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Capacity building

Community organization and empowerment

Disaster risk reduction is a process by which the resilience of communities is transformed to a higher level of capacity to reduce vulnerability or disaster risk that may be triggered by a combination of a hazard with limited capacity. Community participation in interventions is essential to arrive at sustainable results. Developing the capacity of communities to participate in risk reduction endeavours will enhance ownership and sustainability of interventions. Taking correct actions and making appropriate decisions requires empowerment. Empowerment can only happen if the communities and groups are organized. Organization and participation/empowerment are two sides of the same coin - the terms participation and empowerment can be used interchangeably.

When communities are organized for a common purpose, their participation can be enhanced and they are able to achieve things they may not be able to accomplish individually. They will exchange ideas, pool resources, share information, encourage one another and get access to external support. They will have a stronger voice to negotiate with government or other stakeholders. When they are organized and effectively participate, they will release their collective potentials to attain the goals of sustainable development.

Community participation is an incremental process that cannot be achieved at a single try or in a short span of time. It should be achieved throughout the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process of disaster risk reduction interventions.

The purpose of community organization and empowerment

Participation enhances widespread exchange of information and experience, which is crucial for success in disaster risk reduction. It enhances contributions of stakeholders and ensures their involvement in the entire process of disaster risk reduction and development activities. This involvement will result in ownership of the process and outcome, which is the basis of empowerment.

Participation and empowerment:

- strengthens individual and group confidence
- enhances visioning of the community to work for positive changes
- capacitates the community to take appropriate action
- enhances access to social power and culminates in transformational development
- enhances local decision-making, self-reliance, inclusiveness, democracy and social learning
- improves the conditions of ordinary people
- narrows relationships and social gaps and enables creation of cohesive communities, especially for marginalized groups
- helps secure one's rights and privileges and encourages people to accept their responsibilities and accountabilities.

Effective participation results in ownership

An Italian NGO based in Adami Tullu-Jido Kombolcha *woreda* of East Shoa zone of Oromiya offered some resources to help the Halaku-Gulenta–Boque community. The NGO sensitized the community and asked them to prioritize their needs. Lack of potable water was identified as their top priority. The NGO promised to install a wind powered water-pump. It conducted a second round of discussion and sensitization meetings with the community members and asked them to select a location for the water point. The people discussed this and decided the place. Further discussions and sensitizations were conducted to agree on who does what. It was agreed that the NGO would provide the necessary machinery and parts: windmill, drilling machine and water pump. The community agreed to provide stones, sand, fencing and labour.

While the water scheme was progressing, training was given to three farmers, elected by the community, on maintenance and operation of the pump and the water scheme. Training was also given to selected committee members to manage and ensure effective functioning and sustainability of the water project.

The community decided on a payment system based on user-fees and also agreed how to handle the money collected. They opened a bank account. Income collected from the fees was saved so it could be used for repairs and maintenance. The committee members and the trained farmer-technicians provided their services on a voluntary basis. A water-users association was formed for overall management supervision and decision making.

The community is so committed to the upkeep of the scheme because the scheme was based on their felt need and they participated throughout the decision-making process. They were part of the whole process through genuine participation. They now own it! Effective participation throughout the entire process helped to create a sense of ownership.

Approaches to community participation

Participation can take different forms - from merely providing labour and materials, through consultation on project implementation, to full involvement in decision-making. In the past various approaches have been tried. While some have succeeded, others have failed. From experience, we know that efforts in which the communities actively participated by initiating and mobilizing their own resources (skills, knowledge, information, experience and expertise) and those in which they were fully involved in making decisions, tend to be sustained and have a lasting impact. Conversely, those prescribed by outside agents tend to fail. Three of the many possible approaches are presented in the matrix below.

Approach	Major Assumption	Strengths/Advantages	Shortcomings/Disadvantages
Banking approach	Community has little or nothing to contribute Everything must be provided by outside experts during disaster (doing to/for the people)	Can be effective during acute disasters or emergencies Outside resources can be mobilized quickly	Communities don't own solution prescribe by outsiders Focuses on deficiencies and doesn't recognize community relevance and resources Not sustainable in the long-term as communities may not have the skills and know how to maintain interventions introduced without their involvement
Problem solving approach (Socratic approach)	Problem-focused, (felt-needs analysis and treatment by providers) Biased by outside experts perception of the problem and its solution	Use of expert for problem analysis could make findings more objective If root cause of the problem is identified, solution can be long lasting Working with experts, community members can learn new skills and enhance their capacity	Analysis and its solutions happen when a problem occurs or its symptoms manifest, hence does not include preventive measures Over dependent on the opinion of outside experts and gives little or no value to local knowledge Problem identification may take a long time and response may be delayed May address symptoms instead of real problem, hence prescribe wrong solutions
Appreciative approach	Communities have assets, social capital, indigenous knowledge and expertise that can be tapped into to minimize vulnerabilities and risks that may be caused by hazards By learning, appreciating and celebrating successes, their capacities can be enhanced	Gives a positive outlook and hope for what may seem a grim situation Enhances community's morale, participation, self-recognition Promotes empowerment, self-confidence, ownership, sustainability, visioning, personal growth and development	The process may take time and response may be delayed Expects too much from the community at the expense of outside support that may be needed Assumes openness which may be lacking in the entire process Wrong people may be targeted to provide the needed information Avoiding negatives may lead to hiding or a cover-up

Empowerment through appreciation

The level of a community's participation in disaster risk reduction depends on their capacity and the extent they are empowered to exercise their economic, social and political potentials. The starting point for enhancing community participation and empowerment is to respect them and give them recognition for what they have achieved so far. This will restore confidence and a sense of pride. Communities have been coping with, adapting to and surviving disaster risks for a long time. They have undertaken innovations - sometimes successfully and sometimes not - but will have learned from both. The positive element of the past can be a source of vision and energy for the future.

