



DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

POSITION PAPER

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL - NOVEMBER 2011

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ADOPTED BY THE BOARD (SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE) ON 28.11.2011

ACRONYMS

CRED	Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
DIPECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid department Disaster Preparedness Program
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
EC	European Commission
EM-DAT	Emergency Events Database
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MDG	Millennium development goals
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SI	SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods approach
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
WASH	Water, Hygiene and Sanitation

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

OF THE POSITION

PAPER



1

The world population is now 7 billion people and most of this population increase is taking place in developing countries, and in urban areas. Combined with the world demographic increase, climate change will have major consequences on the world population, in particular in the developing countries. Indeed, with 60 megacities (more than 10 million people) expected by 2015, we can forecast major humanitarian crises in term of impact and casualties (food insecurity, epidemic outbreaks or major natural disasters).

In 2011, 94% of disaster related deaths are now occurring in developing countries. Indeed, according to the data from the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED)¹, the number of people in developing countries affected by climate-related disasters has grown from less than 50 million in 1975-1979 to more than 250 million in 2000-2004. With the earthquake in Haiti, the Russian heat wave and the floods in Pakistan, 2010 proved to be the deadliest year for natural disasters in more than two decades. In 2010, according to the CRED, some 373 natural disasters killed over 296,800, affected nearly 208 million and cost nearly USD 110 billion. The related effects of Climate change will continue to have a significant effect on the type of humanitarian crises encountered across the world.

Moreover, it is widely recognized that more women than men die as the direct and indirect result of natural disasters. According to the conclusions of the report published by the Women's Environmental Network and titled Gender and the Climate Change Agenda²: *"Globally, women are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to different and unequal social roles and status"* and *"that women contribute less to climate change, are impacted*

more by it, and have less say in decisions about the problem."

It is now acknowledged that the world's climate is changing at a very rapid pace. Current predictions suggest that natural hazards – many of which are climate related – are expected to increase both in scale, frequency and severity in the coming decades. By 2015 already, the number of people affected by climate-related hazards is projected to rise by 54% to 375 million people. In its fourth Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)³ projected that rising global temperature would lead to increased risk of drought in mid-latitudes and semi-arid latitudes, increased water stress in many parts of the world, and increased damage from hydro meteorological events (like storms and coastal flooding), affecting millions more people each year.

Moreover, climate change will lead to an increase in the size of large-scale natural disasters combined with larger and more concentrated populations. Weather-related natural disasters such as cyclones are likely to become more severe and frequent. Consequently, extreme events such as Cyclone Nargis, which devastated the Irrawaddy Delta of Myanmar in 2008, killing more than 100,000 people or the floods in Pakistan (summer 2010), are likely to increase. Last but not least, one of the acknowledged effects of climate change is an increase in the frequency of small and medium-sized disasters, with smaller-scale floods and droughts happening more often and affecting more people. Droughts in the Horn of Africa, for example, have already increased in frequency from being "semi-regular" – every few years – to become almost annual in certain countries, with disastrous consequences such as the famine in 2011.

1 - EM-DAT, the OFDA/CRED emergency events database maintained by the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters

2 - Women's Environmental Network, The Climate Change Agenda, The impacts of climate change on women and public policy, April 2010.

3 - Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K. and Reisinger, A. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland.

The main objective of mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL' programs is to reduce the burden of disasters on the most vulnerable and strengthen communities' capacities to cope with risks.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL recognizes that disasters exacerbate poverty and hunger by destroying housing, crops, food stock, savings and infrastructure. Disasters further marginalize the poor by destroying their productive assets and resulting in the loss of income from regular activities. Taking into account this context, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is strongly committed to increasing the DRR focus of its interventions in order to maximize and protect program impacts.

This paper sets out SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL objectives and priorities on DRR, its importance in the humanitarian framework of analysis and its relevance to SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL global approach and strategy. The DRR position paper of SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL has been designed taking into account the larger framework of the Climate Change adaptation imperatives and the Disaster Risk management framework which encompasses different risks including climate change adaptation, social protection, under-nutrition...

