WHY ADVOCATE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION?

'Our vulnerability to disasters has never been so high. We have no choice ... we need to move the disaster risk reduction agenda forward if we want to save lives.'

JOHN HOLMES, UNITED NATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

tearfund

This booklet was produced in collaboration with
The Community Resilience Research and Development Group, World Vision International.

World Vision International is a Christian relief and development organisation working for the wellbeing of all people, especially children.

World Vision International, 800 West Chestnut Avenue, Monrovia, CA 91016-3198, USA

Tearfund   We are Christians passionate about the local church bringing justice and transforming lives – overcoming global poverty.

Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, UK

Why advocate for disaster risk reduction?

Contents

Glossary

Capacities The physical, economic, social, political, cultural and institutional strengths upon which people, communities or states can draw on to avert, mitigate or recover from disasters.

Climate change A change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity which alters the composition of the earth's atmosphere and is in addition to climate variability that happens naturally over time.

Disaster An event, either natural or man-made, that causes great distress or destruction. It is a social crisis which occurs when a hazard coincides with a vulnerable situation, resulting in significant loss of life, severe life-threatening disruption and substantial physical damage.

Disaster risk management The systematic process of using administrative decisions, organisation, operational skills and capacities to implement disaster risk reduction policies and strategies.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) A preventative approach to disaster management that includes the technical, social or economic actions or measures used to reduce direct and indirect disaster losses. The expression 'disaster risk reduction' or 'DRR' is now widely used as a term that encompasses the two aspects of a disaster reduction strategy: 'mitigation' and 'preparedness'.[1] It is a process concerned with reducing the level of vulnerability and minimising the disruptive effects of hazards by building community capacities.

Vulnerability The degree to which people are susceptible to loss, damage, injury and death due to hazard. This is a function of spiritual, physical, economic, social, political, technical, ideological and cultural factors. These factors affect people's ability to protect themselves or to recover from a disaster.

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1 The term 'DRR' is now more commonly used than the term 'DMP' (disaster mitigation and preparedness).

Introduction

This booklet is for organisations that are engaged in community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR), but have not yet considered carrying out advocacy on this issue.

We look at what advocacy is, and four reasons why advocacy related to DRR is necessary:

■ Disasters are increasing, and threatening progress in sustainable poverty reduction.

■ Governments at every level are responsible for reducing disaster risks

■ Governments should be held accountable to their promises

■ Businesses need to ensure that their operations do not add to the vulnerability of employees and other members of the community.

Community-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and churches have an important role to play in the decision-making processes of governments and businesses.

The aim of this booklet is to inspire organisations to involve advocacy in their work to reduce disaster risks, in order to bring long-term positive change. An advocacy approach should be used alongside disaster interventions such as preparedness planning, early warning systems and education and awareness.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is about influencing people, policies, structures and systems in order to bring about change. It is about influencing those in power to act more fairly.

Tearfund defines advocacy as…

'seeking with, and on behalf of, poor people to address the underlying causes of poverty, bring justice and support good development through influencing the policies and practices of the powerful.'

Advocacy is firmly rooted in the Bible, and is based on God's commitment to justice:
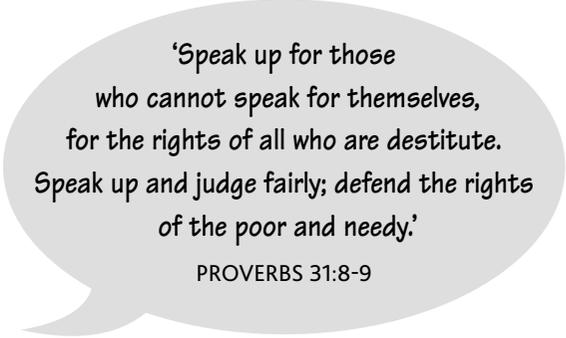
> 'Speak up for those
> who cannot speak for themselves,
> for the rights of all who are destitute.
> Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights
> of the poor and needy.'
>
> PROVERBS 31:8-9

Advocacy complements other approaches to development because it:

- tackles root causes of poverty and brings long-term change
- helps people to see themselves as agents of change in their own communities
- can change power structure and systems of injustice
- can help to generate more resources for on-going development work.

Advocacy is not necessarily confrontational. Decision makers such as governments and local leaders are often aware that there is a problem and will welcome suggestions about how it can be solved. Advocacy work can take place on many levels and varies according to the problem and the types of groups involved. The roles of an advocate include facilitating communication between people, negotiating, demonstrating good practice and building alliances. Advocacy work involves a number of activities, such as research, lobbying, campaigning, praying, networking, raising awareness, mobilising people and working with the media.[2]

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2 For more detail about carrying out effective advocacy work, see Tearfund's *Advocacy Toolkit* (ROOTS 1 and 2).