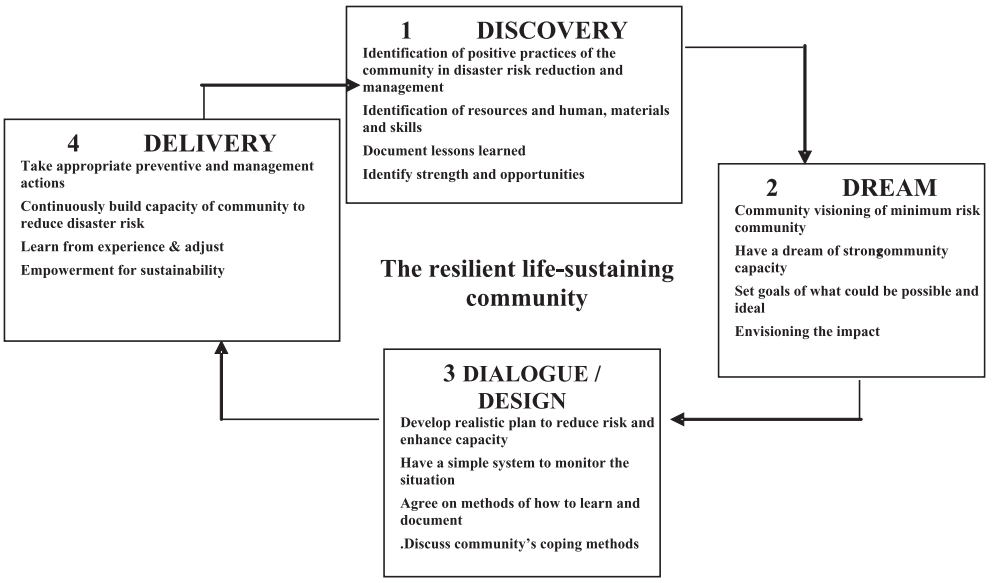
The capacity building and empowerment of the community should, therefore, start from the story of the community by the community; this will empower them. It is a mechanism of sharing and transferring experience and information to the next generation, which can be useful in disaster risk reduction.

Why the 'banking' approach doesn't work

During the socialist system of government in Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s, responsibility for formation of cooperatives was given to local administrations. People were forced to come together to form cooperatives by their communist leaders. Quite a number of such cooperatives were established with this 'top-down' approach, without consultation and without taking into consideration communities' preferences and consensus. Members were forced to contribute to the functioning of the cooperatives, both in cash and in kind. The rich and the poor were brought together by the order of the 'comrades'. The Aira Producer's Cooperative (West Wollega) was formed in this way and was forced to function for more than ten years. The Cooperative had accumulated a substantial sum of money and resources through 'voluntary' contributions.

However, the truth about its 'voluntary' nature manifested itself immediately the socialist government was overthrown. Members not only looted its property and forced the treasurer to share with them all the money to hand, but also destroyed the infrastructure. Because there was no community involvement in the management, the resources of the 'cooperative' were stolen by its own 'members'!

The appreciative approach to building disaster risk reduction capacity of the community uses the 4-D model: Discovery – Dream – Dialogue/Design – Delivery, described below.



Basic considerations in the appreciative approach

These include that:

- it recognizes and values the long history, experience and knowledge the community has used to prevent, mitigate and manage disaster
- it capitalizes on successes
- through appreciation, communities are empowered and their confidence is enhanced
- the appreciation process enhances formation of strong partnerships between communities and outsiders
- the process will enhance participation based on mutual respect, trust and knowledge.

Key steps towards participation and empowerment

In disaster risk reduction efforts, it is crucial to get all stakeholders involved actively. The following are some principles of empowering participation:

- When people are organized, they are better empowered and will have a stronger voice that can be heard.
- It is the right of every citizen to get organized and involved so this must be encouraged.
- Citizens have the right to access basic services so their needs can be met.
- The facilitator has to be patient (getting activities done on time is unlikely to enhance transformation or sustainability).
- Partnerships must be forged with local government to create mutual understanding and support.
- Effective participation starts small, in a manner that the community can manage largely on its own, and in time grows.
- Effective participation takes a 'learning and sharing' approach, not a blueprint
- It encourages the community to mobilize its own resources and encourages community members to invest.
- It helps to find new ways of working together (partnership).
- The process must be all-inclusive: women, children, youths and other vulnerable groups.
- Who participates, the type of participation and how the participation takes place determine the quality of the participation.

Participation is meaningful only when it implies ownership of the whole process in which all have the chance to contribute.

'Outsiders' think they have the solutions for all community problems
In his 1997 book "Whose reality counts? Putting the first last", Robert Chambers suggests otherwise:

> "All powerful uppers think they know
> What is right and real for those below?
> At least each upper so believes
> But all are wrong; all power deceives"

Robert Chambers further encourages development workers and actors to pose critical questions such as:

- whose knowledge counts?
- whose values are emphasized?
- whose criteria and preferences matter?
- whose appraisal, analysis and planning are emphasized?
- whose actions are encouraged?
- whose monitoring and evaluation tells the truth?
- whose learning is given emphasis?
- whose empowerment are we talking about?
- so, whose reality counts?

Empowerment through organizing: the experience of Lalo Mamma Community Self-help Development Association, North Shoa zone of the Amhara Regional State

Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE) has been using community-based institutions (CBIs) at the grassroots level to unleash potential and empower members to manage and sustain development. To form such associations, ASE uses sensitization and dialogue with the community. After the sensitization, a steering committee is formed to convene meetings and lead the discussion. The general meeting called by the steering comm ittee, after reaching consensus on the need, elects the CBI leadership from among the community members. The CBIs formed at the *kebele* levels come together and form an apex organisation at *woreda* level.

