recommendations set-out above.

- Discussion of this focus area, policy implications and recommendations at the WHS Thematic Teams Second Face-to-Face Meeting in Bonn from 21-23 April 2015
- Discussion of this focus area, policy implications and recommendations at the Global Forum for Improving Humanitarian Action in New York from in 4-5 June 2015
- Discussion of this focus area, policy implications and recommendations at the final Conversations that Matter series meeting, hosted by BRC, DFID and HPG in London on 8 July 2015
- Specific consultations with key stakeholders on this issue from the IFRC and National Societies, donors (DFID, CIDA and SIDA), UNDP, the World Bank and others, potentially hosted by IFRC in London, Geneva, New York and/or Washington D.C. (linked to the planned validation/dissemination meetings for the research programme)

### **Building Momentum**

It is important to start early the process of building political momentum to develop voluntary commitments that will help to make the recommendations a reality. To that end, some initial ideas on activities to support this process are set-out below:

- Initiate informal and formal discussions with donors, States and local organisations on their willingness and ability to take forward initiatives in the priority areas identified
- In run-up to Global Consultation, explore the potential for engagement or voluntary commitments on this agenda at the Summit by the Movement and other key stakeholders

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### **Notes**

<sup>i</sup> This emerging consensus was reflected in the Regional Consultations in West and Central Africa; North and South-East Asia; East and Southern Africa; and Europe and Others.

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<sup>ii</sup> This research project is managed by the IFRC, implemented by Oxford Policy Management and funded by the UK Department for International Development and the Governments of Canada and Sweden. The research programme includes a literature review, a global survey and financial analysis and six field-based case studies in Ethiopia, Pakistan, Myanmar, the Philippines, Haiti and Mozambique. Published reports are available at <http://preparecenter.org/resources/strategic-research-national-and-local-capacity-building-disaster-risk-management> (accessed on 26 March 2015).

<sup>iii</sup> In particular, this paper also draws on a meeting held at the British Red Cross, in partnership with HPG, on 27 January 2015 on 'Promoting National and Local Humanitarian Action in the World Humanitarian Summit', and a think piece developed for the Movement by HPG on the same theme – see Zyck, S. with Krebs, H. (forthcoming) *Localising humanitarianism: improving effectiveness through inclusive action* (London, Overseas Development Institute).

<sup>iv</sup> One study of particular importance here is Harkey, J. (2014) *Experiences of National Governments in Expanding Their Role in Humanitarian Preparedness and Response* (Somerville, MA, Feinstein International Center).

<sup>v</sup> Functional capacity includes general (non-technical) managerial skills; organizational systems and processes; incentives for staff performance and retention; and internal political conditions necessary to reinforce DRM as a priority. Guidance from multilateral agencies emphasises the importance of building the managerial and organisational capabilities needed to ensure effective decisions and actions can flow from technical know-how, see Few, R., Scott, Z. and Tarazona, M. (2014) *Strategic Research into National and Local Capacity-Building for Disaster Risk Management: Inception Report* (Oxford, Oxford Policy Management).

<sup>vi</sup> It should be noted that the research is still being conducted. These are preliminary findings in which the research team have a high degree of confidence from the case studies undertaken to date.

<sup>vii</sup> For example, the 11 countries most at risk of disaster-induced poverty are Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda, see Shepherd, A. et al. (2013) *The geography of poverty, disasters and climate extremes in 2030* (London, Overseas Development Institute).

<sup>viii</sup> For further information on the NRRC approach see NRRC (2012) 'The Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium', *Humanitarian Exchange*, 53, pp. 32-34 and Grunewald, F. and Carpenter, S. (2014) *Urban Preparedness: Lessons from the Kathmandu Valley* (London, British Red Cross).

<sup>ix</sup> See CADRI (2015) *Enhancing Country Level Capacity for Disaster Risk Reduction: Country Support Guidelines* (Geneva, CADRI).

<sup>x</sup> This is a recommendation shared with those under the urban cross-cutting area of the WHS.

<sup>xi</sup> There is potential to harness learning on this new way of working, what may be called humanitarian "interoperability", in the Asia Pacific Region. For example, OCHA and WFP are leading a preparedness initiative which seeks to better understand Government capacity and only to supplement this when there is a clear value-added of international assistance in terms of the speed, volume or standards and principles.

<sup>xii</sup> See Carpenter, S. 'Strengthening local humanitarian action: the case for a political economy approach', in IFRC (forthcoming) *World Disasters Report 2015: Local Actors at the Centre of Effective Humanitarian Action* (Geneva, IFRC).

<sup>xiii</sup> See 'Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship', Endorsed in Stockholm, 17 June 2003, available at <http://www.alnap.org/resource/10184> (accessed 31 March 2015).

<sup>xiv</sup> The value of such an approach has already been shown in relation to make the political argument for resilience and early response financing. For example, Cabot Venton, C. et al. (2012) *The Economics of Early Response and Disaster Resilience: Lessons from Kenya and Ethiopia* (London, Crown).

<sup>xv</sup> Zaidi, R., Carpenter, S. and Burke, J. (2012) *Commercial-Humanitarian Engagement in the Horn of Africa Crisis: A Scoping Study of the Response in Kenya and Somalia* (London, Humanitarian Futures Programme, King's College London).

<sup>xvi</sup> For further information on the PAHO Emergency Response Teams see [http://www.paho.org/disasters/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=644&Itemid=879&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/disasters/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=644&Itemid=879&lang=en) (accessed 31 March 2015).

<sup>xvii</sup> Sumner, A. (2012) 'Where do the poor live?', *World Development*, 40 (5), pp. 865-877 and Matheou, A. (2014) 'Better systems to address chronic crises', Devex blog, available at <https://www.devex.com/news/better-systems-to-address-chronic-crises-84201> (accessed 26 March 2015).