Disasters are increasing

Natural hazards such as floods, droughts and storms, are having an increasing impact on people because human vulnerability is increasing. Vulnerability is related to inequality and injustice that exists within society, and poor people are usually the most at risk.

- ■ Three times more people were affected by disasters in the 1990s than in the 1970s

- ■ Nine out of ten people killed and affected by disasters are in developing countries. Poor women are particularly vulnerable.

Climate change is expected to result in more frequent and severe hazards. It is also likely to increase people's vulnerability, resulting in even more disasters. Tearfund's partner organisations in Latin America, Africa and Asia are already reporting the effects of a changing climate on the people they are working with.

Tearfund partner MOUCECORE, Rwanda

'The longest drought period used to be up to four months and now it can be six to seven months. River and lake levels have also fallen and some swamps have dried up.'

Currently, many governments and aid agencies focus more on emergency relief measures than disaster risk reduction. This can create a culture of dependency amongst vulnerable people, preventing them from escaping the poverty trap. Governments and local authorities must put more emphasis on strengthening people's capacity to anticipate, cope with and recover from disasters, as an integral part of relief and development programmes. This can reduce the impact of disasters or even prevent them from happening. The most effective way to reduce the risk of disaster is to work with local people to identify and analyse their vulnerabilities and capacities, and to develop and implement an action plan that will be effective and sustainable in their context.

Governments and institutions must also put more emphasis on addressing the underlying causes of disasters, such as poverty, unplanned urbanisation and environmental degradation.

United Nations Hyogo Framework for Action

'Disaster loss is on the rise with grave consequences for the survival, dignity and livelihood of individuals, particularly the poor, and hard-won development gains.'

Governments are responsible

■ Governments have a responsibility to uphold their citizens' rights, including their right to be 'safe from harm' (see United Nations Declaration of Human Rights)

■ Poor governance is one of the main reasons why people are vulnerable to hazards. Poor governance is when a government is not effective, or is not open, transparent and accountable to its citizens.

■ Government policy can affect the programmes of NGOs and the communities they work with, in positive and negative ways.

United Nations
Hyogo Framework
for Action

'Strong national and local commitment is required to save lives and livelihoods threatened by natural hazards. Natural hazards must be taken into account in public and private sector decision-making in the same way that environmental and social impact assessments are currently required. Countries must therefore develop or modify policies, laws, and organisational arrangements, as well as plans, programmes, and projects, to integrate disaster risk reduction. They must also allocate sufficient resources to support and maintain them.'

Governments can meet their responsibilities by doing the following:

■ making disaster risk management a priority in their policies

■ developing legislation on disaster risk reduction issues which involves participation by people at all levels of society

■ promoting disaster risk management as the responsibility of many different sectors

■ allocating human and financial resources for work related to disaster risk reduction

■ encouraging the use of disaster risk reduction principles and practices at all levels

■ facilitating participation from civil society and the private sector in work related to disaster risk reduction

■ decentralising resources and decision-making powers

By advocating on disaster risk reduction, we can help our governments to become more transparent in the way they work, to involve local communities more in decision-making, and to become more accountable to the people who elected them.

Disaster Management
Law in Indonesia

CASE STUDY

Indonesia's Disaster Management (DM) Law was initiated by civil society. Following the tsunami in southern Asia in 2004, an NGO held a meeting with the leader of Indonesia's Legislative Body to discuss the status of disaster management among national priorities and how it could help to push it forward.

The NGO then organised a public discussion: 'The Urgency for a Disaster Management Law in Indonesia' where participants agreed on the need for a law on disaster management. The NGO was then asked to co-ordinate the drafting of a White Paper for a Bill on Disaster Management. This was written with participation of the Department of Home Affairs and other NGOs and sectoral experts. The paper was submitted to the President of Indonesia in 2005.

In 2007, the Indonesian Disaster Management Bill was passed. Civil society was involved throughout the discussions and drafting of the Bill.

Governments should be held accountable

Around the world, community-based organisations (CBOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are working with poor communities to reduce their vulnerability to disasters. However, in a context of increasing poverty and global climate change, this is becoming more difficult. Only government and inter-governmental agencies have the capacity to 'scale up' community-based approaches so that the rising trend in disaster losses can be addressed.

