



BUILDING PEOPLE'S RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS AND CLIMATE CHANGE THE 'RISK GOVERNANCE' APPROACH

January 2016

This paper is an extract of research undertaken for the UN by AHF Director, Janine Constantine, on the governance of integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk management (CCDRM) into development approaches. Refer: *Building Resilience to Climate Change and Disasters*, UNDP (Constantine J), 2015; and *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion – Essential Elements of Risk Governance*, UNDP (Constantine J), 2015 - both papers pending publication.ⁱ

1. THE CHALLENGE

The increasing known and unknown impacts of climate change significantly add to the threats posed by natural disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, droughts and floods to some of the world's most vulnerable people. Together, disasters and climate change provide additional layers of complexity to development in some of the poorest regions.ⁱⁱ

Most developing country governments now have policies and plans for climate change and disaster risk management (CCDRM). But, with severe capacity and resource constraints (especially in National Disaster Management Offices and climate change agencies), it is difficult to translate these plans into action 'on-the-ground' to help people deal with the interaction of pressures from disasters and climate change. Whole-of-government and national to local coordination and partnership is a major gap with planning processes generally treating climate change and disaster risk management as separate 'sectors'. Roles of sub-national governments are often unclear with competition between different administrative levels over authority and resources.ⁱⁱⁱ International research has found that institutions are at the heart of the lack of sustainability of CCDRM approaches (as with a range of broader development processes).^{iv} Significant levels of funding and assistance for CCDRM from international agencies and development partners, often through uncoordinated projects and mechanisms, can further weaken government systems.

Different community members and groups (such as women, older people, people with disabilities and youth) are often acutely aware of what is needed to reduce their exposure to risk from disasters and climate change. But gender equality and social inclusion (GSI) issues are largely neglected in CCDRM. Failing to recognise traditional social structures, the power relations within them, and how the use, control and distribution of resources is governed, can create long-term social problems.^v These factors are exacerbated by limited sharing of information, knowledge and lessons between communities, between communities and governments, between levels of government, and across the region.

2. THE SOLUTION

There is a clear need to expand the CCDRM focus beyond simply managing the symptoms of disasters and climate change. 'Business as usual' will increase negative impacts on the lives and livelihoods of people and communities.^{vi} Addressing vulnerability to disaster and climate change risk and **building resilience to risk is a necessary and intrinsic part of broader development processes**.^{vii} This concept of resilience is gaining traction internationally and as a framework for addressing challenges in development policy.^{viii} Taking a Risk Governance Approach (RGA) sees authorities, public servants, media, private sector and civil society working with communities to manage and reduce disaster and climate change related risks that impact on broader development.^{ix}

Based on international analysis (particularly lessons from improvements in environmental governance in recent decades) several critical risk governance ingredients have emerged to help position CCDRM at the heart of development.^x

Building resilience to risk calls for **integrated and comprehensive approaches** – within and between national, sub-national and community levels - to move from a response and relief focus toward a holistic culture of protection and safety that is established as a normal part of the process of development.^{xi} Strong **enabling environments** for whole-of-government approaches for managing risk and addressing community-based issues can **empower people** to better identify their risks and needs, formulate and implement sustainable responses, and also demand more accountable governance. Understanding and applying risk governance dimensions will enhance the way in which assets, institutions, innovation, and knowledge flows contribute to more **informed decision-making** to improve peoples' lives and livelihoods.^{xii} These approaches can also help build the governance of broader policy, planning, financing, delivery and monitoring systems.^{xiii}

Improving risk governance is more a **political, institutional and individual change** process than a technical one. It deals directly with overarching policy issues on matters such as security, macro-economic policy, education, health, agriculture, natural resource management, etc. It a **continuing and long-term process** requiring committed leadership and strong institutions to forge the necessary links and processes. These range from 'upstream' changes (influencing a policy, plan, budget, decision, etc.) to 'downstream' changes (in behaviours and delivering CCDRM improvements 'on-the-ground'). Approaches will depend on context and will differ. Risk governance is not a standardised technical process carried out in a neat sequence.^{xiv}

3. COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

Although national (supported by international and regional) policies and frameworks are important, the outcomes of implementing integrated CCDRM strategies at the community level will be the ultimate test of risk governance.^{xv} It is at this level that lives and livelihoods can be protected, development promoted and safety and resilience built – with the practice of these approaches influencing policy decisions.^{xvi} Grounding policy at the community level cannot be progressed by international and regional organisations, but rather must be owned by local civil society. Community-

based adaptation and community-based DRM are already showing some success in developing countries. Use of existing social networks to integrate CCDRM into ongoing development efforts is also proving effective at the community level. In this respect, local-level case studies are useful in informing the development of higher-level risk governance policies.^{xvii}

Failing to recognise traditional social structures, the power relations within them, and how the use, control and distribution of resources is governed can create long-term social problems.^{xviii} These factors are exacerbated by limited sharing of information, knowledge and lessons between communities, between communities and governments, between levels of government, and across regions. As CCDRM becomes an integral part of development priorities need to be set by those who are at most risk while providing room for national and local politicians and communities to develop and coordinate their own agendas.^{xix} It is now increasingly recognised that, for poor communities, CCDRM approaches that are rooted in local knowledge and coping strategies, and in which communities are empowered to take their own decisions, are likely to be far more successful than top-down initiatives. In addition, communities have the right to participate in decisions that affect them.^{xx} Community risk governance structures that link to sub-national, national, regional and global governance approaches should be mandated by communities and governments to ensure communities are accountable and effectively addressing their risk and vulnerability to strengthen their resilience.

Recognition should therefore be given to the value of traditional governance structures in designing appropriate and effective risk governance approaches. This can facilitate the connection of traditional and scientific knowledge and support decisions that are informed by community experience of shocks and stresses and learning to ensure community resilience is attained and sustained. Traditional knowledge systems – e.g. relating to the production of food surpluses, diversification, preservation and storage, community cooperation strategies and building styles - have enabled communities to be sustained for millennia.^{xxi} Various adaptation and mitigation strategies are being implemented by communities (the world's 'advance guard' of climate change), as they use their traditional knowledge and survival skills.^{xxii} In the face of rapidly changing conditions the traditional knowledge of communities in managing and responding to CCDRM risks should be given appropriate attention alongside scientific assessments. The application of traditional knowledge can contribute to solutions that are socially and culturally sensitive and have a greater chance of community acceptance and engagement.

For these reasons capacity and financial resources need to flow to community levels. This will require decisions on the allocation of assets through semi-formal decision-making processes. New funding models and incentive structures need to be explored and local monitoring frameworks for vulnerability and resilience tracking and reporting required. An effective way to increase transparency and responsiveness is to establish, at the community level, an independent monitoring function for development plans and budgets that include CCDRM, with strong participation from at-risk groups, and from civil society at large.^{xxiii}

4. GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The range of risks posed by climate change and disasters mean that different groups of people face different challenges, have varying capacities to respond, and have different perspectives and priorities on approaches at the national, sub-national and community levels. Different community members and groups in developing countries are often acutely aware of what is needed to reduce their exposure to risk from climate change and disasters. Enhanced integration of CCDRM considerations into development and sectoral programmes and policies at the community, sub-national, national and

regional levels therefore requires accounting for the perspectives of men and women, youth, community groups and broader human rights.^{xxiv}

There is a strong link, especially, between gender and CCDRM issues, as women and men often have different knowledge and skills and face different degrees of vulnerability. There is therefore a need to ensure that the views of men and woman are adequately reflected in adaptation and vulnerability assessments and decision-making processes. The vital nexus between women’s experiences of natural resource management, CCA and DRR and how they can come together to make communities strong and sustainable is a key entry point to sustainable development.^{xxv} This highlights the need to promote awareness of the connection between CCDRM and gender-focused approaches to development, grassroots women’s leadership, and women’s full participation in risk governance.^{xxvi}

