

NGO Group Statement to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Cancun, Mexico, 22-26 May 2017

It is 12 years since the first framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) was agreed. And after all this time, CSOs *once again* find ourselves calling for lessons to be learnt from the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), and for the global community to do things differently in order to see an actual improvement in the lives and livelihoods of local people.

We were happy to see that importance was placed on the inclusion and collaboration of local actors in the Sendai Framework. The role of civil society as a partner in resilience is mentioned 82 times across the post-2015 frameworks. We hoped to finally see risk reduction designed by those bearing that risk. But it has now been two years since the Sendai Framework was adopted, and we are still seeing a gap between policy rhetoric and realities on the ground. Local people are being excluded from decision-making processes at the local and national level, and very few representatives of civil society have been regarded as technical experts at the Regional Platforms for DRR.

In order for DRR strategies to be effective, stakeholder collaboration is crucial. If these strategies do not take into account the local realities - realities often best understood and communicated by local communities and civil society groups - and do not include the capacities and resources that local level actors can offer, they will likely fail to address the root causes of disaster risk and the everyday disasters that local communities face. Without systematic collaboration, DRR activities are likely to be maladaptive, ineffective, and an inefficient use of resources.

CSOs attending the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction - including community based organisations, national non-governmental organisations, faith based organisations, networks and INGOs - want to work with others towards the success of these DRR strategies and the other targets of the Sendai Framework, as well as the interrelated global agendas (including Agenda 2030, the commitments and outcomes from the World Humanitarian Summit, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the New Urban Agenda from Habitat III). We want to do this through an integrated, coherent and holistic approach. The expertise, skills, and connections developed by civil society play a crucial role in understanding local-level contexts.

CSO Commitments

Using these particular skills and connections, we CSOs have committed to the following actions in support of the design, implementation and monitoring of effective national and local DRR strategies before 2020:

- Support the building of overall resilience of communities, by implementing projects to reduce the underlying drivers of risk, small and everyday disasters, including livelihood diversification and health initiatives.
- Support the building of knowledge and capacity of local leaders and communities to monitor their own risk, in national and local governments and also make them aware of new risks such as sea level rise, glacial melt and ocean acidification as well as limits to climate change adaptation, in the view of rising temperatures and increasing impacts.
- Establish community-based early warning and communication systems at the local level, integrating traditional, indigenous, local and scientific knowledge, and linking them with various levels.

- Support the inclusion of most vulnerable groups such as women, youth and children, indigenous communities, those living with disabilities and the elderly are included in early warning and communication processes
- Support governments to define national and local targets and indicators that are locally appropriate and gender, age and disability sensitive.
- Collect and analyse local data on risk, disaggregated by location, sex, age, ethnicity, and disability, to support governments in their monitoring of progress.
- Promote and support, at the local level, formal and informal education on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and enhance the implementation of comprehensive school safety frameworks at the national and local levels.
- Support the institutionalisation of community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) through evaluation of enabling environments, knowledge exchange and trainings.
- Identify and create opportunities at local, national and regional levels to actively integrate disaster risk reduction with climate change adaptation and development programming and policy making processes. The ongoing National Adaptation Plan (NAP) development process is a clear opportunity for integration and ensuring coherence across the aforesaid streams.
- Support multi-sectoral coordination, including through collaborative workshops and best practice sharing, to ensure that communities receive integrated services such as ecosystem management, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction for more effective resilience strengthening.
- Work with national governments and regional institutions to promote cross-border cooperation and collaboration for issues concerning more than one country and develop ecosystem based risk reduction and adaptation solutions.
- Share good practice on the collaborative development of DRR policies, plans and actions. Is also important to disseminate and implement good practices related to DRR at the national and regional level.
- To play a broker role to ensure the realisation of well-functioning multi-stakeholder platforms that allow for common agenda setting and action.
- Support to local participatory disaster risk analysis, integration of risk reduction into development measures, and the inclusion of people's inputs in disaster risk governance at regional, national, local and global level.

Asks to governments and donors

In order to deliver these commitments, we ask all governments and partners to create and maintain a supportive institutional and political environment to facilitate the engagement of local people and actors, together with access to adequate means of implementation for local actions. We outline 10 specific ways that governments and donors can support this enabling environment by 2020 in relation to their institutional structures, capacities, regulatory framework, and financial arrangements.

