From risk to resilience

Making global policies count for the most vulnerable

CONCERN worldwide

Growing Resilience

CONCERN
worldwide

Concern Worldwide is an international humanitarian organisation dedicated to tackling hunger and transforming lives in the world's poorest places. We are working for a world where no one dies for want of safe and nutritious food. Malnutrition is one of the gravest threats to child survival and development, with long-lasting consequences. We use our expertise and local knowledge to work with people and communities to develop lasting solutions to hunger so that they can lead happier, healthier lives and lift themselves sustainably out of poverty.

Concern's focus on tackling hunger and extreme poverty is underpinned by an understanding of a lack of assets, risk, vulnerability and power inequality in any given context. The need to protect development gains from being wiped out by disasters, whether natural or human-made, has been the driving force of Concern's interest in long-term programming, research and advocacy for strengthening community resilience to food and nutrition crises.

On the front: Villagers in Arpangasia, Satkhira district, Bangladesh conduct a community risk and vulnerability analysis as part of the Paribartan project.

Photo: Palash Kanti Haldar/Bangladesh

From risk to resilience: making global policies count for the most vulnerable

The current humanitarian system is faced with a situation of need and suffering on an overwhelming scale. In 2015, an estimated 125 million people required humanitarian assistance, 60 million were displaced and 37 countries were affected[1].

The catastrophe of Syria has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and forced millions of people from their homes[2]. Rising levels of malnutrition in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa, exacerbated by El Niño, represent the latest spike in a pattern of recurring crises, each of which makes people more vulnerable to the next.

The impact of climate change, leading to an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, will bring further suffering to many of these regions. Meanwhile, people in coastal areas and low lying parts of the world will be at greater risk of cyclones and flooding caused by sea level rises.

In addition to these more high-profile disasters, the damage caused by regular low-intensity 'everyday emergencies', such as small scale floods, failed rains, or low-level conflict, has a major impact on people's lives throughout the world, leading to an erosion of assets that further exacerbates vulnerability.

In the light of this situation, fundamental changes are needed to the world's development and humanitarian systems. There is an increasing consensus around the need to shift from responding to disasters to addressing the risk of disasters before they happen, focusing not only on emergency response but also on the root causes of disasters and extreme poverty.

This has the potential to save lives and livelihoods, protect gains already made in long-term development projects and reduce the burden on a humanitarian system which is increasingly over-stretched and under-funded.

Photo: Mahmud/Map Photo Agency / Bangladesh / 2012

Salinity in coastal areas of Bangladesh has increased due to rising sea levels caused by climate change leading to flooding and water logging. In many places, the high salinity in the soil and water stops crops from growing.

The approach that has gained most prominence in the humanitarian and development sectors in recent years is that of building resilience. Resilience is a complex concept and debates continue as to precisely how it should be defined[3] or measured.

Nevertheless, there is broad agreement as to its potential benefits for development and humanitarian practitioners and commitments on building resilience featured prominently in key 2015 policy processes such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) and the Paris Agreement on climate change. There was also a call for a greater focus on resilience in the UN Secretary General's statement for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

[1] United Nations (2016) 'One Humanity, Shared Responsibility, Report of the United Nations Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit'
[2] United Nations Office For Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2016) 'Syria Crisis Overview'
[3] Concern understands resilience as the ability of all vulnerable households or individuals that make up a community to anticipate, respond to, cope with, and recover from the effects of shocks, and to adapt to stresses in a timely and effective manner without compromising their long-term prospects of moving out of poverty. Concern Worldwide (2013) 'Confronting Crisis: Transforming Lives Through Improved Resilience'

The challenge now is how to translate these policies into effective action. Concern has been implementing programmes to reduce risk and build resilience in regions of vulnerability for many years. Drawing on our programme experience, we have identified five broad principles, which dovetail closely with the 2015 policy commitments, and contain within them practical guidance for effective resilience building. In this paper, we examine the importance of each of these principles, use evidence from our programmes to demonstrate why they matter on the ground, and propose a series of recommendations for actors to support their implementation.

The principles are:

- Putting disaster-affected people at the centre of resilience building efforts.

