



# Checklist: Scaling Up Disaster Risk Reduction In Humanitarian Action

Recommendations for the  
Humanitarian Programme Cycle



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# Checklist: Scaling Up Disaster Risk Reduction In Humanitarian Action

## 1. About this checklist

Reducing risk – due to natural and man-made hazards, including related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks, including pandemics – is fundamental to meeting humanitarian needs and achieving sustainable development. In many humanitarian contexts, populations already impacted by conflict, civil strife, pandemics or other disasters are also confronted by growing hazard-related disaster risks, often fuelled by climate change. As a result, underlying vulnerabilities are compounded, capacities are limited, and short-term solutions are ineffective in reducing risk and dealing with the consequences.

This checklist is a condensed version of a more comprehensive set of recommendations on scaling up disaster risk reduction in humanitarian action, developed through an extensive consultative process, to support operationalization of humanitarian-development-peace collaboration through scaling up DRR. For further detail or background, or for good practice examples and support tools, refer to the longer set of recommendations.

The first section of the checklist focuses on steps within the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC). The following section outlines enabling actions and the final section provides recommendations which fall outside of the HPC.

## 2. Recommended Actions for DRR within the Humanitarian Programme Cycle

This section provides recommendations for building DRR into humanitarian response through the phases of the HPC: Preparedness, Needs Assessment, Strategic Planning, Resource Mobilization, and Response Monitoring.

### 2.1 Preparedness

At the country level:

- Humanitarian and development actors and governments:** Review and test contingency plans across agencies, with the government, at sub-national levels in particular to ensure they are aligned, actionable and reflect multi-hazard risk conditions, including to health emergencies such as pandemics. During the review, consider:

  - How historical data on disaster events (collected through disaster loss databases), and hazard and vulnerability assessments (done by development partners), inform contingency plans.
  - If contingencies exist for both all Sendai Framework hazards (natural or manmade) as well as conflict and health emergencies such as pandemics, and the roles and responsibilities for when hazard and conflict situations intersect.
  - Weather triggers which can be measured in real time and indicators for seasonal and sudden onset events are included for early action and financing;
  - Pre-agreed triggers with government for anticipatory action.
  - The inclusion of slow onset early warning indicators through Clusters such as drought - for example nutrition checks or school attendance rates – which may not automatically feed into early warning systems.
  - Reference to business continuity plans, which should be tested and incorporate measures for staff security.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Collaborate with Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) colleagues for improved risk communication.

  - Identify the full spectrum of risks faced by people – not just for natural hazards, but also for conflict, pandemics, gender-based violence including intimate partner violence, communal tensions, etc.
  - Develop communication strategies for DRR which go the “last mile” to reach communities and local municipalities in their local language or jargon, with culturally and socially appropriate messaging.
  - Put appropriate measures in place to reach displaced and remote populations who may not have access to critical communication systems.
  - Adapt local early warning systems to migration crises and displacement settings. Use social media, crowdsourcing and other digital knowledge-sharing as well as community networks to promote DRR.
  - Include communities in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of preparedness plans.
  - Expand feedback channels to include people’s perception of risk and the effectiveness of risk reduction efforts.
  - As part of the exit from a response, carry out a lessons learned exercise with affected communities to identify what they should do differently in the event of another disaster.

- Humanitarian actors:** Provide ongoing DRR training in staff inductions especially in cases where there is high turnover.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Prepare for the use of cash<sup>1</sup> by:
  - Conducting a market analysis to determine feasibility of cash-based assistance.

- Promoting stronger coordination between pre-existing social protection systems and humanitarian, multi-purpose cash programming.
- Preparing data, such as unified registries of vulnerable households, targeting systems, or inventories of possible payment networks.<sup>2</sup>
- Establishing necessary pre-agreements with government on beneficiary selection criteria and required documentation to ensure all at risk people are actually enrolled in social safety nets.



## 2.2 Needs assessment and analysis

At the global level:

- Humanitarian actors:** Promote shared learning across countries. Some countries have successfully applied a risk lens in HNOs and CCAs. Documenting and sharing these good practices can spur other countries to take similar steps.

