

Local to global: Communities at the centre of policy implementation

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What do international policy frameworks mean without the people most vulnerable taking charge?

These policies mean nothing. They sit on the shelves and we meet all over the world. Without communities. Policies mean nothing.

The narrative is widely accepted now : disaster risk reduction saves more lives, reduces human suffering and prevents economic losses. Risk reduction also contributes to economic prosperity. The impact of climate change negatively affects access to water, and consequently affects food security sectors in agriculture, livestock, health and nutrition. The impacts extend to other social sectors like education, social cohesion (peace), infrastructure and create more inequalities in gender roles. Climate induced disasters push vulnerable people further into poverty.

The Partners for Resilience (PfR) is an Alliance of five Netherlands-based working on building community resilience through climate change adaptation and ecosystem management initiatives. The PfR is a collaboration joining humanitarian, development, DRR and ecosystems perspectives. Local perceptions of what risk is crucial in community-based resilience initiatives, thus PfR places a strong emphasis on the centrality of communities in driving the resilience agenda.

PfR, funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is advocating for the application of an integrated risk management (IRM) approach to reduce impacts to shocks from climate change, ecosystem degradation and mal practices in development investments, or a combination of these factors. PfR advances policy dialogue on risk reduction from concrete programmes implemented by PfR members in Africa, Asia and Latin America where it has proven that we can reduce disaster risks but also create community economic prosperity. The session will showcase practical experiences on integrating diverse skills from environment, humanitarian and development practitioners and the role that traditional knowledge plays to build community resilience, diversify livelihoods in drought/flood prone areas from a climate change and eco-system management perspective. PfR emphasizes placing communities at the centre of risk reduction through risk analysis/assessment, development of early warning mechanisms as well of planning and implementation of programmes through an inter-sectorial/interdisciplinary perspective.

On a basis of eight key principles, the IRM approach strives for:-

1. Local ownership - Promote community self-management, boost empowerment and create local ownership. This will put communities in the driving seat of their own development. Local and traditional knowledge and resources should be the basis, and should to be

complemented with external resources, including scientific knowledge, to make interventions more effective and sustainable.

2. Livihoods - Focus on protecting and strengthening livihoods, both from a humanitarian and a development perspective. The robustness of structures and arrangements through which a individuals, families and communities function determines their ability to withstand or recover from shocks and stresses. Risk management should therefore focus on livihoods through a combination of community interventions and targeted dialogues with stakeholders to make policies, investment decisions and practices risk-informed
3. Landscapes - Recognize the broader geographical scales (landscapes) on which the drivers of risk express themselves. By regarding risk in a wider landscape, the places where it originates and where it manifests itself become clear é places which can be geographically remote.
4. Ecosystems - Moreover the role of ecosystems for community safety and resilience needs to be recognized: degraded ecosystems can increase disaster risk, while healthy and well-managed ecosystems can function as a buffer for hazards and contribute to people's livihoods.
5. Timescales - Encompass different time scales in risk management, enabling its adaptation to changing risk situations in both short and long-term, and ensuring that early warning information can be translated into appropriate action. Global and local - Make global and regional policy frameworks and agreements risk-informed by local realities, so that they effectively enable IRM initiatives. The accompanying systems and structures should in turn ensure that indeed local communities benefit.
6. Integration - Apply a holistic approach. Since hazards and risks are not only manifold but also often mutually reinforcing, single-sector orientations should be avoided
7. Partnerships - Approaches will become most effective if involved stakeholders (communities, government agencies, private sector, knowledge institutes, and civil society) collaborate to complement each other's expertise and resources in order to traverse different sectors.

The approaches applied by PfR exemplify how to bring coherence in the implementation of international agreements- Sendai, the SDGs, Paris Climate Agreement and New Urban Agenda.