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL MANDATE AND VALUES



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SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL was established as an NGO in 1980. In 2011, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is carrying out around 90 humanitarian aid projects in 15 countries worldwide.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL'S aim is to provide humanitarian aid and to act through actions of solidarity, to population threatened by war or by political, ethnic, economic or any other kind of oppression [Article 1 of SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL'S Charter]⁴.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL overall objective can be summarized as follows: « **To respond to the essential needs of populations facing an acute crisis – whether of human or natural origin – and to build and reinforce their capacity to sustainably recover from such shocks, in particular in the fields of Water, Sanitation, Hygiene, Food Security and Livelihood.** »

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL intervenes with complete respect of the cultural identity and dignity of each individual [Article 5 of the Charter].

Moreover, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL activities are in line with the scope of the humanitarian framework as defined in International Humanitarian Law and in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

Above all, the humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, impartiality, and neutrality are inherent in all actions.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL vocation is to:

- I **[DRINK]** Prevent and respond to water borne diseases & provide water of a good quality and in sufficient quantity to the most vulnerable populations,
- II **[EAT]** Increase food security and secure livelihoods of vulnerable populations,
- III **[SHELTER]** Support reconstruction in post-crisis environments.

In all cases, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL programs aim to allow the beneficiaries to meet their basic needs and to develop and sustain their livelihoods as early as possible.

Generally speaking, the following are the criteria which initiate a SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL' response:

- The lives and/or health of the population are threatened
- The local authorities cannot meet the vital needs of the population and aid is insufficient
- The crisis or succession of crisis negatively affects the coping strategies put in place of the communities to the point that the sustainability of their livelihoods is threatened.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL' intervention intends to go beyond the traditional emergency/relief approach in addressing the roots of vulnerability. In order to broaden its operational strategy and have a more comprehensive approach SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL uses the livelihood framework⁵ to address food security issues and increase DRR interventions in the coming years.



4 - See Charter of SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL on www.solidarites.org

5 - According to P.H. Barret "Thinking about food security has advanced from a first generation focus on aggregate food availability – the supply side – through a second generation emphasizing individual- and household-level access to food – introducing the demand side – toward a nascent third generation conceptualization that places food security in a broader framework of individual behavior in the face of uncertainty, irreversibility, and binding constraints on choice."

DEFINING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



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3.1 DEFINITION AND CORE CONCEPTS

At the global level, the DRR approach has shifted from a mainly reactive approach to disaster mitigation to a new paradigm based on a more comprehensive approach that includes preventive measures, mainly aimed at reducing the likelihood that a natural hazard translates into a disaster.

In this document DRR will be considered within the global framework of the Climate change. However, we will also address disasters that have no direct links with the climate change (e.g.: earthquake). Disaster risk reduction refers to activities that aim to limit the negative impacts of natural hazards. They either reduce the likelihood of a disaster occurring (through things like flood protection mechanisms, livelihood diversification, safe building practices), or strengthen a community's ability to respond and cope with a disaster.

Disaster Risk reduction can be defined as follow: *“The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyze and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events (UNISDR, 2009)”*

DRR activities fall under three commonly agreed categories, namely preparedness,

mitigation and prevention that can be defined as follows:

- **PREPAREDNESS:** The knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions.
- **MITIGATION:** The lessening or limitation of the adverse impacts of hazards and related disasters.
- **PREVENTION:** The outright avoidance of adverse impacts of hazards and related disasters.

Both Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and Climate change adaptation (CCA) focus on reducing people's vulnerability to hazards. This is done by improving methods to anticipate, resist, cope with and recover from the impact of hazards. CCA considers the consequences of permanent change in climate and its longer-term consequences while DRR focuses on providing a set of practices and tools to help the communities cope with an extreme event. CCA concentrates on climate-related hazards, whereas DRR also addresses other types of hazards like the risks associated with geophysical hazards such as earthquakes and volcanoes.