At the country level:

- Humanitarian actors:** Use data through national disaster loss databases, national bureaus of statistics, UN regional commissions, and national disaster management agencies (NDMAs), district/province disaster and climate atlases, disaster-related statistics reports to conduct multi-sectoral Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA).
- Humanitarian actors:** At the appropriate time, conduct a more in-depth risk analysis including vulnerability drivers, including related to urban or peri-urban vulnerability, and deeper analysis of capacities. This should examine the cascading and inter-connecting nature of risks in humanitarian crisis, especially the interplay between conflict and natural hazards and how the two impact each other (for example competition over water resources in drought/desertification settings).

- Humanitarian actors:** Focus on capacities, not only needs, as responses should attempt to restore and strengthen existing capacities.
- Humanitarian actors, development and peace-building actors:** Complement and link to other existing risk information through the Common Country Analysis (CCA), loss and damage information, Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments, and Conflict and Development Assessments to facilitate a shared view of risks, their root causes and interlinked nature to encourage joined-up programming.<sup>3</sup>
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Examine contributing factors that have influenced a crisis which may not neatly fall into a needs analysis framework. (For example, health workers going on strike led to late detection of Ebola in areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo and perhaps the outbreak could have been better mitigated if the information was detected earlier.)
- Humanitarian and development actors and government:** Identify sources of meteorological, geological and other climate forecasting data to conduct the risk analysis: Where there are capacity gaps, identify where regional or international forecasting centres can help interpret and apply forecast information.
- All actors:** Use risk analysis results as an advocacy tool with HCT, donors and development partners including government for support, funding and to influence programme decision-making.



## 2.3 Humanitarian strategic planning

At the country level:

- Humanitarian actors:** Use multi-hazard analysis in the IASC updated humanitarian needs overview to ensure a risk informed Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).
- Humanitarian actors with support of UNDRR:** Clarify the mandates of different country stakeholders, and appraise the DRR capacities that exist among them including specific line ministries, meteorological or statistics agencies, community level NGOs and other actors who may not, but should be included in response planning and cluster coordination.
- Humanitarian actors:** Make DRR a standing item in HCT meetings.
- UNDRR:** Help identify stakeholders outside of the formal system to ensure resilience and recovery actions are embedded in the HRP. In protracted settings, there may be DRR actions that humanitarians are unwilling or unable to do, and UNDRR can help identify an appropriate partner to take responsibility.
- Humanitarian actors:** Ensure that the HRP supports NDMA and responsible line ministries' priorities on DRR.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Closely engage with each other in the recovery phase to ensure inclusion of DRR, especially when there are significant pressures for reconstruction efforts after disasters that might lead to creation of new risks.
- Humanitarian actors:** Consider the following questions when assessing how risk-informed the HRP is:<sup>4</sup>
  - To what extent does it factor in expected hazards, shocks and stresses, drivers of vulnerability and capacities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to hazards, shocks and stresses, including pandemics?
  - Where natural, environmental, biological and technological hazards including pandemics may pose a risk to the implementation of the plan, is this acknowledged and risk management actions identified?
  - Does the plan address the full range of risks (natural, environmental, biological, technical) the country faces?
  - Are sector/cluster plans informed by an understanding of multi-hazard risks, with cross-sectoral linkages, including to public health professionals, clarified? Have they been informed by an individual risk analysis for that sector with involvement of relevant line ministries?
  - Does the HRP seek to reduce vulnerability to those hazards, shocks and stresses of populations and systems and promote capacities to prevent, prepare for and respond to them?
  - Does the HRP explicitly state DRR actions, targets, and budget allocations?
  - Does the HRP target the most hazard-prone areas and populations, and those that may be left furthest behind?
  - Does the HRP support DRR efforts at the sub-national level, specifically efforts of local government actors who may not have the necessary discretionary budget to allocate towards DRR?

