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Dealing with Disasters

Capacity Building Toolkit for National Civil Society Organisation Platforms

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**Integrating dealing
with disasters
with sustainable
development and climate
change adaptation**



Integrating dealing with disasters with sustainable development and climate change adaptation

The concentration of the response and recovery phase of an intensive disaster can obscure the need for recovery to be based on 'building back better' - a developmental and integrated approach. National CSO Platforms (NCPs) can strengthen the role of CSOs to pursue long-term sustainable development and livelihood resilience, ensuring that communities 'bounce forward' after a disaster.

In the midst of an intensive disaster, it is difficult to focus on anything other than immediate response and survival, but 'building back better' - ensuring that affected populations emerge better able to build sustainable livelihoods, rather than simply 'bouncing back' - depends on preparation for sustainable recovery.

The need for '*coherence*' between frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development, so that they are mutually reinforcing, is widely recognised at policy level. At country and local level, the corresponding idea is '*integration*' of these interlinked activities. Fundación Azimuth in Colombia, for example, states the case as follows: 'We can't see how development or poverty alleviation processes can be separated from Disaster Risk Reduction because communities are living in adverse regions, such as post-conflict which displace many people. Many poor displaced communities are in high-risk urban areas.' It follows that pursuing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) depends on also pursuing DRR.

Integrating disasters and development secures the gains of sustainable development by preventing them being affected by future disasters. Integrated action combines sustainable development with mitigation and adaptation to the effects of climate change. It also applies disaster risk reduction to reduce the impact of disasters on sustainable development. CCOAIB, in Rwanda, highlights how such integration is essential in practice: 'We cannot say that the CCOAIB association does not deal with disasters because if we work in all these areas, especially agriculture, we cannot do so without addressing the erosion of great rains and drought and other disasters that hinder development.'

Responsibility for ensuring sustainable recovery falls heavily on national and local CSOs, as humanitarian response by international agencies is typically short term. A study of the outcomes of five differing intensive disasters showed that international agencies typically left within months of a disaster and that in all these cases greater investment in capacity development of the local agencies, who are there for the long term, was necessary.¹⁴

Experience of CSOs during the initial response phase to the Coronavirus pandemic (March to June 2020) shows that the crisis results in a sudden shift to humanitarian response, distributing healthcare equipment, food etc. It also pushes affected populations towards dependency. CSOs regard it as important to think critically about how to restart sustainable development programmes and help communities move back from dependency to active involvement and self-reliance.¹⁵ In practice this means that alongside immediate reconstruction, development of sustainable livelihoods is essential to long term recovery.

In Aleppo, Syria, the Tamkeen project connected response with development in a war zone. Recognising that humanitarian response alone was not sufficient, the project worked with local people and organisations on establishing teaching and training centres, on rehabilitating businesses and repairing local infrastructure, and on agricultural development. This 'humanitarian/development nexus' created sustainable livelihoods and re-established vital services.¹⁶

These examples underline the necessity of taking a developmental approach even when faced with an intensive disaster.

FOOTNOTES

¹⁴ START Network (2013). *Missed Opportunities: The case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses* (2013, November 3) <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/missed-opportunities-the-case-for-strengthening-national-and-local-partnership-302657>. (Accessed 20/09/18).

START Network (2014) *Missed Again: Making Space for Partnership in the Typhoon Haiyan Response*. <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-03/missed-again-typhoon-haiyan-evaluation-report-sep-2014.pdf> (Accessed 20/09/18).

¹⁵ Personal communications with CSO leaders 22-26 June 2020.

¹⁶ Dadu-Brown, S, Dadu, A and Zaid, M (2017). *Exploring the nexus between humanitarian and development goals in Aleppo*. IIED working paper. <http://pubs.iied.org/10855IIED> (Accessed 14/08/18).

See Case Studies 1, 2 and 4 for examples of integrating disasters with sustainable development and climate change adaptation.

Integrating dealing with disasters with sustainable development and climate change adaptation: Action Points

- Encourage integrated action by forging links between organisations focusing on Disaster Risk Reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development.
- Build capacity of member organisations to support livelihood development as well as reconstruction.
- Integrate sustainable development into response to crises to support building back better.