3.2 DRR WITHIN THE HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Disasters do not just happen, they are a result of failures of development processes which increase vulnerability and reduce coping capacities, constraining livelihoods and economics further in a downward spiral. Disasters cause deaths, injuries and displacements. They increase vulnerabilities and impact negatively people's livelihoods and capacity of resilience.

Therefore, DRR is a cross cutting issue and falls both in the humanitarian agenda (protecting and saving lives) and the development agenda (protecting livelihoods and reduce disruption). It is now widely recognized that unless more determined efforts are made to address the loss of lives, livelihoods and infrastructure, disasters will become an increasingly serious obstacle to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (especially MDG 1).

International DRR efforts are guided by the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) – adopted in 2005 by 168 governments – which emphasizes the importance of DRR in the context of climate change and calls on

countries to work for integrated DRR measures through five “Priorities for Action”⁶ (ISDR, 2007).

The Framework offers guiding principles, priorities for action, and practical means for achieving disaster resilience for vulnerable communities. Its priorities for action include:

- Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.
- Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.
- Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.
- Reduce the underlying risk factors.
- Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

Moreover, disaster preparedness has a central place in the 23 principles for Good Humanitarian Donorship agreed in 2003 in Stockholm by leading humanitarian donors.

6 - According to the Hyogo Framework, DRR is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation; identify, assess and monitor disaster risks, and enhance early warning; use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels; reduce underlying risk factors; and strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

WHY
IS SOLIDARITÉS
INTERNATIONAL
COMMITTED
TO DRR?

4

4.1 DRR IS ABOUT SAVING LIVES

As a humanitarian organization, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is particularly sensitive to the fact that the number of people in need of life saving assistance from humanitarian organizations is predicted to grow considerably in the coming years. Those who suffer most are the poorest in risk-prone countries. These people often lack the resources to adapt or cope with the increasing numbers of disasters. Hence, taking into account the capacities

or difficulties of responsible authorities to address the issue, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is committed to strengthening DRR approaches in its intervention' framework. The linkages between natural disaster and increasing vulnerabilities are increasingly known. Consequently, it would be unethical to wait for a disaster to happen and generate suffering to trigger an emergency response.

4.2 INVESTING IN DRR INCREASES IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL has always put a strong emphasis on the sustainability of its projects, and from the earliest stage of its humanitarian responses, intends to create the conditions for a successful transition from emergency to early recovery, rehabilitation and development. In this perspective, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL naturally encompasses DRR in its approaches.

Investing in DRR pays off⁷; studies suggest benefits in terms of prevented or reduced disaster impacts of two to four dollars for each dollar invested in DRR.

When hit by a disaster, prepared communities, with reduced vulnerability and strengthened coping capacity, would lose much less lives & properties, but responses would also be much more efficient. The first humanitarian response to any disaster and to many extents the one that primarily "saves lives" is the response

by the community itself. A DRR-prepared community would develop a much more acute primary response, while fostering the external response and making it more efficient. For SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL, it would thus ensure a larger impact of its interventions.

Further to this, there is a real cycle whereby future risks would be mitigated by incorporating the concept of risk reduction into the recovery efforts that are in fact a large part of what is done under the heading of humanitarian action. For these reasons, DRR interventions should not replace emergency responses when needed, but need to be developed alongside emergency responses and within emergency responses whenever possible. For SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL, mainstreaming DRR this way is a guarantee to increase the sustainability of its action.

7 - According to the "EU strategy for supporting disaster risk reduction in developing countries", Feb.23, 2009: "Studies suggest benefits in term of prevented or reduced disaster impacts of two to four dollars for each dollar invested in DRR."