Care is taken to ensure participation of different groups, including women and other marginalized groups. The CBIs then prepare their own bye-laws and register with the Government as a legal self-help development association. ASE provides backstopping through leadership and management training, project pla nning, implementation and monitoring. The Lalo Mamma CBI has run self-help development activities in areas of community-centred livelihood projects, such as potable water development and other group-based schemes. The CBI also developed and promoted micro-projects on an individual basis, such as sheep and poultry rearing and vegetable production. Recently, the CBI prepared its own programme proposal and secured Birr 1.3 million from Action Aid Ethiopia.

Outcomes of community empowerment

In community empowerment processes, the following should be clearly observed at the end of their implementation:

- The release of people's potential to help themselves to promote development initiatives, so risk reduction capacity is enhanced.

- People are encouraged to take initiatives that reflect their situation and to be aware and act on the needs of their more disadvantaged members.
- Communities trained and mentored to take leadership roles for community-related programmes and interventions, including disaster risk reduction efforts.
- Local resources are valued, mobilized and utilized by and for communities to enhance their welfare.
- People are encouraged and organized to act collectively to achieve common goals and objectives.
- Culture of respect, trust and inclusiveness promoted by all stakeholders.
- Culture of open discussion on issues, including celebration of successes and airing of grievances without fear of repercussion.
- Frequent participatory training conducted for the achievement of the desired community behavioural changes.
- Freedom of expression: people's talents, rights and opinions encouraged and nurtured.
- People's initiatives are encouraged during appraisal of needs and selection of responses – local wisdom and tradition respected and heeded.
- Active community organizations emerge to sustain disaster risk reduction, responses and development schemes.

Community organization

If communities are organized they will deal better with hazard and disaster risks. A strongly organized community has strong local institutions with mutually agreed upon rules and practices. If they are organized, they can pool resources, experience and knowledge and will become cohesive and have coping strategies that enable them to withstand difficult times. If they form a strong and united group, they can speak with one voice and negotiate with local government, other communities and development agencies. These capabilities enable them to respond to hazards effectively.

There is a wide range of community organizations. These include the councils of elders, who mange clan affairs, settle conflicts, direct herd movements during drought, mobilize clan members during floods and other hazards to support the affected, and mediate inter-tribal disputes. There are also health, water and sanitation, environmental protection and education committees that perform various functions. In addition there are special interest groups, such as faith-based and women's groups. Finally, there are various local welfare associations in Ethiopia, such as *edirs, ekubs and debo*, that can be involved in preventing and managing disasters.

Advantages and challenges of community organizations

Community organisations offer a range of advantages. These include:

- services provided at low cost
- services provided within easy reach
- technology and know-how remains in the community
- build community capacity over time
- trusted by the community
- understand the local traditions and customs hence limit conflict
- community members are encouraged to innovate and learn from each other.

But they also present some challenges, such as:

- may not be recognized by government policies, which undermines their authority
- there may be mutual suspicion among community members
- fear of offending friends and relatives may compromise objectivity
- need for great efforts to achieve inclusivity of weak and disadvantaged group.

Disaster risk reduction education

Disaster risk reduction education (DRR E) is a variety of educational and training initiatives that proactively promote appropriate behavioural attitudes and practices. This is undertaken at all levels so that people can make informed

decisions and develop systematic tools, skills, and ideas to prevent (where possible) or reduce hazard, vulnerability and risk. It is an interactive process of mutual learning among people and institutions. The *Hyogo Framework for Action* encourages governments and civil society to "use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels."

DRR E in Ethiopia is important for a number of reasons: to create the necessary risk perception among all actors using the relevant lessons and experiences from Ethiopia; to develop a culture of prevention and safety, and public awareness of their situation and capacity; to ensure that any changes in behaviour and practice are targeted at the whole population to achieve sustainable development; to create opportunities to link scientific and traditional knowledge to safeguard against all sorts of hazards.

An example of DRR E could be the linking of indigenous livelihood situation monitoring systems with the scientific predictive indicators on climate, markets and other social issues. The Borana people, for instance, have their own systems to monitor pasture and water availability, physical security and for communicating about and controlling livestock disease outbreaks. To assess and scout for pasture availability, groups of men will be dispatched to different areas and the information obtained will be disseminated for decision-making by the community.

DRR E in formal education systems

Schools are universally regarded as institutions of learning, for instilling scientific lessons, cultural values and passing on both traditional and conventional knowledge. One way of mainstreaming disaster risk reduction is to develop educational curricula and appropriate supporting materials. Through different educational materials and basic toolkits, we can promote awareness and understanding of disaster risk reduction in schools in order to ensure that students consider disaster prevention as an important component of their daily lives. Students can be asked to analyze how household and community level actions and decisions can interact with vulnerability factors and what prevention, mitigation and preparedness measures need to be considered.

Students could be asked to consider:

Are there differences in access to food among household members? If so, who is disadvantaged? Can this be a hazard that could trigger health risks? What are the potential health risks? What do you think is the preventive measure?

How do development decisions interact with vulnerabilities of different groups (boys, girls, women and men)? How do you think faulty development programmes and emergency responses can be a source of vulnerability to a community and households?

Students can be facilitated to build a scenario on a locally known hazard that translated to disaster, say flood or drought, and rehearse the analysis. The following box, gives a simple process to initiate group exercises among students group:

Do you remember a flood incident in your community? When did it happen? Who was affected? What were the impacts? If the impact was high, why was this? In your judgment, was the response adequate? If not, why not?

Do you think there will be another flood in this community in the future? What do you think should be done to protect against this or prevent or reduce the impact? What do you think should be the respective roles of the Government, community and students?

This process will help students to analyze their situation and come up with creative disaster risk reduction strategies for their communities. Boys and girls may have different views and should be given the chance to express their feelings in different groups. Facilitating similar exercises for HIV/AIDS, drought, malaria and other hazards will enhance risk reduction initiatives.

Children at kindergarten can be provided with puzzles and games related to disaster risk reduction issues to help in early sensitization. In addition, formation of student disaster risk reduction clubs related to common hazards will further enhance their understanding.

