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# **“Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction”**

**Recommended Priority Actions for 2008-9**

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**“NGO Position Paper”**

Geneva, 5-7 June 2007

As relief and development agencies working with communities and through partners in Latin America, Africa and Asia, we are extremely concerned about the impact of disasters on the world's poorest people. In order to reduce the scale of loss and suffering, and increase the impact and effectiveness of the Hyogo Framework for Action, we recommend that governments focus on the following 8 priority actions in 2008-2009:

**1: Target the most vulnerable**

**Governments should prioritise activities that focus on 'high risk' groups & communities in the most disaster-prone, poorest countries of the world.**

Given the enormous number of people living in vulnerable conditions in relation to available resources, there is a need to target resources on those countries, communities and individuals where the needs are greatest (particularly women, children, disabled and the elderly). It is unacceptable that high-risk, poor communities still suffer from a basic lack of information, awareness and understanding of disaster risk reduction.

**2: Strengthen local capacities**

**Governments should place stronger emphasis on actions that strengthen local capacities to offset hazard-related vulnerabilities.**

The main reason for the upward trend in disasters is an increase in the number of people living in vulnerable conditions. At-risk people and local governmental / non-governmental organisations are the first responders in meeting the needs of their communities in times of crisis. The primary strategy to reduce vulnerability is to **reinforce or create local strengths**, upon which communities can draw to anticipate, resist, cope with and recover from hazards.

This was further endorsed by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition which recommended a 'fundamental reorientation' of humanitarian response towards 'community ownership that builds capacity and reduces vulnerability'. Moreover, evidence shows that *people-centred* activities addressing aspects of human vulnerability provide simple, proven cost-effective ways to reduce loss of life and injuries within relatively short timeframes.

A good place to start is to support vulnerable communities to assess local capacities and vulnerabilities. Risk assessment has historically been concerned with developing technological hardware to monitor and predict *hazards*. Yet actions to reduce human vulnerability through building local capacities require an understanding of the local context, to harness the resources within a community. Participatory assessments of coping strategies and local capacities should be utilised to offset hazard-related vulnerabilities. This is a crucial step towards raising people's understanding of how to reduce disaster risk.

**3: Support a more inclusive approach**

**Achievement of the HFA requires greater participation from civil society at all levels, including representatives of women and high-risk groups.**

Evidence reveals that disasters continue to have an increasing impact on societies since the signing of the HFA in January 2005. Progress made within

the public policy domain has not yet generated the required level of change within sub-national /local policy and practice. Implementation of the HFA requires a more inclusive 'top down-bottom up' approach to harness traditional knowledge and resources, and build broader consensus and ownership particularly at the local community level. It is crucial to recognize, strengthen and scale up the skills, knowledge, and innovative practices that disaster prone communities have initiated and sustained in response to natural disasters - for the most part without financial and institutional support.

Grassroots leaders who have pioneered effective risk reduction approaches should participate in sub-national, regional and global policy dialogues. Poor and low income women play many formal and informal roles in community recovery and risk reduction, such as ensuring equitable distribution of relief aid, and monitoring retrofitting of houses. These public roles provide women with opportunities to participate in public decision making, and in the long- run to address issues of social and economic marginalization and political exclusion (which are key factors underlying vulnerability). For people with disabilities, participation in decision-making is a key issue in overcoming the barriers of social exclusion.

#### **4: Address root causes**

**Governments should capitalise on political opportunities to address the root causes of disasters.**

The HFA does not deal comprehensively with the root causes of either hazards or vulnerabilities, and these must be addressed if underlying risk and vulnerability is to be reduced. It remains difficult to raise political commitment to tackle root causes (requiring substantial redistribution of resources from rich to poor) due to entrenched vested interests at all levels.

The root causes of disasters are political, economic, social and environmental. They are related to the basic values, principles and beliefs upon which societies and cultures are built and which influence our relationships with one another and our natural environment. Long-term solutions lie in being able to build a more just, equitable and compassionate society. Practical steps towards this goal include strengthening democratic accountability; increasing women's participation and voice in decision making, and strengthening partnerships with civil society organisations.

#### **5: Achieve greater accountability**

**There is a need for greater clarity and focus on expected outputs and outcomes, linked to clear indicators, benchmarks and timeframes, to increase accountability and transparency in implementing the HFA.**

Effective implementation of the HFA requires a stronger focus on the delivery of clear outputs and outcomes, particularly at the local-level, to help ensure alignment and coherency between a multitude of tasks and activities across the different administrative and planning levels. Monitoring mechanisms must be in place to measure progress towards these outcomes in an open and transparent manner, with the community providing feedback throughout the process. Staff competencies (in skills, knowledge and awareness) within governments,

institutions and response organisations must be developed to ensure accountable and effective implementation of DRR, and further support mainstreaming and re-prioritisation of funding towards community-based activities.