4.3 NATURAL DISASTERS CAN CAUSE OR FUEL CONFLICTS

Slow-onset disasters such as drought may trigger conflicts related to natural resources. Conflict may trigger displacement, and displacement may trigger additional conflict. There are several vicious

circles. In several places, climate change and degradation of land contribute to urbanization, growing slums and increased competition for resources in cities.

4.4 DECREASE HUMAN DISPLACEMENTS

Human displacement is considered as a main factor of vulnerability in the coming years. Sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters can be a direct cause of displacement. According to OCHA⁸, in 2008, approximately 20 million people were displaced by climate related sudden-onset

disasters, such as floods and storms, while 4.6 million people were displaced by conflicts. Moreover, according to the International Organization for Migration, environment degradation should cause the displacement of 200 million of people by 2050.

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8 - "Natural disasters and forced displacement in the context of climate change"

PROMOTING A HUMANITARIAN VISION OF DRR



5

5.1 COMMITMENTS

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL acknowledges the importance of an integrated DRR approach which encompasses (I) an emergency response to save lives in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, and (II) a longer term approach to strengthen livelihoods of disaster affected population through optimization of existing coping mechanisms and the promotion of adequate livelihoods.

While SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL'S rationale for intervention in a given area will always be linked to its mandate and to the initial response to a shock, DRR is integrated into SI programs as mainstreamed or stand-alone action depending on the context and population needs.

DRR policy will be implemented through an operational framework based on 4 main principles presented thereafter.

5.2 OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES

Projects are based on the livelihood framework approach

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is committed to taking a livelihood approach to food security, meaning that we not only focus on saving lives but also on strengthening livelihoods on the long term. The livelihood framework approach highlights the assets upon which livelihoods depend. It also highlights the interaction between the vulnerability context and people's abilities to secure these assets. Using a livelihood framework increases the opportunities to protect people's assets and give them the opportunity to diversify their options in a sustainable manner.

Projects are based on risks, vulnerabilities and capacities assessments

Risk and vulnerability assessment is at the core of the general assessments process. It aims at identifying the risks to communities and the traditional ways people overcome those risks. The process involves

hazard assessment, vulnerability assessment and capacity assessment. During assessment, people's perception of risk is considered, together with an analysis of the coping strategies developed by the population.

Community based approach

There is growing evidence to show that most top-down disaster risk management programs fail to address specific local needs of vulnerable communities, ignore the potential of local resources and capacities, and may in some cases even increase people's vulnerability.

In order to have a comprehensive view of household vulnerabilities and capacities, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL teams analyze the current living situation at village and household levels, using the livelihood approach. SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL approach is people-centered, multilevel, dynamic, and ultimately aims to achieve sustainable livelihoods.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL does not have a unique framework to investigating

vulnerability and local capacities. Vulnerabilities differ depending on the type of hazard and how they change over time. In the field, assessment teams use tools developed by SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE or other agencies and research institutes. Assessment tools are required to address a set of key questions (including DRR related questions) to be answered during the assessment and monitoring phases.

Contingency planning

Ready-prepared contingency proposals are ready, so that there are plans and budgets in place for ensuring that livelihoods activities can be supported during and after disaster episodes. This may include planning for additional short-term staff as well as prepositioned stocks.

APPENDIX

ISDR TERMINOLOGY

All these definitions were taken directly from the ISDR Terminology web page:
www.unisdr.org/eng/library/lib-terminology-eng%20home.htm

CAPACITY

A combination of all the strengths and resources available within a community, society or organization that can reduce the level of risk, or the effects of a disaster. Capacity may include physical, institutional, social or economic means as well as skilled personal or collective attributes such as leadership and management. Capacity may also be described as capability.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The climate of a place or region is changed if over an extended period (typically decades or longer) there is a statistically significant change in measurements of either the mean state or variability of the climate for that place or region.

Changes in climate may be due to natural processes or to persistent anthropogenic changes in atmosphere or in land use. Note that the definition of climate change used in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is more restricted, as it includes only those changes which are attributable directly or indirectly to human activity.

