

Inclusion and empowerment of at risk groups in reducing disaster risk¹

Submission by a multiple-interest group, following a dedicated event to review how inclusion and empowerment of at risk groups is featured in the Post-2015 Framework for DRR.²

Preamble

The need for inclusive disaster risk reduction (DRR) is not new; it has been highlighted in the Yokohama Strategy, the HFA and now in the post-2015 framework for DRR. In order to ensure the implementation of the post-2015 framework for DRR is inclusive, however, it is essential that critical successes of the past are recognised and built upon. The zero draft of the post-2015 framework for DRR explicitly promotes the integration of a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective in DRR. There is also greater recognition of the need to tailor activities to the ‘needs of users, including social and cultural requirements’. Nevertheless, it still misses language and requirements that would help create and enforce stronger accountability for action on social inclusion and adequate attention to social vulnerability and capacities (including within the monitoring process).ⁱ

- The group wants an ambitious and achievable agreement, and is concerned that the current process and quality of the current draft will not meet ambitions.
- The group calls for the disaggregation of disempowering labels such as ‘vulnerability’. In this statement we are referring to vulnerable groups using the term ‘at risk’, in order to highlight the existing knowledge, skills and other capacities of these groups, rather than solely seeing them as victims. Those who are most at risk are vulnerable to disaster risks not because of their biological characteristics but because they live in a society and structure that does not protect them or help them cope with or adapt to disasters. We would also like to include the caveat that the term ‘at risk’ should not be misunderstood to mean exposed or solely refer to those living in at risk locations.
- In order to ensure that the draft does not mask vulnerability through catch-all terms, definitions of at risk groups could be reinforced through a glossary that refers to specific people, more vulnerable on the basis of their gender, age, disability, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation and other factors that may marginalise them.
- The framework should highlight that we live in a dynamic world with evolving disaster risks due to urbanization, ageing, climate change and evolving technology and knowledge. The framework must address and be reactive to these trends to mitigate future risks.
- Poverty is not sufficiently highlighted in the draft, as a driver of vulnerability and, potentially, of risk accumulation. Risk reduction may not change poverty levels but at times could exacerbate poverty: there is not a linear correlation between the two.
- At risk groups at the grassroots level should be enabled and supported to speak for themselves. Resources and commitments need to be made at the local government level to support and work with different stakeholders and at risk groups to ensure inclusive DRR. Funding must support social inclusion (including learning across stakeholders); and help develop an enabling environment for participation (including the allocation of resources to civil society organisations and grassroots groups to participate directly).

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² During the ODI/CDKN event, panel members and 150 participants (both online and in person) drafted a set of recommendations for the post-2015 framework for DRR in terms of what needs to be retained in the zero draft, and how the zero draft can be strengthened.

- The draft is not clear how inclusivity is going to be operationalised, promoted, accounted for, and by whom?ⁱⁱ There also needs to be greater accountability to at risk groups in fragile and conflict affected states, including the allocation of resources to civil society and grassroots organisations.
- There needs to be a clear operational framework and also a clear mandate between UN agencies and INGOs in terms of who does what. The draft should also outline the roles, responsibilities, liabilities and accountabilities of ALL actors, not just agencies in the post-2015 framework for DRR.
- Setting up targets and indicators on social inclusion is crucial to help monitor how well societies perform and how resilient they can be. The draft needs to clarify who is responsible for developing monitoring mechanisms, for undertaking the review and who will be accountable for achieving progress against targets. Programmes should incorporate inclusivity markers, similar to the ECHO 'resilience marker'. Interested parties in this group could provide technical inputs and support member states to help design systems to support this type of data collection – for instance GNDR's Frontline work on data collection methodologies.
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be in place and functioning, including at the local level (so that local realities are reflected). Participatory monitoring would allow local people the opportunity to express their own experiences, knowledge and priorities, such as in GNDR's 'Frontline', in addition to consulting them on externally defined indicators. This data then needs to be disaggregated across these groups.
- The draft needs to ensure that all new investments are contingent on the outcome of a full health/environmental/risk impact assessment (statutory or voluntary), which also analyses the impact on different at risk groups and their needs.
- Coherence between key international agreements is vital to reducing disaster risk/losses. This coherence should be expressed in the form of aligned targets, timelines, strategies, actions, means of implementation and monitoring and evaluation; this will help implementation and monitoring burden at various levels.
- The frameworks should be accessible to all (available in non-national languages, braille, child-friendly versions and so on). These should be communicated widely, in a way that is sensitive to local needs and addresses changing and emerging risks.