To promote disaster risk reduction insight, geography and social science curricula can incorporate disaster risk reduction issues using examples that make the subject more enjoyable, add a relevant cultural dimension and educate students on how to reduce risks. Many countries have already developed such specialized curricula in their school systems. Countries with hazards teaching in primary and secondary schools include Algeria, Kenya, Madagascar, Senegal and Uganda. Furthermore, these countries have also linked academic research and policy/practice at national or local levels.

Disaster risk reduction in the Guatemala school curricula

With support from the ECB Risk Reduction Initiative, IWG agencies in Guatemala and other partners have been advocating for the introduction of disaster prevention and preparedness as a key component of the national public school curriculum. Earlier this year, they learned that their hard work had paid off when the Ministry of Education announced a comprehensive programme of reform.

The new curriculum will address several areas vital to risk reduction, including:

- identifying threats, vulnerability and risk
- safety at home, school and in the community
- risk reduction measures
- family emergency plans
- disaster preparedness and prevention
- evacuation early warning.

The new curriculum will be developed through consultation between the Ministry, schools, communities and the Inter-Institutional Forum, an alliance of humanitarian organizations in Guatemala facilitated by the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction. The ECB Risk Reduction Initiative and the IWG agencies will continue to provide support for the revision of teaching materials and the training of teachers and administrators. The different themes will be taught in social science and life science classes to students aged between four and 14, from pre-primary to middle school.

The practical aspects, such as simulations, drills and the actual elaboration of family emergency and contingency plans will require community and family involvement, and will be extended to include all pertinent community members, such as local response team s including fire crews and the Red Cross. The new curriculum will be introduced first in the central and western regions, as well as all areas where pilot projects are underway. From here it will be extended to all urban and rural public schools, including all 22 language groups in Guatemala.

Over the three-year reform process, there have been many critical moments during which it was doubtful that the reform would happen. This was due at times to disagreement, lack of time, lack of resources or because of more pressing matters (such as, for example, the state of emergency caused by Tropical Storm Stan). However, during the past year, the ECB in Guatemala has supported the scholastic reform, recognising that effective disaster prevention and preparedness largely depends on people being knowledgeable of their surroundings, aware of their resources and educated in the use of some basic tools to assess the risks in their communities.

Juan Manuel Girón, ECB Pilot Project Manager in Guatemala, commented: “Given that school reform only happens every forty years or so, this is a very significant step. The process was not easy, and would not have been accomplished but for a huge amount of inter-agency collaboration, in large part facilitated by the ECB Project."

Source: Danadevi Paz, Disaster Risk Reduction Initiative Translator

In Ethiopia, Bahir Dar University has started a programme at first-degree level, which could usefully be adopted by sister institutions

Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia

Save the Children Canada's Institutional Support Project (SC-Canada ISP) took the initiative to institutionalize disaster risk reduction in higher education institutions and development organizations in Ethiopia. SC-Canada ISP requested Bahir Dar University to include the topic in its curricula and, after analyzing the contextual realities and policy environment, the idea gained acceptance.

The university formulated a curriculum development committee constituting the university, SC-Canada and Food Security Program Coordination and Disaster Prevention Office of Amhara region. An experienced disaster risk reduction professional from the UK led the process. A national curriculum design workshop, which brought together experienced professionals from other universities, government and NGOs sectors, enabled the enrichment of the proposed programme content. The programme was launched and began to deliver the courses in 2005/2006 under the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Science with regular, summer and extension schemes. Dur ing 2006, the department had 70 first-year and 45 year-2 students. In addition, there are 80 summer and 50 and extension students. The department is also facilitating disaster risk reduction research and training for relief and development workers.

These examples represent a significant move by education institutions but they need to be encouraged to spread their arms even wider to assist with reducing poverty in Ethiopia. However, to truly influence the development of students' attitudes, establish a culture of disaster prevention and contribute to community development, it is imperative that existing curricula include environmental, social, and economic issues related to disaster prevention in their objectives, content and activities, and that they serve as guiding principles. These topics should be included both in materials for teachers and in student textbooks and workbooks. The process should focus on ecological problems, their causes, effects and prevention. An institute for disaster risk monitoring, such as the Drought Monitoring Centre in Kenya, would help the coordination of efforts and specialization of actions.

This may be a long process, but it will help to inculcate new generations with greater knowledge on disaster risk reduction and human development, thus empowering them as actors in reducing future disaster risk. Hence, two of the most important elements are the teaching-learning process at school - making the students equipped technicians - and the ties students have with their families and communities.

Then we can be confident that students who graduate from these schools will know how to live up to their convictions and use their knowledge, skills and attitudes for environmental protection and disaster prevention.

The second way to reduce disaster risk is within the school environment and a set of activities may be carried out to initiate disaster reduction. Some of these have to do with the safety of the learners themselves. Protecting students from hazard incidence (reducing disasters) through school safety measures with regard to locally identified hazards. Classrooms can be built in such a way that in case of fire, flood or conflict, learners have enough exit points to minimize risk. For example, disasters such as the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan, that killed over 16,000 children when schools collapsed, could have been minimized if school construction was more 'hazard-oriented'.

DRR E and training among local communities

The general public - those who may not have access to schools but are affected due to recurrent disaster impacts - also need to be provided with disaster risk reduction training. Producing and disseminating public and technical information, and ensuring that it is clear, interesting and accessible, is important. Information products, such as magazines and radio programmes, are also useful means for keeping the public informed and motivated.

In many places, the relationship between people and their ecological and social environments requires a profound change to enable sustainable development and reduce disaster risk. Risk reduction is not an isolated act. It is very much

linked to our attitudes towards others and ourselves; to our sense of civic-mindedness as a society; to our social consciousness; and to the ways in which we relate to everything around us. Furthermore, disaster risk reduction thinking need to be mainstreamed into development programmes taking place in communities.