- Bridging the humanitarian and development divide

- Building capacity for Early Warning Early Action

- Taking an integrated approach to disaster risk management

- Tackling inequality to reduce vulnerability

Resilience in global policy processes

In 2015, states came together to agree three global policy frameworks which lay out a blueprint for alleviating poverty and addressing some of the most significant threats facing people around the world. Resilience features prominently among the commitments made in these frameworks, as well as in the UN Secretary General's Report for the World Humanitarian Summit.

- The SFDRR has as its overarching goal: 'Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of…measures that…strengthen resilience[4].'

- Goal 1 of the SDGs includes a target to 'build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to…extreme events…shocks and disasters.' Resilience is also mentioned in goals 2, 9 and 11[5].

- The Paris Agreement on climate change acknowledges the need to increase 'the ability [of people] to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience[6].'

- In his report for the World Humanitarian Summit[7], the UN Secretary General states: 'The international community must shift… toward investing in crisis prevention and building up community resilience.'

[4] United Nations Office For Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) 'Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 30'
[5] United Nations (2015) 'Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.'
[6] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015) 'Adoption of the Paris agreement'
[7] United Nations (2016) 'One Humanity, Shared Responsibility, Report of the United Nations Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit'

1. Putting disaster-affected people at the centre of resilience

Disasters are experienced at the local level and it is the people affected who generally have the clearest understanding of the particular risks they face.

Disaster-affected people are usually best able to identify the shocks arising within their context and the likely effect of these on their lives and livelihoods. They often understand most about who is particularly vulnerable within their community and the sometimes unseen social dynamics perpetuating this. They may employ local, indigenous approaches to addressing disaster risk which can make a valuable contribution to any additional attempts to strengthen resilience and should be built on, rather than discarded or ignored.

Yet too often the development and humanitarian systems operate in a way that actually marginalises them from the processes and structures which are intended to reduce their vulnerability. An effective approach to resilience therefore requires a shift from considering stakeholders as victims to considering them as agents of change, and a much greater focus on empowerment and inclusion.

Participatory risk analysis

The cornerstone of Concern's resilience programming and the mechanism through which Concern builds communities' involvement is a process of participatory risk analysis[8]. This ensures that the needs and voices of disaster-affected people and communities are central to resilience planning and programming. It comprises two key mechanisms for analysing risk: a broad contextual analysis and a more focused community risk analysis.

The contextual analysis is useful for gaining an overview of hazards, and who is most vulnerable. For example, in Concern's Building Resilience In Emergency-Prone Areas of Wolaita, Ethiopia project, communities identified those most in need of support through a wealth ranking at household level. This helped ensure that extremely poor people within communities were central to the programme.

The community risk analysis tends to go deeper into the causal factors of risk and vulnerability, and also allows for the community to prioritise the hazards they consider most important, based on impact and likelihood. It can also bring to light key localised issues which might otherwise be missed.

For example, during the analysis in one community participating in the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia[9] programme (BRCiS), villagers explained that crocodile attacks were a significant risk when collecting water for domestic and animal use, due to the proximity of slaughterhouses further up the river. Safe water access was therefore identified in the plans as a key consideration to be addressed in programme design for that specific location.

The participatory risk analysis enables an approach to resilience with community perspectives at its centre. It helps implementing agencies understand what vulnerable people already do to recognise and address risk, so that they can build on this rather than replacing it. It also helps increase community ownership of the ongoing collaborative process to build resilience.

Developing effective governance systems

Ensuring the continued engagement of communities in resilience planning also requires effective governance structures.

The resilience of most communities is tied closely to their ability to self-organise and react to shocks as they occur, so it is important that structures are built or strengthened at community level to lead planning, advocacy and action.

This may mean extending the remit of community groups already in place or it may be necessary to develop new ones. It is crucial that vulnerable and marginalised groups are properly represented within them.

[8] Concern Worldwide (2016) 'Disaster Risk Reduction for Community Resilience: A synthesis of lessons from more than a decade of Disaster Risk Reduction Programming,'
[9] The DFID-funded Building Resilient Communities in Somalia programme is delivered by a consortium of five organisations in over 100 communities.

The ability of these community governance structures to connect to wider governance systems is also important. They can add significant value to disaster risk planning and budgeting processes at meso and macro levels if they are consulted and their proposals given full consideration.