In 2005, in Kobe, Japan, 168 governments met at the UN 'World Conference on Disaster Reduction' (WCDR). They agreed a set of goals, activities and policy measures related to disaster risk reduction, which are to be achieved by 2015. These are set out in the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015* (HFA).

Governments agreed on five 'priorities for action':

- ensuring that disaster risk reduction is a priority at national and local levels
- identifying, assessing and monitoring disaster risks and enhancing early warning
- using knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels
- reducing the underlying risk factors
- strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

Achieving the goals agreed at the WCDR is the responsibility of governments in the North and South. Tearfund UK is advocating for donor governments in the North to invest more in disaster risk reduction. Governments in the South must also act on the WCDR agreements and be held accountable for achieving them.

Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action

In June 2007, the United Nations hosted the first session of the 'Global Platform for Disaster Reduction' in Geneva. The purpose of this Platform, which will meet every two years, is to assess progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA).

At the Platform, a 'Global Network of NGOs' was launched. The members of this network are relief and development agencies who work with communities in Latin America, Africa and Asia and are committed to the HFA. The NGOs produced a 'position paper' of recommendations, which was endorsed by 80 organisations and distributed at the Global Platform. Governments welcomed the paper and many referred to its recommendations in their speeches. Some of the recommendations were also included in the summary document produced by the Chairperson at the end of the conference.

The Global Network of NGOs is currently chaired by Tearfund, and will continue to plan joint advocacy initiatives leading up to the next session of the Global Platform.

Businesses have a role to play

■ Businesses, as well as governments, should be responsible for reducing disaster risks.

■ Businesses should be careful to avoid creating hazards and making local people more vulnerable to disasters. This concerns their business environment (including the communities in which they are based) , as well as their supply and distribution networks.

■ Successful reduction of disaster risks requires the involvement and commitment of both public and private parties. NGOs can work with businesses to help them to better protect their operations and ensure that their operations do not add to the vulnerability of the local community. National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction can encourage dialogue and develop common interests (see p15).

■ The evolving idea of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) provides a good basis from which to encourage business participation in disaster risk reduction. CSR is the contribution that businesses make to a country's sustainable development goals. They take account of their economic, social and environmental impacts as they operate, and seek to increase the positive impacts and reduce the negative impacts.


Lobbying for water rights in Malawi

CASE STUDY

In Malawi, over 159 people in four target communities were trained in a rights-based approach to development. They received advocacy training which helped them to mobilise themselves to lobby the Limbe Leaf Company. This company had constructed a dam on the community's land to enable tobacco production, but it prevented anyone else from using the water. After the lobbying, the community was granted permission by both the company and the local authority to use the dam and part of the disputed land for crop irrigation.

Civil society organisations should be involved

- When a government fails to fulfil its duty to its citizens, the citizens have a legitimate right and responsibility to hold the government to account.

- Local civil society groups (including the local church), have the right to engage in political debate in order to influence policy on behalf of the poorest members of the community.

- Good government policies are based on experience and knowledge of the activities that are successful and those that are not. CBOs and NGOs have a wealth of experience of project implementation and working with communities that should be shared.

- Achievement of the Hyogo Framework for Action requires greater participation from civil society at all levels, including representatives of female, vulnerable and high-risk groups. All stakeholders, including government, business and civil society, need to work together if goals and targets are to be reached.

- CBOs and NGOs can enable the voices of poor people to be heard by those in power. Grass roots leaders who have developed effective risk reduction approaches should participate in local and national dialogues about policy.

- CBOs and NGOs are also in a good position to raise awareness amongst communities of the importance of disaster risk reduction.
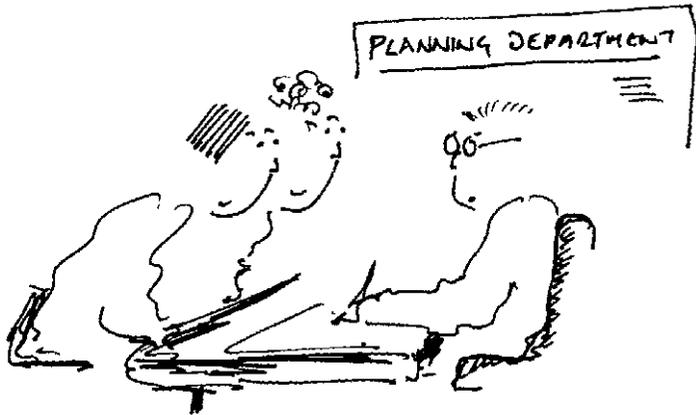
Influencing DRR
policy and practice in
Malawi

CASE STUDY

In 2006 the Government of Malawi, through its Department of Poverty and Disaster Management, started to develop a National Social Protection Policy. This is a significant policy because it is supported by a consortium of international donors, and will provide a central source of funding for the government's disaster risk reduction (DRR) projects. A Technical Committee was established to help develop the policy.