The effective engagement and involvement of youth is also essential as they and their children are the generations that will face more severe climate change and disaster impacts in comparison to today’s decision makers. Research and advocacy on youth and children highlight that they have been relatively marginalised in debates around climate change and disasters. A growing body of research on the impacts of climate change and disasters on children, especially on child health, has shown that children are among the worst affected in the aftermath of natural disasters. With increasing number of disasters being linked to changing climatic conditions, and the escalating frequency of droughts, floods, water scarcity, malaria and vector-borne diseases, children are likely to be adversely affected both as children and in their adult lives. Recent research has attempted to move away from focusing on youth and children as passive victims of climate change and disasters and, instead, advocating for them as active participants in efforts to reduce risks. This includes their participation in adapting to climate change and preventing disasters through risk governance approaches.^{xxvii}

5. LESSONS FROM LOCAL AND COMMUNITY CCDRM PLANNING

5.1 Main focus for risk governance

- The local level is critical for integrating risk governance where the impacts of climate change and disasters are manifested; vulnerability and resilience are determined; and risk governance activities are observed allowing for the monitoring and evaluation of how policies, programmes and projects provide a basis for scaling up, revising and learning.^{xxviii}
- The bottom-up approach results in the best outcomes as local control and ownership leads to longer-term sustainability. This highlights the need to: understand the governance structures existing from the local to the national level; work with these systems to achieve effective outcomes; and balance high-level and central ownership and coordination with bottom-up inclusion and engagement.^{xxix}
- People-centred strategies and adapting approaches to community needs and capacity are more cost-effective for reducing climate change and disaster risk and can be more equitable than large-scale structural measures.^{xxx}
- Broad and sustained engagement with and participation of local stakeholders (including sub-national governments, communities, civil society and businesses) requires collaborative approaches with local actors seen as legitimate decision-making agents. This will enhance the outcomes of coordinated risk governance approaches in communities and local district/provincial level governments where the impact of climate change and disasters is felt the most.^{xxxi}

5.2 Local knowledge

- Community participation and knowledge is a traditional strength in most developing countries that can form the foundation for improved risk governance.^{xxxii}

- Attention to the views and perspectives of communities and sub-groups within those communities is essential for the long-term sustainability of integrated CCDRM responses.
- Linking local knowledge and experience to national structures and the information housed at higher levels is essential for integrating CCA and DRM.^{xxxiii}

5.3 Inclusion

- The inclusive planning and design of development outcomes needs to highlight the community level and where it fits within reference to sub-national, national and regional levels.
- Provision of social protection measures for the poorest and most vulnerable is required through human, financial and technical resources and services to support local CCDRM responses.
- The risk of exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, influencing local power dynamics and promoting maladaptive pathways is high.^{xxxiv}
- Ensuring an enabling policy and institutional framework with provisions for increased bottom-up feedback and regular reviews will support the revision of policies that may increase vulnerabilities. This requires the implementation, improvement and maintenance of local monitoring frameworks for vulnerability and resilience tracking and reporting.

5.4 Partnerships

- Integrated inclusive community programs through multi-stakeholder partnerships can coordinate at community level and link to sub-national, national and regional strategies.
- Facilitating the creation of partnerships, networks and the sharing of information between community groups and sub-national levels of government is required through local development plans and strengthened institutions.
- NGOs play an essential role in supporting CCDRM at the community level.^{xxxv} Those agencies prepared to work with responsive governments can take a lead at the community level and the private sector can demonstrate leadership by adapting high profile investments to natural hazards.^{xxxvi}

ⁱ The number of Pacific references in this research highlights that the region presents some of the highest levels of global risk from climate change and disasters and has a slightly longer history of managing these challenges than other regions.