Taking as an example well development where there is serious shortage of water both for human and livestock consumption:

Who initiated the project? Why?
Who is doing what? How do different community groups participate?
Who is monitoring implementation of the project?
Who are the users?
Are there potential users from neighbouring communities?
What is the plan for the scheme's management?
How is maintenance and operation planned?
Are there risks associated with the project that may adversely affect boys, girls, women, men or older people, or the environment surrounding the site?
What associated awareness, preventive or mitigation measures should be thought of proactively?

Non-formal DRR E and training can help to address the community's needs and facilitate learning from their local contexts and realities. Institutions such as farmers training centres, adult education centres and farmer or pastoralist field schools could be used to promote such initiatives. Preparing community emergency plans, creating risk maps and developing disaster risk reduction strategies applicable at individual, household and community levels, all with active community participation, could be helpful to create the necessary awareness. In pastoralists settings, context-specific tools and approaches are needed. The Alternative Basic Education (ABE) approach, promoted by NGOs such as SC-USA and Oxfam GB and gaining acceptance by the government, represents a good opportunity to promote DRR E in pastoralist settings.

Role of media in DRR E

In Ethiopia there are a number of initiatives in relation to HIV/AIDS which utilise drama, song, discussions and posters. Similar efforts should be encouraged with regard to disaster risk reduction for drought, flood, malaria and other hazards, and their translation into disasters.

Much media reporting takes place in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. But after the disaster event ends, the media do not routinely cover potential hazards, prevalent risk reduction practices or similar topics in disaster risk reduction. It is essential that disaster risk reduction authorities work together with the media to capitalize on disaster events and that they use such opportunities to provide the public with more timely, frequent and comprehensive information on disaster risks. This can be effectively done through radio programmes in local languages.

This will help citizens to understand how their behaviour and practices impact upon the environment, which is a cross-cutting theme of human security and risk reduction. This constitutes an important challenge: it runs counter to the common thinking that asserts that the causal factors considered in disaster risk reduction are primarily, if not exclusively, structural/material. A psycho-cultural approach observes the psychological and cultural forces that frame the beliefs and behaviours of individuals and groups that have association with disasters.

To be successful at raising awareness, we must provide relevant information, including realistic examples and useful experiential knowledge. Furthermore, if the information transmitted is able to spark an internal process that makes recipients feel like it speaks to them, or that it relates to their social values, then it will be much easier to create the 'awareness' we want people to have.

Traditionally, communities tackle disasters at a local level, often utilizing different coping mechanisms based on local knowledge and experience. It is important, therefore, that efforts to enhance disaster risk reduction incorporate interventions that strengthen the role of traditional authorities, knowledge, experience and coping strategies in both, the so called 'development' and 'emergency' response. Disaster risk reduction interventions should be informed by local survival strategies so as to promote more risk-neutral or risk reducing survival strategies.

Single, short-term projects are not able to achieve this longer term, more encompassing goal. Therefore, although the process may be slow, it is important to continue devoting effort towards affecting real and substantial change. It is also appropriate to take into account numerous proven and innovative models designed for communication and evoking attitudinal change.

In all these endeavours, the role of professionals such as government and civil society workers and researchers is remarkably high. Disaster risk research and learning requires multi-disciplinary analysis for effective sharing of knowledge and application. A range of disciplines, both from the natural and social sciences,

currently contribute to the generation of knowledge on hazard, vulnerability, capacity and risk. Combining this information into messages, which are comprehensible for decision-makers, practitioners and target communities, should be encouraged. The professionals and experts have the responsibility to facilitate cross-learning among different communities (both in development and emergency programmes) and further research on challenges faced by communities. For better theoretical advancements in disaster risk reduction, experts need to link to other practice models and frameworks already developed in related fields of study, such as sustainable livelihoods, rights-based approach, environment, gender, HIV and peace studies.

Knowledge management and information sharing

Knowledge management in disaster risk reduction

Knowledge management is a process to capture and share people's experiences, expertise and insight. Knowledge management requires:

- valuing knowledge
- building a culture of focusing on innovation and knowledge creation
- maintenance of a data-base of in-house knowledge
- best practices for learning
- creation of a knowledge sharing environment
- facilitation for transfer of knowledge.

"Knowledge management concerns the entire process of creating knowledge (research), exchanging knowledge, and using knowledge (application and implementation). Good practices of knowledge management helps reduce the risk of disasters by increasing the level to which people are informed and motivated to participate in a culture of disaster prevention, mitigation and recovery."

Source : Ben Wisner, Let our children teach us!: A review of the role of education and knowledge in DRR.

Knowledge transfer in the community

The Ethiopian Rural Self Help Association implemented the Birbirsa ena Cherecha Development Programme (BCDP) in Guder *woreda*, North Shewa zone of Oromiya regional state. One of its strategies has been to organize experience - sharing visits for the project's target groups so that knowledge can be transferred.

"Fufa Wolkeba is a farmer and has a residence in Ula Lanisa Kebele. He is an active participant of the BCDP and had the opportunity to visit other areas through exchange visits organized by the project coordination office. He has applied all the agronomic practices introduced by the project, particularly improved seed utilization. He has experimented with use of compost and succeeded in increasing his crop productivity. He spread the idea to the villagers and almost all of the residents of the villages have substituted compost for commercial fertilizers. Before the intervention he used to sell almost all of his cereals to meet his financial obligations. Part of the food is now consumed by the family. He used to consume only *enset* (a local crop), but now the family diet is complemented by other crops as his production has grown and diversified".

Source: Meleaku Ayalew, Evaluation of Novib's Food Security Policy and Practices as Implemented by Counterparts in Ethiopia; Part Ii, 2005

Information is closely linked with knowledge. Generally knowledge relates to:

- awareness of facts, methods, principles, techniques and so on – 'know about'
- understanding or grasping of facts, methods, principles and techniques sufficient to apply them in the course of making things happen – 'know how'
- facts, methods, principles and techniques that are articulated and captured in the form of books, papers, procedure manuals, etc.