Tearfund partner EAM (Evangelical Association of Malawi), which represents a consortium of NGOs working in DRR, was concerned that it did not have a seat on the Technical Committee. Instead, NGO interests were being represented by CONGOMA (Council for Non-governmental Organisations), which did not have all the necessary knowledge and experience in DRR.

In July 2007, there was a significant breakthrough. EAM agreed to participate in a Tearfund research project on national government approaches to DRR. This involved setting up a meeting with the Government of Malawi to find out more about its DRR policy and practice. As well as providing valuable information for the Tearfund research project, this meeting helped EAM to develop a strong relationship with its government department responsible for DRR. As a result, EAM was given a seat on the Technical Committee developing the Social Protection Policy. The government has also included EAM in a group of stakeholders which will meet regularly with the government to monitor and contribute to its progress on addressing climate change.

Strengthening
local capacities in
Guatemala City

CASE STUDY

In Guatemala, seven humanitarian agencies are involved in an Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The aim of the project is to improve the speed, quality, and effectiveness of emergency response. One of the ECB initiatives focuses on building local capacities and integrating DRR into policies and programming.

The ECB project has strengthened the disaster risk reduction capacities of local communities in the 'Nuevo Amanecer' slum in Guatemala City, improving community organisation and risk management. Community members learned new techniques to make their houses safer. This brought government interest and as a result the community members have obtained documents for land ownership and access to services such as water and electricity. These results were only possible with the effort of each family living at the slum and with the collaboration of local government and international organisations present in the area.

Next steps

■ Find out more about what advocacy involves by reading Tearfund's *Advocacy Toolkit* (ROOTS books 1 and 2). The second book provides guidance on developing an advocacy strategy.

■ Make sure that DRR is integrated into your organisation's own development work. Remember, if you are telling others what you think they should be doing, you must be prepared for your own work to be inspected. A useful publication is *Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction: a tool for development organisations* (Tearfund 2005).

■ To avoid duplicating work, and to strengthen your advocacy efforts, find out which other organisations in your country or region are carrying out DRR work and/or advocacy work.

■ Try to gain a better understanding of the national policy context for DRR, by researching the existing policy frameworks and structures. Useful questions to ask include:

  • What is the government's policy and strategy on disaster risk reduction? Are any laws in place that relate to DRR, such as land use and building codes?

  • Has the government signed up to the Hyogo Framework for Action?

  • How does the government make decisions about disaster risk reduction?

  • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the government's policies on DRR?

■ If you have identified a problem that needs to be addressed and have decided to go ahead with advocacy work, make sure you gather all the necessary information to ensure that the causes and effects of the problem are well understood. Tearfund's *Advocacy Toolkit* contains tools to help you get to the root of a problem in order to address it in the most appropriate way.

■ Arrange a meeting with other organisations carrying out DRR work and/or advocacy, to see how you could work together.

■ Tearfund's Regional teams and Advocacy Group will be happy to discuss ideas with you and offer advice.

Useful networks and organisations

Global

United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)

Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Telephone: +41 22 917 8908/8907

Email: isdr@un.org

Website: www.unisdr.org

ProVention Consortium

IFRC
PO Box 372
17 Chemin des Crêts
CH-1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland

Email: provention@ifrc.org

Website: www.proventionconsortium.org

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

PO Box 372
CH-1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland

Telephone: +41 22 730 42 22

Website: www.ifrc.org

Regional and national

Many countries now have 'National Platforms' for DRR. These are forums or committees that support the development of DRR policies and monitor implementation. They should consist of, and facilitate interaction between, government and civil society including NGOs and businesses. Contact the UNISDR for more information.

There may be regional and national networks of NGOs who are doing advocacy work related to DRR. Find out about these by asking other NGOs working on disaster issues. Your national Red Cross / Red Crescent Society may be a good place to start.

Further information

- *ROOTS 1 and 2: Advocacy Toolkit*. Tearfund 2002
- *ROOTS 9: Reducing risk of disaster in our communities*. Tearfund 2006
- *The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015*. UNISDR 2005
- *Learn the Lessons*. Tearfund 2005
- *Turning Practice into Policy*. Tearfund 2007
- *Legislation for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction*. Tearfund 2006
- *Prepare to Live*. Tearfund 2007

All the above publications can be ordered from Tearfund or accessed on the web at http://tilz.tearfund.org.

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