



Scoping Paper – Theme 2: Reducing Vulnerability and Managing Risk¹

Background

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016 in Istanbul will set the agenda for how we can collectively meet the humanitarian challenges of the future.

In the lead-up to the Summit, consultations will focus on four core themes that have emerged from policy discussions over the past years: 1) humanitarian effectiveness; 2) reducing vulnerability and managing risk; 3) transformation through innovation; and 4) serving the needs of people in conflict.

This scoping paper on the theme of reducing vulnerability and managing risk is an initial attempt to set out issues that could be explored through the consultation process in order to generate a set of recommendations on how we can more effectively support countries and communities build resilience to the changing nature of shocks and stresses.

Feedback on this 'living' document is welcomed and will be used to help these initial ideas evolve, in order to provide a basis to guide and facilitate technical, regional and online consultations leading up to the 2016 Summit.

Future Challenges

The number of people affected by humanitarian crises has almost doubled in the past decade, during which time the overall cost of humanitarian assistance rose three-fold. Global challenges – such as the effects of climate change, environmental degradation, food and energy price spikes, rapid population growth, and rapid and unplanned urbanization – are all contributing to increasing vulnerability to shocks and stresses. This in turn could lead to the continued rise of humanitarian needs.

A number of studies illustrate the potential challenges. There could be up to 325 million extremely poor people living in the 49 countries most exposed to the full range of natural hazards and climate extremes in 2030². 192 million more people will live in urban coastal floodplains in Africa and Asia by 2060³, compared with 30 million today.

¹ This is a working document

² Shepherd, A. et al (2013) The geography of poverty, disasters and climate extremes in 2030. ODI

³ Foresight (2011) Migration and Global Environment Change. GoScience.

There is therefore a need for increased focus and attention in helping countries and communities better withstand, adapt and quickly recover when shocks and stresses occur. Greater investment in building resilience will help ensure lives and livelihoods are not destroyed in an instant, reduce the risk and scale of humanitarian crises, and make sure development gains are safeguarded.

Investing in measures to reduce vulnerability and manage risk is also better value for money than humanitarian response. A recent study found that in Kenya - over a 20 year period - every \$1 spent on disaster resilience resulted in \$2.9 saved in the form of reduced humanitarian spend⁴.

Prepared for the future?

In the past few years there has been sharpened interest in this theme. A number of initiatives⁵ and approaches are underway to help build the resilience of vulnerable populations throughout the world that are exposed to a diverse set of risks – whether women and children facing repeated displacement in areas of conflict, urban poor living in flood prone settlements, pastoralists and farmers affected by recurrent drought or rural households exposed to hurricanes and storm surge in coastal areas. The reality is that many people are faced with multiple risks.

Through these initiatives, a body of evidence is starting to be built that demonstrates that the impact of disasters can be mitigated by better managing risk, and addressing the root causes of vulnerability. At the heart of this is an attempt to get the right combination of humanitarian, development, climate change adaptation and political action in order to limit unnecessary loss of life and suffering, better protect livelihoods and in the long-term reduce the need for humanitarian assistance.

The consultation process leading up to the Summit will help identify areas where new approaches are starting to demonstrate impact and can be scaled up. The process will also identify areas where limited progress has been made, and further thinking is required in order to recommend proposals that are ambitious enough to tackle the challenges faced.

In approaching this theme, it will be important to approach these issues from a humanitarian perspective and to consider the specific roles that humanitarian organizations can and should play. It will also be critical to make sure there are close links with the discussions leading up to the agreement of a post-2015 development framework, the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action, the Conference of the Parties negotiations on climate change and the UN Summit on Human Settlements, so that collectively they enhance the management of disaster risk for the future.

Limitations

⁴ Cabot Venton. (2013) The Economic of Early Response and Resilience.

⁵ For example the IGAD-led Global Alliance for Drought Resilience in the Horn of Africa and the ECOWAS, CILLS and EU led (AGIR) in the Sahel.