	What we want to retain in the zero draft	How should the zero draft be strengthened?	Reason
Para. 6	Commitment that DRR practices need to be 'multi-hazard based, inclusive and accessible'; and the recognition of 'engagement of all stakeholders and the participation of women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners, and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards'.	'... It is necessary to ensure {insert} <i>and facilitate</i> the engagement of all stakeholders and the participation of women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples {insert} <i>ethnic groups, displaced populations and refugees</i> , volunteers, the community of practitioners, and older persons {insert} <i>and others appropriate to the context</i> in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards'.	It is essential that DRR practices help facilitate the engagement of all stakeholders.
Para. 10; Para. 12; Para. 19; Para. 27; Priority 3	Recognition of the need to 'invest in economic, social, cultural and environmental resilience; and that <i>economic, social, cultural, and environmental</i> measures are needed to address exposure and vulnerability, and strengthen resilience.	'...economic, social, cultural, {insert} <i>political</i> and environmental...'	Political issues such as decentralisation and devolution, accountability and transparency in budgeting and funding as well as political structures such as means for local people to participate in decisions over safety and DRR programming are also means to address exposure

			and vulnerability, and strengthen resilience.
Para. 13		Para. 13 all targets should be disaggregated by gender, age, disability and ethnicity.	
Para. 15(b)	Focus on 'protecting persons, their property, livelihoods and productive assets, while respecting their human rights'.	'... be aimed at protecting persons, their property, livelihoods, productive assets {insert} and welfare (encompassing education, health, protection), while respecting their human rights'.	Welfare needs to be included here, including education, health and protection.
Para. 15(d/e)	Recognition of leadership and empowerment of those recognised as vulnerable, and 'all-of-society engagement and empowerment, equality, and inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, paying special attention to at-risk groups in line with internationally agreed human rights'. Recognition that a 'gender, age, disability, and cultural perspective should be integrated into DRM.	Para 15(e): 'A gender, age, disability, and cultural perspective {insert} must be {insert} systematically integrated into disaster risk management {insert} and must be made accessible to at risk groups'.	This must be systematically included to ensure it is taken into account, and progress is monitored accordingly; it must also be made accessible to all at risk groups.
Para. 15(g)	Recognition that 'disaster risks have local and specific characteristics which must be understood' and that different countries and communities have different capacities.	'...disaster risks have local and specific characteristics which must be understood, given the differential capacities of countries and communities. {insert} These skills and capacities must be utilised and participation of at risk groups resourced, for the determination of measures to reduce disaster risk.'	There needs to be greater recognition of the fact that there is much untapped knowledge, skill and capacity at the community scale, and that resources need to be devolved in order to assist communities to use their capacity for DRR.
Para. 15(h)	Commitment to disaggregated data collection by gender-specific/sex/age/disability, and recognition that this needs to be accessible, and easy-to-understand, and complemented by 'local, traditional and indigenous knowledge, as relevant'.	'... based on open and gender-specific/sex/age/disability {insert} /ethnicity disaggregated data... by local, traditional and indigenous knowledge, as relevant. {insert} This data should be collected by all stakeholders working on disaster risk reduction, in order to inform inclusive design, implementation and monitoring of current and future disaster risk policies and programming'.	The draft is currently unclear what this 'data' is for, what it's purpose is? Why is it collected? Who uses it? We also need to repeat the need to have disaggregated data by ethnicity.
Para. 15(j)		'... education and awareness on disaster risk. {insert} It is essential that the needs of at risk groups in post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction are addressed through their participation in the recovery process.	This para should specifically refer to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in post disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction whilst ensuring their participation in strategies for recovery
Para. 16		'... including the protection of [insert] the most at risk people...'	To ensure adequate inclusion of at risk groups.
Para. 21	Commitment that disaster risk management should be based on an 'understanding of risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity and exposure of persons and assets and hazards characteristics'.		