Three types of knowledge are frequently mentioned in literature: explicit, tacit and implicit. Explicit knowledge is knowledge that has been articulated and, more often, captured in the form of text, tables, diagrams and so on, such as a scientific formula or product specifications. Tacit knowledge is knowledge that cannot be readily articulated but that can be put into practice - *the knowing is in the doing*. Face recognition is an example of tacit knowledge – one can readily perform it but it is difficult to explain how it is accomplished. Knowledge that can be articulated but hasn't is implicit knowledge: once such knowledge is articulated it becomes explicit.

Information sharing

Information sharing is a part of knowledge management. Though knowledge is broader and deeper, usually information refers to knowledge. Knowledge is a combination of experience, values, information and insight that enable the evaluation and incorporation of new experiences, values and ideas. Knowledge exists at different levels. All types of knowledge (scientific and non-scientific knowledge) are important in disaster risk reduction.

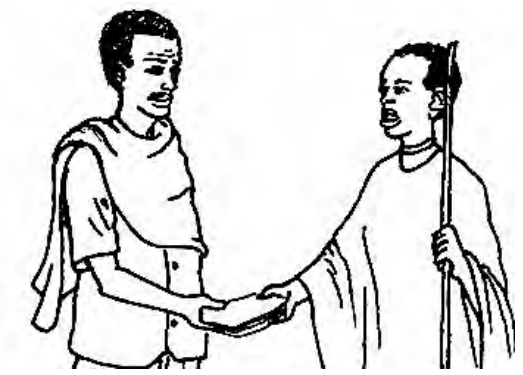
Why information sharing?

Information creates awareness, provides power and increases the capacity to decide, act and communicate authoritatively. It is an important tool for effective and efficient programme implementation, including for disaster risk reduction interventions. There is a set of information related to disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, warning, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Having clear knowledge or access to this information increases not only the power of decision- and policy-makers, but the capacity of implementers of disaster risk reduction programmes.

One of the activities highlighted in the *Hyogo Framework for Action* is establishing institutional and community capacity for collection and analysis of early warning information. Developing institutional capacities for researching, analyzing, mapping and forecasting hazards and vulnerability is also key to generating and managing information. Apart from early warning information, operational and management information should also be collected, analyzed, documented and disseminated as appropriate to inform agencies engaged in disaster risk reduction. Such information includes a comprehensive data-base - basic information about the country including demography, economy, agriculture,

infrastructure (roads, storage facilities, etc), accessibility, stockpiles, communication networks, market information, governance, hazards and vulnerabilities - and mapping of relevant agencies which have a stake in disaster risk reduction in the country as a whole, including the sectors and coverage of their programmes.

Every agency is expected to have the required expertise to collects, analyze, document and disseminate information in the areas of their mandate or sectors. Agencies tend to manage information that they need for their programme, but less frequently use information from other sources. Moreover, the volume of information required for disaster risk reduction is large. It would be difficult, expensive and beyond the competence of one agency to maintain and manage all that information. Information is expensive to collect but the additional costs of sharing are low. Sharing information reduces the cost of collection, updating and managing information, and therefore the costs of disaster risk reduction interventions. The cost-savings from information management can be added to the programme budget and enable it to achieve more development work. The best and most efficient way of getting information is to have a mechanism through which information can be accessed from relevant agencies.



Purpose of information sharing

The purpose of disaster risk reduction-related information sharing is to ensure policy- and decision-makers, planners, researchers, implementers, community leaders and others have access to the information they require in an efficient manner so they can learn from it and use it to improve their programmes and strategies.

Sharing information and transferring knowledge

As part of knowledge management, information should be transferred and shared. Knowledge and information is worthless if not communicated to others or accessed by users.

Disaster is a public issue and people in general - and vulnerable communities in particular - must be aware of disaster-related information (what has happened, why, what is being done about it, and so on). Disaster affects programmes financed by public funds and when the public interest is affected, the public has the right to know. Dissemination and sharing of information also promotes learning.

Access to information is often difficult within agencies. Even agencies working to achieve the same goal can have reservations about sharing information that should be public. On the other hand, information can be misused or misinterpreted or used for unintended purposes. Misuse of information can even trigger violent conflict. The power of information in bringing about a political crisis that resulted in widespread loss of life and destruction of property has been witnessed recently in Rwanda. People tend to act with whatever information they receive. Therefore it is important to carefully manage information.

The challenge is how to balance the restriction of access to information due to fear of being misused, with unrestricted access to information with the intention that it will be used for the purpose of disaster risk reduction.

How to communicate information and transfer knowledge

Information can be communicated and knowledge transferred using the following means and mechanisms:

Local media for awareness creation: Disaster-related information should be communicated fast. One mechanism for communicating information and creating public awareness is via the media. National media tend to focus on specific areas and populations, which can be particularly effective. Some agencies, like Oxfam Canada, are promoting the spread of community radio. It is important that disaster risk reduction information is mainstreamed in such local radio stations.

Traditional method for information sharing: Though the mass media can be an efficient means to reach the wider population, the majority of the rural population in Ethiopia does not yet have access to radio or television. Some communities, however, have their own traditional mechanisms to share information. Traditional means for information sharing and dissemination in pastoralists societies can be very efficient: when community members meet on the road, each has a traditional obligation to inform the other about what they have heard and know before moving on to their respective destinations. They do the same to others they meet along the way. By this means, information is disseminated fast. It is important to use and enhance traditional means of communication and information sharing. The use of community radio adds value to such traditional systems.

Information & communication technology in information sharing: Information and communication technologies (ICT) can make a significant contribution to knowledge management in general and information sharing in particular.