In Kenya, Concern has developed the capacity of communities to articulate and share decisions with government. Common development priorities, identified across villages, have been bundled to inform ward and sub-county planning documents. Issues emerging that require policy change or legislative action have been packaged for tabling to the county assembly[10].

Through the Paribartan resilience programme in India and Bangladesh, the benefits of connections between community and government are already being seen. In both countries, community priorities have been incorporated into the development plans of a number of local government units (Panchayats and Upazillas) which in turn have led to funding for local adaptation measures for community resilience building. Community resilience action plans were also incorporated into the plans of all local government units (8 Panchayats in India and 12 local government Union Disaster Management Committees in Bangladesh) with which the programme has worked for five years[11].

These examples of successful bottom-up influencing show the need for strong community structures but also for strong and well resourced local government structures. The advocacy of a well organised community committee will have little impact if local authorities lack the capacity to help.

It is therefore important that national governments devolve sufficient power and resources to local structures to strengthen them and make their engagement with communities meaningful.

While donors and aid agencies should ensure they support programming at community-level, they should also allocate funding and support to enable government institution-strengthening at local and regional levels. Where the context allows it, this is preferable to setting up parallel structures.

Both the long-term ability of communities to advocate to their government, and the capacity of government to respond, are undermined if an alternative system of competing structures is created.

Photo: Shafiqul Alam Kiron / Map Photo Agency / Bangladesh / 2015

Through the Paribartan project, an embankment was built to protect the community in Kuakata, Bangladesh from flooding, allowing crops to be grown without salt water intrusion.

"The difference you see is that this is a community-led project. You don't tell them what to do. That is why I feel it will sustain. Now the horticultural department, the forest department, all the departments are involved. The organisation is speaking with the Panchayat and all the departments to find ways to link with different schemes for their initiatives[12]"

Khageshwar Lenka, Sarpanch (head of Panchayat), Gupti, Odisha, India referring to the Paribartan programme.

---

[10]Concern Worldwide (2013) 'Community Conversations: Opportunities for Systematic and Inclusive Citizen Participation in Kenya'
[11]Concern Worldwide / Saferworld Communications (2015) ' Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk of Coastal Communities to Climate Change and Natural Hazards in Bangladesh and India Final Evaluation Report.'
[12]Concern Worldwide / Saferworld Communications 'Helping communities cope with climate change in the Bay of Bengal.'

2. Bridging the humanitarian and development divide

2. Bridging the humanitarian and development divide

In order to build resilience effectively, the traditional distinction between long-term development work and rapid humanitarian response must be broken down.

Time and again, we see that those most vulnerable to disasters are badly served by a system which addresses development and humanitarian response in separate silos. This system is often ill-suited to protracted humanitarian crises where people are faced with emergency needs over long periods of time. It can be inefficient and ineffective in regions with slow onset, predictable disasters where regular peaks in malnutrition and food insecurity arise out of a context of longer-term need. And it does not adequately address the small-scale everyday emergencies which further increase vulnerability, particularly in disaster-prone regions.

A more integrated approach to development and humanitarian work is therefore required. Disaster-affected people should be supported to build their resilience with interventions that address both the short-term shocks and longer-term stresses that put them at risk.

Flexible programme design

Resilience programmes should be developed in a way that incorporates flexibility to allow them to switch quickly between development, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), preparedness, early action and scaled-up interventions as needed.

Development activities should be designed with a view to supporting the future success of humanitarian activities when needed. And, where appropriate, humanitarian interventions should be designed to support long-term development goals.

An example of this latter approach is provided by Concern's emergency response to Cyclone Mahasen in Bangladesh where people affected by a cyclone were employed in cash for work activities to install some of the embankments needed to support climate smart agriculture, thereby meeting their immediate needs while laying the foundations for livelihoods which would be sustainable in the longer-term.

Increased and flexible funding

Supporting flexible programme design is not only an important consideration for implementing agencies but also for donors. Funding for resilience is currently well short of what is required. Just 0.4% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) was spent on disaster preparedness in 2014[13].