- Does the HRP enable populations and systems to be resilient to cycles of hazards, shocks and stresses, and anticipate, project, and to mitigate potential negative effects? In particular:
  - To what extent have populations impacted by disaster risk – especially those exposed to both conflict and other hazards – been consulted in the HRP design process and have a role in implementation and monitoring of these efforts?
  - To what extent does the HRP help communities and systems at all levels scale up DRR efforts to prevent, prepare for and respond to hazards, shocks and stresses? Can these efforts be improved?
  - Does the HRP link to early warning systems and to people and processes that support risk management?
  - Are feedback channels from local communities built into programme design to ensure that stakeholders can be held accountable?
- Does the HRP link to, support and build upon already existing national and local DRR priorities and plans?
- Does the HRP reinforce concepts of “build back better” and the long-term impacts of humanitarian actions on recovery, future vulnerability and development objectives, such as ensuring risk-tolerant reconstruction?
- Have environmental groups been consulted, if possible, and/or have Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) been done to ensure that HRPs consider environmental impacts and mitigate them?
- Have displacement tracking data, such as IOM’s displacement tracking tool, been used to inform planning and track people displaced not only by conflict but also by disasters?



## 2.4 Resource mobilization

At the global level:

- Humanitarian and development actors and UNDRR:** Advocate for more complementary, layered financing including multi-year and flexible funding for DRR from both humanitarian and development sectors. Complementary global funding instruments, such as the Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, the Central Emergency Response Fund and the UN Peacebuilding Fund (CERF), can also identify programme synergies, but should not take away from already stretched humanitarian funding.
- Humanitarian and development donors, and private sector:** Promote and scale innovative financing models such as forecast-based financing, crisis modifiers and risk-transfer instruments such as financial insurance, micro-insurance, and micro-financing, investment in social capital, and intergovernmental risk sharing, flexible financing, layered models and blended financing.<sup>5</sup>
- Humanitarian actors:** Use Financial Tracking Service to track and publish information on DRR investments.

At the country level

- Humanitarian actors:** Identify and capitalize on other financing opportunities to reduce risk including:
  - Country-Based Pooled Funds for joint activities to tackle risk reduction;
  - Opportunities that emerge after crisis to access resources for prevention;
  - The Grand Bargain’s localization agenda which should integrate DRR elements into these direct investments for national and local institutions;
  - DRR investments to include a portion to go directly to local actors;
  - Climate adaptation funding to be applied in humanitarian settings;
  - Funding from government authorities such as Ministries of Environment to also contribute resources to reduce risk.

- Humanitarian and development actors and UNDRR:** Advocate for national resource mobilization and help governments unlock funding for DRR. Advocate with governments to release more dedicated funding to DRR by developing business and cost efficiency cases and capitalizing on opportune times, such as immediately after a disaster when awareness is high.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Continue building and communicating the costs and benefits of investing in risk reduction and early action.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Engage the private sector to limit exposure and mitigate vulnerability of human and environmental systems, and to provide financial resources, build infrastructure, contribute innovation, expertise, or channels of influence to support risk reduction, mitigation, preparedness and resilience building which broaden contributions beyond the government.<sup>6</sup>
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Advocate with the private sector to make resilient investments and business continuity plans to reduce exposure and to ensure that shocks do not impact employment or supply chains.



## 2.5 Response monitoring

At the global level:

- Humanitarian and development actors and UNDRR:** Use the evidence gathered in monitoring At the country level for consistent advocacy demonstrating DRR's impact to promote greater investment from donors and governments.

At the country level:

- UNDRR:** Help OCHA and HCTs articulate DRR targets and indicators in humanitarian response plans, multi-year humanitarian response plans or frameworks for Collective Outcomes as well as the IASC Humanitarian Response Indicator Registry.
- Humanitarian actors:** Evaluate programmes based on the extent to which risk has been reduced and considered. Programmes should include strategies and tools to monitor, evaluate and analyse progress in DRR and resilience building.

Questions to consider in monitoring processes include:

- How was risk analysis applied and integrated into strategic planning?
- Have risk scenarios and projected contingency plans been updated to incorporate risk?

- For resilience considerations, were social protection services scaled appropriately and are they flexible enough to a given stressor or shock?

Questions to consider in monitoring results include:

- Have programmes reduced the vulnerability to hazards, shocks and stresses and if so, how?
- Have programmes bolstered the capacities of government ministries to prepare, prevent and respond to hazards, shocks and stresses that impact education, and if so, how?
- For resilience programmes, have levels of well-being remained stable or recovered despite a stressor or shock?
- Did any unintended consequences result in increased vulnerabilities?
- Have disasters, hazards or extreme weather affected achievement of sectoral and strategic targets?