An important first step is to consider what core factors are limiting the ability to reduce vulnerability and manage risk. Below are some perceptions, which will need to be tested and backed by evidence.

- perception that disaster risk management remains primarily a humanitarian endeavor, rather than a development one;
- few examples of governments and their humanitarian, development and climate change partners having a common risk analysis to ensure coherent action;
- tendency to address individual risks rather than the multiple risks people face;
- weak coordination amongst humanitarian and development partners to help government leadership in developing and implementing resilience plans;
- incoherence of humanitarian and development programs in helping people meet short-term emergency needs, protect their assets and build livelihoods;
- continuing gap between early warning and early response;
- lack of predictability and flexibility in donor funding, and limited and fragmented investment in preparedness and resilience;
- insufficient attention to the specific role that women can play in improving risk management, and of the impact disasters can specifically have on women and girls;
- tendency of short-term, annual planning and finance in long-term, protracted crises;
- nascent evidence base on how to build resilience effectively in different context, the value for money of these investments and better ways of sharing experience on disaster preparedness and response;
- varied political commitment and limited incentives to invest in risk management and tackle the underlying causes of vulnerability;
- insufficient attention to the challenges and complexity of managing risk in urban settings;
- limited engagement with the private sector.

Focus areas

The following are initial ideas of the issues that could be taken up by the thematic team and a set of working groups that will be formed to address each area. These will need to explore the various limitations described above and identify recommendations for addressing them. This will be reinforced by both the regional and online consultations process.

Understanding risk, vulnerability and future threats

- What are the major threats and challenges faced in the future and what are the implications of this for humanitarian preparedness and response? How can we improve the understanding and anticipation of the changing nature of risk and vulnerability?

Managing recurrent and predictable shocks

- How can countries and communities better manage predictable and recurrent shocks by themselves? What longer-term action should be taken to reduce humanitarian need in those countries and communities that are most vulnerable to disasters? How can the gap between early warning and response be closed? How can the silos between humanitarian and development assistance be broken down? How can common analyses of risk be generated? And can humanitarian organizations best engage and what should be the limits to this?

Managing future uncertainties and unprecedented shocks

- How can countries, communities and other national, regional and international organizations be better prepared to respond to these threats and challenges? What behavioral and investment changes are needed by governments, donors and agencies?

Preparedness and resilience in conflict

- How can countries more effectively be prepared and manage conflict-induced displacement? How can people better cope and adapt to the recurrent shocks faced in protracted, conflict-affected settings?

Rising risk in urban areas

- How can municipalities and civil society be better supported to address the rising risk of humanitarian need in urban areas?

Preparedness and risk financing

- What changes to current financing mechanisms are required to enhance preparedness and risk management? How can there be greater links with climate change adaptation finance? What are the opportunities for scaling up risk financing and adapting best practice from the insurance sector?

Intersection with other themes

There are close links between this theme and the other three thematic areas. For example, exploring how to improve the management of risk in urban areas will need to be closely linked with improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response in urban areas, addressing the specific challenges of serving people's need in urban areas affected by conflict and developing innovations to tackle problems faced in urban response. Every effort will need to be made to ensure close working between the themes to ensure the coherence and ambition of recommendations developed.

Developing the theme through regional and online consultations

Every effort will also be made to cross-fertilize the discussions happening on each theme, as well as ensuring that issue-specific points from face-to-face consultations and online discussions are captured and inform the agenda. In addition, each regional consultation will address the four broad themes of the Summit, but the agenda for each will be designed and adapted to reflect the humanitarian priorities and specific issues faced in the region..

The WHS web platform will be a forum for discussion and information exchange on each theme. Issue-specific discussions and debates will be moderated online in different languages around key WHS events in order to generate broader participation in developing recommendations for the future.

For more information on the summit, please visit www.worldhumanitariansummit.org.