Moreover, resilience programmes are largely financed from humanitarian budgets. Given the overwhelming demands currently on the humanitarian system and the chronic nature of many of the disasters resilience programmes are set up to address, there needs to be a much greater allocation from the development sector, particularly in areas such as supporting preparedness, establishing Early Warning Systems (EWS), addressing underlying vulnerabilities and strengthening local response functions.

Finance for resilience programmes should be allocated in the form of long-term, flexible funding. Where short-term grants and rigid budget lines tend to preserve and reinforce the distinction between development and humanitarian sectors, longer-term flexible funding allows for a more nuanced and proportionate response that blends the two.

This is crucial if programmes are to be able to scale up humanitarian activities quickly and effectively in response to early warning information. It also allows for a smoother and more efficient transition through the range of activities that sit along the development-humanitarian continuum. The more prone the context is to shocks, the more flexible the funding needs to be.

In addition, longer-term funding allows programming to change and evolve according to a deeper understanding of the root causes of a community's vulnerability. This reduces the risk of short-term and shallow interventions in communities based on limited analysis and limited time to address key underlying issues such as those of governance.

---

13 OECD, OECD.Stat database. Available from http://stats.oecd.org/

The delivery of longer-term, flexible funding also requires an accompanying shift in the way programmes are evaluated. Monitoring and evaluation systems need to evolve to capture longer-term outcomes as well as the outputs of activities that adapt as the context changes.

Photo: Dustin Caniglia / Somalia / 2015

Farmer field school group planting maize and groundnut crops on their communal farm after receiving training as part of the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia programme.

Flexible resilience programming in Somalia

A good example of what can be achieved when a programme is structured and funded so that it can adapt to a changing context is provided by the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) programme.

The programme benefits from a four year funding stream with significant flexibility built in. This helps it to deliver an integrated package of development, DRR and social protection activities, as well as emergency response activities during times of shock, scaling activities up or down as appropriate.

BRCiS delivers programming in the major riverine areas of Somalia, where longer-term activities include training for farmers on climate smart agriculture techniques, tree planting schemes, infant and young child feeding programmes and the organisation of women's self-help groups. However, in August 2015, forecasting information provided warning of rainstorms which posed a significant risk of flooding in the region.

Due to the flexibility of its funding and long-term ties with communities, the programme was able to trigger a series of rapid disaster mitigation measures, without need for further consultation with donors or lengthy contractual negotiations.

Using existing community committees and networks supported under BRCiS, the programme spread awareness of the flood risk through radio programmes, identified villages at greatest risk, then distributed sand bags and material to shore up river banks, including in inaccessible regions controlled by armed groups. Some flooding did occur but the speed and effectiveness of the disaster mitigation activities ensured that the impact was minimised and, though BRCiS had also been able to make ready supplies of hygiene and Non Food Item (NFI) kits, a full-scale humanitarian response was not required.

It is hard to estimate the value of these rapid disaster mitigation activities but it is likely that the damage caused to homes, lives and livelihoods among affected communities, would have caused significant suffering and eroded development gains made through BRCiS and earlier projects. Based on this experience and due to the flexibility of its funding and longterm ties with communities built through the programme, Concern staff working through BRCiS estimate that they are able to deliver a rapid response at least six weeks faster than might otherwise be achieved.

3. Building Capacity for Early Warning Early Action

Effective Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) represents a crucial component of building communities' resilience, particularly in contexts of predictable or slow onset emergencies, such as climate disasters in the Sahel and Horn of Africa.

Targeted information on changing weather conditions or growing vulnerability, acted upon in a timely and effective way, can bring significant benefits in mitigating the impact of disasters before they occur or reach their peak.

As with the resilience building initiatives they contribute to, EWEA systems should be community-focused, ensuring that warnings are communicated to vulnerable people in ways that they understand and act on, as early as possible.

At an institutional level, it is important that there is sufficient capacity and clear lines of communication between actors collecting and disseminating early warning information and those mandated to respond.

Donors, governments and agencies seeking to strengthen EWEA should therefore join forces to improve capacity and provide resources at all levels to ensure an effective and well-coordinated system.

Concern is working with other actors in Chad to support EWEA through the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED)[14] programme. The Chadian government's EWS – Système d'Information sur la Sécurité Alimentaire et l'Alerte Précoce (SISAAP) – is based on a structure reaching from community to national government, with early warning committees in place at local, regional and district levels.