ⁱⁱ ADB, *Outlook 2013 Update: Governance and Public Sector Delivery*, www.finance.gov.to (accessed March 2015)

ⁱⁱⁱ SPC and UNDP, *Review of Regional DRM Mainstreaming Programme in the Pacific*, 2011; SPREP and UNDP, *Mainstreaming Climate Change in the Pacific: A Practical Guide*, 2013; Hay J, *Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific: An institutional and Policy Analysis*, ISDR, UNDP, GFDRR, 2012

^{iv} Levine S, Ludi E, Jones L, *Rethinking Support for Adaptive Capacity to Climate Change: The Role of Development Interventions*, ODI, 2011

^v UNDP/AusAID, *The Gendered Dimensions of Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation to Climate Change – Stories from the Pacific*, 2010

^{vi} World Bank, GFDRR, *Acting Today for Tomorrow: a policy practice note for climate and disaster resilient development in the Pacific Islands region*, 2012

^{vii} Resilience is defined as: 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 (UNDP, 2010). Refer: Boyd E, Osbahr H, Ericksen P, Tompkins E, Lemos, M and Miller F, *Resilience and 'climatizing' development: examples and policy implications*, *Development*, 51: 390-396, 2008; Mitchell T and Harris K, *Resilience: a risk management approach*, Background Note, ODI, 2012; UNDP, *Reducing disaster risk: A challenge for development*, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, 2004

viii The need for integrated, comprehensive and whole of government approaches for managing risk and addressing community-based issues is the basis of the integrated Strategy for Climate and Disaster Resilient Development in the Pacific (currently under development for launch in 2015).

ix The Risk Governance concept was framed by risk theorist and researcher Ortwin Renn. It integrates concepts of risk into the social and natural sciences. The main focus is on systemic risks that have a high degree of complexity, uncertainty and ambiguity, and with major financial, economic, and social impacts. Refer: Renn O, *Risk Governance: Coping with Uncertainty in a Complex World*, Earthscan Risk in Society Series, 2008.

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xv Gero A, Méheux K, et al, *Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific: The challenge of integration*, UNSW and Australian Tsunami Research Centre, Miscellaneous Report 4, 2010

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xvii Galloway McLean K, *Advance Guard: Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation, Mitigation and Indigenous Peoples – A Compendium of Case Studies*, UNU, 2009

xviii UNDP (BCPR), *Disaster Risk Reduction, Governance & Mainstreaming*, 2010

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xx International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), *Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change. Participatory Learning and Action*, 2009

xxi Campbell J, *Traditional Disaster Reduction in Pacific Island Communities*, NZ Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences, 2006

xxii Galloway McLean, OpCit

xxiii Hay J, *Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in the Pacific: An institutional and Policy Analysis*, ISDR, UNDP, GFDRR, 2012

xxiv Schipper L and Pelling M, *Disaster Risk, Climate Change and International Development: Scope for, and Challenges to Integration*, *Disasters* 30(1), 2006

xxv In this context entry points are defined as: opportunities for the identification, integration and implementation of measures and investments specifically designed to improve risk governance (ODI 2013).

xxvi ISDR, *Gender Perspectives: Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction into Climate Change Adaptation - Good Practices and Lessons Learned*, 2008

^{xxvii} Tanner T, Lazcano J, Lussier K, Polack E, Oswald K, Sengupta, A, Murphy L and Rajabali F, *Children, Climate Change and Disasters: An Annotated Bibliography*, IDS, undated

^{xxviii} Hay J, OpCit

^{xxix} Gero A, Méheux K, et al, *Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific: The challenge of integration*, UNSW and Australian Tsunami Research Centre, Miscellaneous Report 4, 2010

^{xxx} Ibid

^{xxxi} OECD, *Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation Policy Guidance*, 2009

^{xxxii} World Bank Group, *Managing Climate Risk: Integrating Adaptation into World Bank Group Operations*, 2006

^{xxxiii} OECD, *Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation Policy Guidance*, 2009

^{xxxiv} ODI (Working Paper), *Exploring Political and Socio-Economic Drivers of Transformational Climate Policy*, October 2013

^{xxxv} ISDR and GFDRR, *Stockholm Plan of Action for Integrating Disaster Risks and Climate Change Impacts in Poverty Reduction*, 2007

^{xxxvi} World Bank Group, *Managing Climate Risk: Integrating Adaptation into World Bank Group Operations*, 2006