- Humanitarian actors:** Use precise definitions of DRR terminology for robust monitoring.<sup>7</sup>

- UNDRR and humanitarian actors:** Build evidence for urban or peri-urban vulnerability which the humanitarian system struggles to capture.



### 3. DRR Actions falling outside the Humanitarian Programme Cycle

Many of the recommendations outlined in this document concern linkages and steps within the HPC. This section offers considerations that fall outside the HPC process: working across the humanitarian-development-peace sectors; adopting a human rights-based approach; taking a conflict-sensitive approach; and reducing risk at the local level in humanitarian contexts.

#### 3.1 Advancing DRR across humanitarian-development-peace collaboration contexts

At the global level:

- Humanitarian actors and UNDRR:** Integrate DRR aspects into the IASC Results Group 4 on Humanitarian Development Collaboration.
- Global Clusters:** Rollout of the recommendations on scaling up DRR in humanitarian actions at the country level and share lessons learned.

At the country level:

- Humanitarian and development actors:** Ensure DRR and preparedness targets and actions are systematically included in Collective Outcomes as well as Multi-Year Response Plans.
- Governments with support of UNDRR:** Facilitate a multi-stakeholder platform for DRR. Convene a national level platform spanning humanitarian, development, human rights, climate change adaptation, pandemic preparation and other related sectors as well as civil society and representatives of affected population, to maintain a dialogue around DRR, including the consequences of not attending to risk and what impact this would have on SDG achievement and human rights.
- Humanitarian, development actors and governments:** Map the required actions, stakeholder capacities (especially civil society and local NGOs), roles, timing, and coordination

models for prevention, mitigation and response phases to identify the synergies, gaps and opportunities to minimize risk as well as the opportunities to build longer-term resilience.

- Humanitarian and development actors:** Overlay risk analysis with development programme coverage to reveal where to adjust both humanitarian plans and development frameworks for action.
- Development actors:** Commission studies to demonstrate the feasibility and cost-efficiency of investing in areas of risk reduction, as well as the cost-efficiency from safeguarding development gains and reducing the need for humanitarian action.
- National governments, with the support of UNDRR:** Develop disaster risk profiles as well as analyse resilient investments from domestic and international resources through the application of the Risk Sensitive Budget Review methodology and the OECD policy marker for DRR.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Ensure that early action and funding work through existing social services, social protection systems and safety nets.
- Humanitarian actors:** When appropriate, request DRR actions be taken up by the development community, such as early warning and incident command systems that could fall under development investment rather than humanitarian response.

## 3.2 A principled, equitable and human rights-based approach to DRR

Hazard and risk assessments, plans, mitigation actions should meet basic principles of accountability, participation, non-discrimination and inclusion.

At the country level:

- **Humanitarian and development actors and governments:** Disaggregate risk assessment data not only by age and gender, but also by socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, migration and displacement status, and other features of marginalization.
- **Humanitarian and development actors:** Inform protection strategies by consulting affected people on the full spectrum of their perceived risks.
- **Humanitarian and development actors and governments:** Improve evacuation centre and displacement site conditions, location and selection, so that they do not deter particular groups from accessing them, and do not further risk or violence including gender-based violence.

- **Humanitarian and development actors and governments:** Ensure inclusion of Persons Living With Disabilities, LGBTIQ, women, adolescents, migrants in capacity assessments, DRR planning in coordination fora.
- **Humanitarian and development actors and governments:** Actively seek input from human rights bodies including National Human Rights Commissions and human rights experts to help embed human rights principles into DRR legislation, preparedness and resilience-building efforts.
- **Governments:** Support more predictable temporary stay arrangements during displacement due to disasters and climate change through bilateral agreements, humanitarian visas, targeted use of existing migration categories, and discretion on humanitarian grounds for those displaced across a border after a disaster.<sup>8 9</sup>

## 3.3 A conflict-sensitive approach to DRR

DRR approaches must be conflict sensitive, seeking opportunities to redress power imbalances and making sure not to perpetuate or fuel conflict dynamics. Conversely, DRR concepts and approaches must also be integrated into humanitarian response to conflict.