To complement this structure, Concern's programme in Sila, eastern Chad, has established 21 Community Action committees, each of which is composed of representatives from three to four villages. These will be trained to collect key data, use it for early warning, and connect effectively with local early warning committees.

Concern is also collaborating with SISAAP to support the operation of EWS at regional level, including working with other stakeholders to improve coordination, and to share information more efficiently with actors at national level.

In addition, Concern is working with Tufts University's Feinstein International Centre[15] on the development of a predictive rainfall model for crop yields which has the potential to connect to and provide additional information for the national SISAAP system.

By engaging existing structures at different levels, while maintaining a focus on community needs, Concern hopes to contribute to the development of effective, well-coordinated EWEA in Chad which can address malnutrition or food shortages before a crisis develops.

Photo: Dom Hunt / Chad / 2014

Men and women make up the Tcharow Comite Communautaire d'Action (community action committee) in Tcharow, Goz Beida, Sila Region, Chad.

They are pictured analysing the impact and frequency of the hazards the village faces in order to identify the most important ones to be addressed.

[14]BRACED is a DFID-funded programme currently being implemented by consortia in countries in the Sahel, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
[15]The Feinstein International Center at Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy

4. Taking an integrated approach to disaster risk management

It is the interaction of a dynamic array of social, environmental, political and economic factors that determines how a person or a community experiences disaster.

The task of reducing vulnerability is therefore similarly complex. It requires all actors – whether governments, donors, aid agencies or communities themselves – to develop a holistic approach to addressing disaster risk.

This means trying to escape the silo-thinking of sectoral activities and understand how, for example, health and livelihoods relate to each other, how hazards interact with them, and how the local context and national contexts shape each other.

In many cases, this analysis will point to the need for integrated programming with coordinated interventions across a range of sectors, in order to address the range of factors that contribute to vulnerability and the connections between them.

Multi-sectoral programming may not always be appropriate: in some contexts – for example, a community facing earthquakes with few other factors compounding the risk – there may be more benefit in a focused DRR package. It is important that the weighting agencies place on certain activities or sectors within a programme is based on thorough analysis of the impact they are expected to have.

Nevertheless, vulnerability generally arises out of a far broader set of circumstances than can be addressed by one approach alone.

Concern's Community Resilience to Acute Malnutrition (CRAM) programme in Chad provides a good example of this. The overarching goal of the CRAM programme is to improve the health, nutrition and livelihood security of the most vulnerable by building their resilience to prevailing stresses and shocks – principally drought and resulting poor harvests – in Sila, eastern Chad.

In pursuit of this objective, the project design incorporated a range of activities across multiple sectors, including support for: climate-smart agriculture, diversification of livelihoods, delivery of health and nutrition services, adoption of positive health, hygiene and nutrition practices (e.g. via mothers groups and handwashing campaigns), borehole and local latrine construction and gender equality promotion.

One of the key findings from the midline evaluation of the project, conducted in December 2014 by researchers from Tufts University's Feinstein International Centre, was that improved access to clean water and sanitation as well as hygiene practices along the water chain may be at least as important as food security in improving nutrition in contexts such as Sila. The CRAM findings to date show that hygiene practices, specifically, washing water containers and lower concentrations of animals at human water points, were closely linked to reducing acute malnutrition at household level, and more links are likely to emerge[16].

This reinforces the need for a multi-sectoral programme design in order to have an impact on multi-causal outcomes such as malnutrition and resilience. Determining which sectoral interventions are critical to resilience outcomes in each context and focusing efforts there is essential. These critical factors and interventions for the Chad context are beginning to emerge from the strong impact evaluation and research partnership with Tufts University.

This holistic approach is not a matter for programming organisations alone. It is central to the philosophy underpinning resilience and can only thrive if government policy and donor practice are aligned in support of integrated programming.

Once again, it is crucial that donors provide funding in a way that is sufficiently flexible to allow activities in different sectors to be scaled up and down as the situation requires. Additionally, it is important that governments improve intra-government cross-sector coordination mechanisms at all levels to ensure that plans and budgets function to support a multi-sectoral approach.