Television, radio, telephone, fax and the press all have important roles in information sharing. The progress in information technology in terms of speed of getting the information, storage, dissemination, management and utilization (the introduction of internet, intranet and e-mail) makes communication and information sharing easier. With this technology it is possible to organize e-mail conferencing, internet discussion forums and shared web sites. However, in Ethiopia such ICT are currently limited to formal institutions and better-off individuals. Rural communities have very limited access to these media. It is therefore imperative that information is also disseminated through development agents, experts and NGO staff working at grass-roots level to reach rural communities.

On the other hand, the use of modern ICT should be increased and broadened, at least to reach extension workers and experts working with vulnerable communities. The initiative to institute early warning committees at *kebele* level should be promoted and these structures could be used to disseminate other disaster risk reduction information to communities.

Regular face-to-face discussion forums: The best way to disseminate information and transfer knowledge to rural communities is through regular face-to-face discussions using the extension system. Face-to-face discussions and information sharing in rural areas can be carried out in market places, churches and mosques, where people from different localities gather. Such places can also serve as 'forums' for information exchange and knowledge transfer.

Working groups or occasional seminars and workshops: Information and knowledge can be shared and transferred by bringing target groups together for training, seminars, conferences and workshops. This is an interactive way of information exchange, though it reaches a limited number of people. The limitation can be offset if participants are committed to share what they learn with their colleagues and communities.

Visits to other communities: Visiting other communities to share experiences can be an effective means of sharing information.

Walk-in resource centres: Researchers, practitioners and agencies that manage information spend a lot of time moving from office to office, collecting data and information. This problem can be solved by establishing a 'one-stop' information centre to which agencies channel their information and users just walk-in and get the information they need. Although more commonly found in urban areas, such an approach can also be initiated for rural communities. It is possible, for example, to support local early warning structures to serve as centres of information for disaster risk reduction.

Publication of books, newsletters or bulletins: Many institutions that manage information publish newsletters or bulletins. These can be good sources of information and establishing mechanisms to exchange such publications further enhances information exchange. Some of the materials should also be simplified

and translated into local languages so that community members can readily use them.

DPPC information centre

In Ethiopia different agencies collect and analyse different types of information that have relevance to disaster risk reduction. Sectoral ministries, such as Health, Agriculture and Rural Development and Water Resource Development have their own information systems. The Meteorological Service Agency and the Addis Ababa University Geo-observatory also manage information related to their mandates and operations, as do UN agencies, donors, DPPA, WFP, UNOCHA, CRDA, and other NGOs. However, accessing information from different organisations can be difficult.

To overcome this problem, an attempt has been made to establish an Information Management Center within the DPPA to provide timely, reliable and adequate information for humanitarian interventions. Information managed in the Center includes port status, shipments and logistics, pledges and delivery of aid by donors, number of people in need of food aid, status of EFSR stock, NGOs plan of operation, and other related information. The information is collected from different agencies, mainly from EWS, EFSRA, WFP, donors, government offices and NGOs. The Center is also developing simple data applications for critical humanitarian data including a contact database, project information, networks, humanitarian resource tracking, affected population tracking and a humanitarian data dictionary.

Information sharing and/or knowledge management at regional and lower levels is generally even worse than at the federal level. Despite the fact that data is gathered from regions and *woredas*, the documentation requires significant improvement. It is therefore important to build-up the knowledge management capacity of regions, *woredas* and even communities.

However, there are various challenges in building capacities particularly within the government structures. These include regular staff turnover, lack of handing-over procedures when people leave their positions, and lack of proper induction of new comers.

Networking and partnership for disaster risk reduction

What is networking?

A network is a formal or informal alliance between independent individuals and organizations to achieve common goals. Networks can create an organizational structure that allows active and effective participation of all members within a framework of defined roles and responsibilities.

Networking involves communicating, sharing ideas and experiences, building partnerships. It requires coordination which can occur in different ways. For example, two or more organisations can combine resources and take on the responsibility of coordination (joint secretariat) or the secretariat responsibility shifts at periodic intervals from one organisation to another (rotating secretariat). Alternatively, different organisations take on specific roles (distribution by function) or, if the network is structured into several discussion working groups, one organisation provides the secretariat for each working group (distribution by discussion group).

Networking for disaster risk reduction refers to alliances of actors involved in disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response at all levels, including policy or implementation levels. Despite the uniform approach of disaster risk reduction interventions in Ethiopia, there are varied experiences around implementation - some have been successful whilst others have failed. Networking will enable learning of how the successes are achieved and how a certain intervention failed to reduce disaster risk. Networking parties not only learn from each others, but can also advocate for change collectively.

Purpose of networking

Networking facilitates sharing experiences of best practices, improving knowledge and ultimately enhancing capacity of stakeholders to plan and implement disaster risk reduction programmes. Networks and networking can also support advocacy and campaigns for policy and practice changes. Since disaster risk reduction requires a multi-stakeholder involvement, a conscious effort of building networks is an important strategy for coordinating disaster risk management efforts and information sharing.

Principles of networks and networking

The basic principle of a formal network is that independent organizations and/or groups are affiliated for a particular purpose. It requires an agreed code of conduct and political and financial commitment. Each member organization maintains its autonomous status, but works in collaboration with other network members for the common interest, contributing to the group in the area of its competence and where it has comparative advantage.

Forms or partnership

Some of the forms of partnerships in Ethiopia include:

Donor-recipient partnerships: Since the financial capacities of local agencies tend to be weak, they often prepare projects and seek funding from donors, including multi-lateral agencies, bi-lateral organizations and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). After reviewing and appraising the projects, if the donor/INGO accepts the proposal, the local agency/NGO enters into partnership with the donor to secure funds. Such partnership is usually neither on parity nor on a shared mission and value basis.

Donor-driven partnership: Some donors and Western NGOs bring funds to the country and establish partnerships with local or international implementing agencies. In some cases there are imbalances in the relationships, such as dominance of the funding agencies. It is usually the donors that set the agenda.

Benefit-oriented: Some agencies establish partnerships based on mutual interest to benefit from comparative advantages and organizational competencies.