At the global level:

- **Humanitarian actors, human rights actors and DRR:** Provide clearer guidance, tools, definitions and approaches with accompanied training specific on programming DRR in conflict settings for a wide range of actors At the country level.

At the country level:

- **Humanitarian actors:** While maintaining impartiality, identify government partners who can be strong partners for DRR and who can be supported in delivering subnational DRR strategies that support conditions for peace rather than exacerbating existing conflict.<sup>10</sup>
- **Humanitarian actors:** Consider conflict adaptability and capacities when conducting risk analysis to better understand how a community or society has changed and adapted in response to the pressures of conflict, whether these adaptations can be sustained if the conflict continues, and if they are compatible with peace.<sup>11</sup>
- **Governments:** Create legislation and plans which include provisions for both climate- and pandemic-related risks as well as conflict-related risks as well as conflict related shocks and stresses. Risk Analyses (described below), should identify overlaps between these risks, which should feed into legislation drafting.

## 3.4 Reducing risk at the local level

At the country level:

- Humanitarian and development actors and governments:** Map local stakeholder capacities such as religious groups, civil society organizations, youth organisations, women's rights groups and women-led organisations – which have unique abilities to reach communities, local knowledge, and enhance their leadership around DRR.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Use horizontal capacity exchanges to share expertise, and to learn from and support community efforts to scale up DRR.
- Humanitarian and development actors and governments:** Ensure that national frameworks, which can be somewhat generic, are nuanced enough to be applicable towards to the risks faced by different population groups such as people living in coastal vs mountainous areas, and urban vs rural populations.
- Development actors and governments:** Support sub-national government and civil society to build resilience. Help them analyse and articulate how ongoing humanitarian emergencies are affecting DRR needs and preparedness efforts, as well as advocate for the changes needed to the national framework arising from specific local situations.
- Development and humanitarian actors:** Engage the perspectives and knowledge of women to mitigate impact, and how to meaningfully and sustainably reach local communities and families.

## 4. DRR as part of humanitarian enablers

An effective humanitarian response depends on the “enablers” of coordination and information management throughout the programme cycle.

### 4.1 Coordination



At the country level:

- Humanitarian actors:** Make DRR a standing item on HCT and Cluster meeting agendas to mainstream it. Broaden meeting participation to include new diverse actors with DRR expertise.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** At the programme level, promote joint technical teams which can informally collaborate to tackle a joint problem stemming from risk.
- All actors:** Form communities of practice to share resources, develop general guidelines, and provide technical expertise.
- All actors:** Collaborate with regional entities to improve capacity, support disaster risk management (DRM) such as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance, the UN and intergovernmental organizations for disaster management and emergency response and UNDRR Regional Offices.

### 4.2 Information management



At the country level:

- Humanitarian actors:** Promote inclusion of DRR in information management processes, platforms and products such as SitReps, the 3/9Ws, and the Humanitarian Dashboard.
- Humanitarian and development actors:** Integrate human and economic disaster losses into humanitarian analysis and recovery planning.
- Humanitarian and development actors and UNDRR:** Use information management products on impact for advocacy with government, community members and donors.

## Endnotes (Annex I)

- 1 For further resources on Cash, see: [The Cash Learning Partnership](#).
- 2 For more information and approaches, refer to: Strategic Framework to Support Resilient Development in Africa, Regional United Nations Development Group (R-UNDG) Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) and Western And Central Africa (WCA).
- 3 UN Common Guidance On Helping Build Resilient Societies, Final version, 17 August 2020.
- 4 Some questions adopted from: [Risk-informed Education Programming for Resilience UNICEF](#), Guidance Note May 2019.
- 5 [The Disaster Riskscape Across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for resilience, inclusion and empowerment Asia-Pacific Disaster Report](#), ESCAP, 2019.
- 6 UN Common Guidance On Helping Build Resilient Societies, Version of 12th December, 2018.
- 7 [World Disasters Report](#), Resilience: Saving Lives Today, Investing for Tomorrow. IFRC, 2016.
- 8 [2012 Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda](#)
- 9 Peters, Katie et al. [Double vulnerability: the humanitarian implications of intersecting climate and conflict risk](#), ODI, March 2019.
- 10 [World Disasters Report](#), Resilience: saving lives today, investing for tomorrow, IFRC, 2016.