[16] Full findings from the impact evaluation's endline, conducted by Tufts University, are due in mid 2016

5. Addressing inequality to reduce vulnerability

Inequality is a key factor in causing or exacerbating vulnerability and an obstacle to building resilience.

Most communities have groups of marginalised people within them; these may be women, children, the disabled and the elderly, but they may also be the poor or a specific ethnic or social group. Disasters do not discriminate but people do, and the way in which vulnerable people experience disaster and respond to risk is, in large part, determined by their social status.

This may be manifested in the following ways:

* Their lack of access to basic rights and services restrict their coping measures. In Dhaka, for example, many pavement dwellers do not have official birth registration and national identification cards and are therefore ineligible for government services. Inability to access key services (health, education, shelter) increases the risks, including violence, faced by this homeless population.

* The voice of marginalised people may not be heard in resilience planning, and they may be excluded from traditional resilience building strategies. High rates of female illiteracy in some regions inhibit women's engagement with Early Warning Systems, and contribution to community decision-making.

* Cultural norms around the roles and behaviour of certain groups may influence how they are affected by disasters. A household survey carried out by Oxfam[17] in Aceh, Indonesia, following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami found that in some of the worst affected areas, up to four women died for every male. To some extent this is because women in these areas were not encouraged to learn to swim or climb trees.

It is therefore crucial that efforts to strengthen resilience address underlying issues of inequality directly.

Programmes must be designed based on a robust analysis of power dynamics and inequalities, must work specifically with the most vulnerable sections of society addressing their needs and ensuring their voices are heard, and must address the underlying causes of inequality. This means

Photo: Tagaza/Djibo/Niger/2012

Women of the Kolkoli village's gardening interest group, supported by Concern in Niger's Tahoua region. The vegetables grown are eaten and sold locally to buy cereals.

moving away from a 'one size fits all' programme towards an approach that takes into consideration the vulnerability profiles of marginalised groups.

Inequality does not, of course, only arise in communities and addressing the range of factors which cause or reinforce it at all levels, represents a much larger challenge. The development or ratification of policies and laws at national level safeguarding the rights of marginalised groups can play a part in institutionalising equality. It is also important that government institutions at regional and local levels are resourced and strengthened to implement these.

[17]Oxfam (2005) 'The tsunami's impact on women'

Photo: Tagaza Djibo / Niger / 2012

Adama Mahamadou and her family eating vegetables cultivated in the gardening interest group of Kolkoli village, supported by Concern in Niger's Tahoua region.

Addressing gender inequality in Concern's Niger resilience programme[18]

Initial results from Concern's ongoing resilience programme in Niger provide a positive indication that through sensitive programming, communities can take important steps in re-evaluating longstanding attitudes to gender.

Concern's five year Integrated Resilience Programme in the Tahoua region of central Niger is addressing inequitable attitudes to gender as part of a programme which also includes health and nutrition, education, livelihoods, disaster risk reduction and emergency activities.

It targets women as the primary beneficiaries of project activities, including livelihood diversification, to increase the number of women with their own source of cash. In addition, the programme includes gender-focused activities such as working with parents and schools to encourage girls to register for and remain in education, with discussions on child protection issues such as school codes of conduct and gender-segregated latrines. The programme also provides support for the poorest families to help them keep their girls in schools.

A survey of participating households suggests a positive shift in the way women's roles are perceived. Among the most significant shifts were around attitudes to women's control of assets and inheritance; the survey reported a rise of 18.3 and 11.8 percentage points since 2013 in the number of respondents agreeing with the statements 'Women should be able to own and control assets' and 'Women should inherit and keep property and assets' respectively.

[18] Concern Worldwide (2014) Niger annual report

Conclusion and Recommendations

The coming years represent a key opportunity to reorient humanitarian and development activity in support of a resilience-building approach.

The prominence of resilience among 2015 policy commitments reflects a consensus at global level of its potential value. At community level, resilience building programmes, such as those described here, provide a growing body of evidence of how vulnerable people can be supported to reduce disaster risk. Although resilience is currently significantly under-funded, a number of new funding streams, including DFID's flagship BRACED programme and Irish Aid's support for projects in disaster prone contexts such as Chad, South Sudan and Somalia, have been designed by donors to address disaster risk in the long-term.