Vision/mission-based: Some international NGOs form partnerships based on shared vision and mission, for example SC Alliance, Oxfam International and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

Subject-based: Thematic groups and forums (for example on gender, early warning, or water) form a type of partnership to share information, experiences and discuss issues related to the respective subjects

Area-based: Some agencies working in the same geographic area enter into partnership, mainly to share information and/or coordinate their work in that area.

The process of network building

Network building includes:

- identification of commonly shared issue(s) that the network members would like to address
- identification of all key organizations that have a role in the identified issue(s)
- bringing these organizations together and determining jointly the objectives, scope, strategies, priorities and minimum standards for the network
- deciding the location and tasks/responsibilities of a focal point, secretariat or coordinating office (analyzing the organizational competence and comparative advantages of the designated focal point)
- establishing committees or task forces to strategize and plan various aspects of the network activities
- assessing progress periodically and making adjustments.

Networks in Ethiopia

Examples of networks include the Poverty Action Network in Ethiopia (PANE), through which organizations engaged in development programmes come together to share information and contribute to poverty reduction efforts in the country. The Basic Education Network (BEN) is another.

Networks and networking are also carried out using different forums in Ethiopia. Some NGOs are members and active participants of various forums including the Rural Development Forum, Sustainable Land Use Forum (SLUF), Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA)-based HIV/AIDS and Gender Forums, and Civil Society-Coalition Against Famine in Ethiopia (CS-CAFÉ). Though these forums are not in principle networks, they informally do some elements of networking such as sharing information and exchanging experiences.

Some organizations also network with international groups and benefit in terms of information exchange and sharing good practices in the areas of food security and poverty reduction.

Networking at community level

To ensure the sustainability of the outcomes of development programmes that reduce vulnerability, it is important to create and strengthen community-based institutions. Many developmental NGOs have organized different functional groups or users associations around specific interventions and handover some of the assets and responsibilities to these CBOs when their projects phase out. For example, the Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD) in Dire Dawa and Agri-Service Ethiopia in East Gojjam of Amhara region and *woredas* in Bale zone of Oromiya region can be cited where organization of civil society has shown progress.

Organizing CBOs alone is not adequate; they also need to learn from each others through sharing experiences. This calls for building and strengthening horizontal alliances among associations or CBOs at community level. Some CBOs are organized into a higher level organization. ACORD organized different CBOs into community-based organization associations and Agri-Service Ethiopia organized them into community-based institutions at *kebele* and *woreda* level. Others organized them in the form of cooperatives. The purpose of all these higher level organizations is to learn from each other and improve individual performances. Producers' and service-oriented cooperatives exist in many places in rural Ethiopia. These structures can be used for disaster risk reduction and their roles and contributions can be enhanced through horizontal networking with other similar organisations and vertical networking with other developmental and humanitarian organizations.

Challenges

The challenges associated with networks and networking include finding the most appropriate structure, ensuring participation and accountability and sustainability/continuity, equality of relationships and respect for autonomy and diversity, and using new communication technologies so that those who do not have access to them are not excluded. Attempts to build networks in Ethiopia should take into account these challenges in addition to institutional mandates, decentralization arrangements and the 'departmentalism' mentality that prevails amongst some agencies. Some consider networking a waste of time and resources - an attitude that has to be changed by showing how it adds value.

What is partnership?

The terms partnership, alliance, counterparts and sometimes networking groups are used interchangeably and there are some common principles in each of them. But getting into a networking relation is different from getting into a partnership. In networking the alliance is loose and members do not necessarily look into the internal governance of the other networking organizations. Partnership is a more formal alliance of two or more agencies that have compatible missions, visions, values and approaches to certain issues. Partnership in disaster risk reduction is a manifestation of solidarity against disaster vulnerability.

Purpose of partnership

The purpose of partnership in disaster risk reduction is to bring positive changes in the lives of vulnerable people through increasing capacities to plan and implement programmes, pulling resources together and increasing the ability to be heard. It can bring benefits based on the partners' comparative advantages.

Principles or basis of partnership

Since things are interdependent and one agency will often have comparative advantage and greater competence than the other in certain areas, working in partnership is useful. However, it should be based on certain criteria and principles. Partnership in disaster risk reduction should be based on:

- clarity about the purpose of the relationship
- effectiveness of the work on both sides
- the agencies' institutional governance record (participation, system for accountability, transparent decision-making procedures, etc)
- satisfactory resource management records and auditing systems
- commitment and reasonable appreciation of disaster and disaster management
- mutual interest, trust and equality
- understanding of advocacy and lobbying to influence policies and practices
- quality of the relationship
- some form of capacity appropriate to implement disaster risk reduction
- mutual assessment of partnership relationship
- systems and procedures to facilitate reflection and learning from experience.

The need for a national platform

Usually disaster hinders or retards development. Conversely, development reduces vulnerability, which is the underlying cause of disaster. There are situations where disaster brings about windows of opportunity for development, while certain development interventions increase vulnerability. It is apparent that disaster risk reduction activities and development programmes are closely related.

Development is multi-sectoral and involves various agencies; so is disaster risk reduction. In order to achieve impact all relevant agencies involved in development and disaster risk reduction should collaborate and coordinate their work, share information and build alliances. This collaboration and coordination should be institutionalized with articulated policies. This calls for a national platform through which government and non-governmental actors, including policy-makers, planners, researchers, professional associations, programme implementers, donors, and community and opinion leaders come together or

form alliances to exchange information and experiences and to network. The national platform should be replicated at regional and *woreda* levels.

It is a challenge for different agencies to work in partnerships and networks as people with different approaches and strategies are involved. The will and commitment of all actors in general, and the government in particular, is vital to take advantage of these diverse approaches through discussions and information exchange in a national platform. The political commitment of the government should be evident in terms of policy and legislative support for networking and information sharing and resource allocation, as well as in translation of the policies into practices.