Institutional structures

1. Collaboration with local actors in the design of policies and actions

Collaboration with, and leadership of, disproportionately at-risk groups (such as women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, older people, smallholder farmers, indigenous people, displaced people, migrants, and refugees) is essential if DRR strategies are to be effective and value for money. Inclusion must be addressed as a cross-cutting issue, and policies and systems must therefore be accessible to all, prioritising specific needs to address the inequality and particular challenges facing the most disadvantaged groups.

2. Establish systematic partnerships with civil society organisations

CSOs have expertise and trust at the local level and can contribute with complementary knowledge, connections, resources and capacities to increase the frontline impact of the SFDRR. States should create the space and mechanisms for a greater partnership with CSOs in strengthening and informing policy and planning processes.

3. Establish inclusive platforms for meaningful multi-stakeholder dialogue at all levels

Inclusive platforms are critical to implement a bottom-up approach to move from plans to actions. Such platforms allow for meaningful dialogue among public and private sectors, and contributions from all perspectives – among them CSOs specifically devoted to work at the local level, including women's organisations. CSOs must have a permanent seat in these platforms, and the platforms must be used systematically to inform new resilience-related decisions and plans.

4. Invest in CSO networks to enhance south-south cooperation

Regional organisations and networks can play a valuable role as facilitators of knowledge sharing, innovation exchange, promoting cross-border collaboration and building capacity for action. The involvement of CSOs in south-south cooperation and cross-border engagement can lead to greater collective outcomes. National and regional civil society and other networks should be strengthened, reproducing and building on existing best practices from the region.

5. Align sectoral activities, targets and budgets

On the ground, problems are diverse and interlinked and communities do not perceive or experience individual threats in isolation. At global, national and local level we often observe disasters, development and conflict being addressed by different institutions, following detached frameworks, and with separate budgets. This siloed approach means that people mandated to reduce disaster impacts often do not collaborate, or are in competition, with those addressing the development issues that are exacerbating disasters. There is a need to make inter-sectoral personnel links, align activities, targets and budgets, and build bridges between the diversity of local actors required for effective DRR. Further, this coherence between DRR, disaster response, climate change adaptation (CCA) and other development processes should be incentivised. Vulnerability needs to be tackled by identifying the new drivers for risk in a more holistic approach for all types of threat, from nuclear disasters to everyday recurrent disasters.

6. Establish a Global UNISDR Civil Society Advisory Group

UNISDR must model the multi-stakeholder collaboration outlined in the SFDRR. It has yet to develop a Civil Society Advisory Group, despite having a well-established Business Advisory Group and Science and Technology Advisory Group. The proposed Advisory Group should be formed of civil society representatives from different regions, contexts and sectors. It should be systematically consulted in the development of priorities and actions, and can be tasked to develop collaborative capacity building programmes and guides.

Capacities

7. Promote and build local leadership, including the delegation of financial and monitoring responsibilities

Promote inclusive and coordinated multi-level governance across vertical and horizontal boundaries to empower and build the capacities of local communities, authorities, civil society actors and at-risk households. This should include strengthening the capacities of local government and local communities, especially women, to manage their own local DRR plans and budgets.

8. Utilise local information

Local knowledge should underpin decision-making and inform actions within DRR strategies. Approaches to integration and mainstreaming of DRR and CCA into development must be guided by research including local and scientific knowledge. Countries must build and make evidence bases easily accessible, including land-use planning and ecosystem based mapping of vulnerabilities. This must include the protection of cultural and indigenous heritage to safeguard the collective memory of communities. The government must recognise the role of the trained grassroots in issues related to DRR to prevent disasters.

Resource and financial arrangements

9. Localise DRR funding

Equitable implementation of the Sendai Framework at all levels will require comprehensive budgeting and allocations for funds at the local level. We call on States and partners to ensure that DRR activities are consistently and predictably financed and integrated into all development and humanitarian

programs at the local level. Operational procedures to release funds for DRR must also be significantly simplified and localized to ensure that they meet local needs in a timely fashion.

Legal and regulatory framework

10. Create accountability mechanisms to ensure civil society collaboration

Governments should strengthen national and sub-national DRR compliance and enforcement mechanisms, in collaboration with CSOs and local communities.

DRR strategies must contain transparent and institutionalised accountability mechanisms that ensure effective citizen participation. The rights of at-risk women, men, children and youth to participate meaningfully should be explicitly recognised in regulatory frameworks.

Government responsibilities and liabilities for the protection of citizens from preventable disasters must be established as a legal obligation across all countries and beyond borders under existing human rights law. We urge national governments to adopt a rights-based approach to DRR, including by recognizing and implementing procedural rights such as rights to non-discrimination, information, participation, and remedy/redress.