There is now a need for concerted action and investment on the part of implementing agencies, governments and donors to build on these positive examples, put policy commitments into practice, and provide the necessary additional funding to ensure that resilience building can be supported at scale. Below, we draw out recommendations for these key actors from across the five major themes discussed in this paper.

Implementing agencies should:

- Ensure that all interventions are community-centred by undertaking participatory risk analysis, building on disaster management skills and approaches already within communities, and strengthening community governance bodies.

- Streamline processes for consolidating community priorities, costing them and communicating them upwards to local, district and national governmental bodies.

- Develop flexible programmes which can switch rapidly between development, Disaster Risk Reduction, preparedness, early action and scaled-up interventions as needed.

- Support effective Early Warning Early Action systems by identifying and addressing community information needs and helping to improve capacity and information flow at all levels.

- Design multi-sectoral programmes where appropriate, or work in partnership with governmental or non-governmental actors to ensure a coordinated package of resilience interventions addressing the principal drivers of risk and vulnerability.

- Address vulnerability by identifying and addressing the specific needs of marginalised groups and ensuring their voices are included within governance bodies.

- Invest in and disseminate learning on all aspects of resilience programming to demonstrate what works best in which contexts.

- Advocate for changes in policy and systems where needed and build capacity at all levels to better assess and manage risk and reduce vulnerability.

Governments should:

At local and regional level:

- Strengthen connections with community governance bodies to ensure the views of vulnerable people are well represented within local and regional level resilience plans and budgets.

- Play a central coordinating role across all areas of resilience programming and governance including organisation of risk analyses, collecting and sharing early warning information and managing response mechanisms.

- Strengthen local institutions and engage with traditional and religious leaders to implement progressive laws and strategies to address discrimination and tackle inequality.

At national level:

- Devolve sufficient power and resources to local and regional governments to help them fully address community perspectives and needs in their plans and budgets.

- Support and strengthen local and regional governance bodies to enable them to play a central coordinating role in areas of resilience programming and governance.

- Work with a range of actors, including civil society and forecasting institutions, to develop effective Early Warning Early Action systems, which are well resourced at all levels and can respond rapidly to mitigate the impact of impending disaster.

- Encourage and facilitate a multi-sectoral approach, where appropriate, by coordinating plans and programmes across ministries and departments at all levels and evaluating national sectoral strategies and action plans using a disaster-proofing and resilience building lens.

- Develop progressive laws and strategies tackling inequality and safeguarding the rights of marginalised groups and resource and strengthen the capacity of local government institutions to implement these.

Donors should:

- Increase funding from Official Development Assistance for Disaster Risk Reduction and resilience.

- Allocate more funds for resilience from the development sector, particularly in areas such as supporting preparedness, establishing Early Warning Systems, addressing underlying vulnerabilities and strengthening local response functions.

- Deliver multi-year, flexible funding to enable programmes to switch quickly between the range of activities on the development-humanitarian continuum, and scale up activities from different sectors as necessary.

- Prioritise funding for resilience initiatives which address inequality and take into full consideration community needs and voices, no matter what level they are operating at.

- Support capacity-building for governance and Early Warning Early Action institutions, both for communities and government, and at micro, meso and macro levels.

- Agree basic criteria for releasing funds in response to early warnings, taking a 'no regrets' approach to prevent dangerous situations escalating into disasters, particularly in regions vulnerable to drought.

- Provide funding for research and learning to enhance understanding of which approaches work best in which contexts, including the cost effectiveness of different strategies to reach the most vulnerable.

[18] Concern Worldwide (2014) Niger annual report

CONCERN
worldwide

www.concern.net

England and Wales

13/14 Calico House
Clove Hitch Quay
London
SW11 3TN
00 44 207 801 1850
londoninfo@concern.net

Northern Ireland

47 Frederick Street
Belfast
BT1 2LW
00 44 28 9033 1100
belfastinfo@concern.net

Republic of Ireland

52-55 Lower Camden Street
Dublin 2
00 353 1 417 77 00
info@concern.net

USA

355 Lexington Avenue
19th Floor
New York
NY 10017
00 1 212 5578 000
info.usa@concern.net

Concern: fighting hunger...