Para. 22(b)		'Systematically survey, record and publicly account for all disaster losses and the economic, social and health impacts {insert} using gender/age/disability/ethnicity and culturally sensitive disaggregated data and perspectives'.	The monitoring process must incorporate disaggregated data by gender, age, disability and ethnicity as a baseline, in order to assess targets.
Para. 22(f)	Recognition of the need to use traditional and local knowledge to complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and the development and implementation of policies, plans and programs.		
Para. 22(j)	Recognition of the need to promote 'national strategies to strengthen public education and awareness of risk information and knowledge through campaigns, social media, community mobilization and other available means, taking into account specific audiences and their needs'.	'... social media, community mobilization {insert} school-based interventions and other available means, taking into account specific audiences and their needs {insert} particularly of at risk groups.	To ensure adequate inclusion of at risk groups.
Para. 25(b)		'Adopt and implement national and local plans, across different timescales aimed at addressing short, medium and long term disaster risk, with targets, indicators and timeframes {insert} that are attentive to social, economic, cultural, environmental and political vulnerability'.	The monitoring process must incorporate a social, economic, cultural, environmental and political vulnerability dimension in the design of the new set of indicators.
Para. 25(g)	Focus on empowerment, 'through regulatory and financial means, local action and leadership' by local authorities, communities and indigenous people.		
Section D / Priority 2: 25		{Insert} Governments must acknowledge the differential needs, vulnerabilities, expectations and existing capacities of all groups and create an enabling environment for socially marginalised people and grassroots organisations to engage in and/or lead {insert} inclusive decision-making processes, disaster risk reduction programme design and implementation'.	At risk groups at the grassroots level should be enabled and supported to speak for themselves.
Para. 28(c)	Recognition of sites of historical, cultural and religious interest.		
Para. 28(h)	Focus on strengthening social protection/social safety nets.		
Para. 31(b)	Recognition of the need to tailor early warning systems to the needs of users, including social and cultural requirements.	'... including {insert} individual, social and cultural requirements {insert} according to people's sex / age / disability and ethnicity'.	We need to acknowledge individual requirements and repeat the need to have disaggregated data by ethnicity.
Para. 34(c/d)	The focus on inclusion and recognition of different capacities of at risk groups, which explicitly recognises the contribution of children and youth, women, persons with disabilities, older persons and	Para 34(c) should also include ethnic groups.	

	indigenous peoples; and the role of stakeholders which recognised the role of social groups, volunteers, civil society, faith-based organisations and the media. This means that when all stakeholders are mentioned it is clear which at risk groups are being referenced.		
Para. 40(k)		'The implementation of this framework will be periodically {Insert} <i>peer reviewed</i> by the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Commission {Insert} <i>in collaboration with representatives of at risk groups and civil society organisations</i> , through and in alignment with existing processes and mechanisms, such as the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development, to allow for stocktaking, identifying new emerging risk, formulating recommendations for further action, and introducing possible corrective measures.	We need to specify peer review particularly including representatives of at risk groups and civil society organisation representatives.

Pledge

The groups of agencies represented at the meeting are prepared to work in partnership with government and other stakeholders to identify indicators of the inclusion and empowerment of 'at risk' groups, as well as exploring ways to jointly develop policies, practices and standards aligned to the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

At an international level, a group of civil society agencies would be well positioned to support a global system for monitoring improvements in the inclusion and empowerment of at risk groups in the context of progress on DRR.

Context

In an event hosted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN): [How to include and empower the vulnerable in disaster risk reduction](#), panel members, which included members from ODI, British Red Cross, Gender and Disaster Network, Save the Children, HelpAge, Handicap International and the University of the Philippines, discussed poverty, gender, age, disability, ethnicity and culture, and made recommendations for the inclusion and empowerment of at risk groups within the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction. At the event, a recent ODI/CDKN paper was also launched: [Equity and inclusion in disaster risk reduction: building resilience for all](#) which promotes socio-economic and cultural inclusion, as well as the political recognition of at risk groups, providing examples of where their participation as active agents of change has proven beneficial for effectively and equitably building resilience.

During the event, panel members and 150 participants (both online and in person) drafted a set of recommendations for the post-2015 framework for DRR in terms of what needs to be retained in the zero draft, and how the zero draft can be strengthened. Comments and suggestions were invited by participants from a wide variety of civil society organisations, INGOs and academic institutions.

ⁱ Taken from: Mitchell, T., Peters, K., Lovell, E., Bahadur, A., Carabine, E., Jones, L., le Masson, V., Simonet, C. and Wilkinson, E. (2014) *Reviewing the zero-draft of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction*. London: Overseas Development Institute and Climate and Development Knowledge Network.

ⁱⁱ Taken from: Mitchell, T., Peters, K., Lovell, E., Bahadur, A., Carabine, E., Jones, L., le Masson, V., Simonet, C. and Wilkinson, E. (2014) *Reviewing the zero-draft of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction*. London: Overseas Development Institute and Climate and Development Knowledge Network.