COPING CAPACITY

The means by which people or organizations use available resources and abilities to face adverse consequences that could lead to a disaster. In general, this involves managing resources, both in normal times as well as during crises or adverse conditions. The strengthening of coping capacities usually builds resilience to withstand the effects of natural and human-induced hazards.

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

The systematic process of using administrative decisions, organization, operational skills and capacities to implement policies, strategies and coping capacities of the society and communities to lessen the impacts of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters. This comprises all forms of activities, including structural and non-structural measures to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) adverse effects of hazards

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The conceptual framework of elements considered with the possibilities to minimize vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society, to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development. The DRR framework is composed of the following fields of action, as described in ISDR's publication 2002 "Living with Risk: a global review of disaster reduction initiatives"

- Risk awareness and assessment including hazard analysis and vulnerability/capacity analysis; Knowledge development including education, training, research and information;
- Public commitment and institutional frameworks, including organizational, policy, legislation and community action;
- Application of measures including environmental management, land-use and urban planning, protection of critical facilities, application of science and technology, partnership and networking, and financial instruments;

EARLY WARNING

The provision of timely and effective information, through identified institutions, that allows individuals exposed to a hazard to take action to avoid or reduce their risk and prepare for an effective response.

EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

Include a chain of concerns, namely: understanding and mapping the hazard; monitoring and forecasting impending events; processing and disseminating understandable warnings to political authorities and the population, and undertaking appropriate and timely actions in response to the warnings.

MITIGATION

Structural and non-structural measures undertaken to limit the adverse impact of natural hazards, environmental degradation and technological hazards.

NATURAL HAZARDS

Natural processes or phenomena occurring in the biosphere that may constitute a damaging event. Natural hazards can be classified by origin namely: geological, hydro meteorological or biological. Hazardous events can vary in magnitude or intensity, frequency, duration, area of extent, speed of onset, spatial dispersion and temporal spacing.

PREPAREDNESS

Activities and measures taken in advance to ensure effective response to the impact of hazards, including the issuance of timely and effective early warnings and the temporary evacuation of people and property from threatened locations.

PREVENTION

Activities to provide outright avoidance of the adverse impact of hazards and means to minimize related environmental, technological and biological disasters. Depending on social and technical feasibility and cost/benefit considerations, investing in preventive measures is justified in areas frequently affected by disasters. In the context of public awareness and Education, related to disaster risk reduction changing attitudes and behavior contribute to promoting a “culture of prevention”.

RELIEF / RESPONSE

The provision of assistance or intervention during or immediately after a disaster to meet the life preservation and basic subsistence needs of those people affected. It can be of an immediate, short-term, or protracted duration.

RESILIENCE / RESILIENT

The capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. This is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organizing itself to increase its capacity for learning from past disasters for better future protection and to improve risk reduction measures.

RISK

The probability of harmful consequences, or expected losses (deaths, injuries, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions. Conventionally risk is expressed by the notation

RISK = HAZARDS X VULNERABILITY / CAPACITY

Beyond expressing a possibility of physical harm, it is crucial to recognize that risks are inherent or can be created or exist within social systems. It is important to consider the social contexts in which risks occur and that people therefore do not necessarily share the same perceptions of risk and their underlying causes.

RISK ASSESSMENT/ANALYSIS

A methodology to determine the nature and extent of risk by analyzing potential hazards and evaluating existing conditions of vulnerability that could pose a potential threat or harm to people, property, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend. The process of conducting a risk assessment is based on a review

of both the technical features of hazards such as their location, intensity, frequency and probability; and also the analysis of the physical, social, economic and environmental dimensions of vulnerability and exposure, while taking particular account of the coping capabilities pertinent to the risk scenarios.

VULNERABILITY

The conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards. For positive factors, which increase the ability of people to cope with hazards, see definition of capacity.



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