#### **6: Use leverage points**

**Governments should determine the greatest leverage points and optimum sequencing of tasks and activities to maximise impact within the timeframe of the HFA.**

An understanding of the relationship between key activities can help determine leverage points and correct sequencing of actions, to create synergies, mobilise political commitment and maximise impact within the timeframe of the HFA. For example, participatory assessments can raise people's understanding of disaster risk (Hyogo Action 2), which in turn can inform local capacity building initiatives (Hyogo Action 3), including strengthening disaster preparedness leading to more effective response (Hyogo Action 5). Actions to enhance knowledge and education of "at-risk" people are the greatest leverage points for vulnerability reduction.

DRR must be elevated and tied to sustainable development. Multiple government ministries need to grasp the fundamental concepts of DRR to maximise its integration into development processes. From a hazards perspective, the increasing profile of environmental issues (notably global climate change) provides an emerging political opportunity to support greater investment in DRR. In particular, there is a need to make explicit linkages between climate mitigation and adaptation and hazard and vulnerability reduction strategies.

#### **7: Integrate DRR in humanitarian assistance**

**Governments should invest more in activities that support a closer integration of DRR into humanitarian assistance.**

The profile of DRR has risen over the last decade, although funding patterns show the general approach to disasters remains predominantly reactive. Incorporation of DRR into disaster response provides a link between short-term *humanitarian* interventions and longer-term *developmental* activities. Importantly, it can serve as an opportunity for DRR by utilising the impact of a disaster to inform, empower and motivate efforts to address the underlying causes. For example, strengthening disaster preparedness for effective response is one of the most effective ways to save lives and reduce injuries.

#### **8: Apply the principle of proportionality**

**Mobilisation of political, technical and financial resources to implement the HFA must be proportionate to the means and abilities of individuals, communities and member states.**

We all have individual and collective responsibilities for upholding people's right to protection from disasters, although the state has sovereign (or primary) responsibility for realising these rights. Efforts to improve the quality of democratic governance (e.g. anti-corruption initiatives) must underpin work to reduce vulnerability.

In reality poor countries often have minimal resources to 'scale up' local-level community-based DRR, with limited scope for manoeuvre over public spending due to external impositions placed on them. Richer nations have a proportionately greater responsibility to mobilise sufficient political, technical and financial resources for successful implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

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This Position Paper has been endorsed by the following organisations:



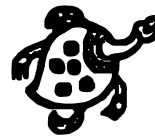
**ABS-CBN Foundation**



**ActionAid International**



**African Youth Movement (AYM)**



**All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI)**



**Alternative Planning Initiatives (ALTERPLAN)**



**American Jewish World Service (AJWS)**



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**Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN)**



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**Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC)**



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Corporate Network for Disaster Response (CNDR)



Development Workshop France (DWF)



Disaster and Crisis Management Initiatives Nigeria (DCMI Nigeria)



Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative (EMI)



Federation of Environmental and Ecological Diversity for Agricultural Revampment and Human Rights (FEEDAR & HR)



Forum Bangun Aceh (FBA)



Global Centre for Compliance Hazards and Disaster Management (GLOCECOHADIM)



Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC)



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Humanitarian Organization for Poverty Eradication (HOPE)



Information-Analytic Environmental Agency (ECORES)



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Intercommunication Center for Asia and Nippon (ICAN)



International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP)



International Association of Schools of Social Work



International Council of Psychologists



International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)



International Hydrological Programme Association (AIHP)



International Institute of Rural Reconstruction



International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA)



Intervida World Alliance (INWA)



Malaysian Medical Relief Society (MERCY Malaysia)



Manila Observatory



Marinduque Council for Environmental Concerns (MACEC)



Masyarakat Penanggulangan Bencana Indonesia - MPBI (Indonesian Society for Disaster Management)



Mercy Corps



MindFreedom Support Coalition International



MIRAI Sustainable Development Consultancy



Mission East



Muslim-Christian Agency for Advocacy, Relief and Development (MuCAARD)



Nahdlatul Ulama



NGO Coordination and Resource Centre (NCRC)



Oxfam International



Pampanga Disaster Response Network (PDRN)



Panay Rural Development Center



Pattan



Philippine Network On Climate Change (PNCC)



**Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement**



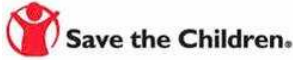
**Plan International**



**Practical Action (former ITDG)**



**Sanayee Development Organization**



**Save the Children**



**SEEDS India**



**Social Action Center (SAC) of the Prelature of Infanta**



**South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS)**



**Swat Youth Front (SYF)**



**Tabang Mindanaw**



**Tearfund**



**Technical Assistance Organization (TAO-Pilipinas)**



**Technological Assistance for Rural Advancement (TARA)**



**The NGO Committee on Mental Health (CONGO)**



**The Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC)**



**Tsunami Rehabilitation Information Network (TRINet)**



**World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation (WAPR)**



**World Council for Psychotherapy**





**World Federation for  
Mental Health**



**World Vision  
International (WVI)**



**Yayasan Kasih Peduli  
Masyarakat Indonesia  
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YAYASAN KASIH PEDULI MASYARAKAT INDONESIA  
FOUNDATION OF LOVE & CARE FOR INDONESIAN  
SK Men. Kehakiman & HAM RI No. C-31/HT.01.02/Th. 2005



**Yayasan Tanggul  
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