



RESILIENCE

CONCEPT NOTE AHEAD OF THE EU STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

ISSUES AT STAKE

Over the last few decades, the alarming increase in both the frequency and the severity of natural disasters has dramatically eroded the livelihoods of people living in developing countries. As the growing number of weather-related hazards is among the consequences of Climate Change, this phenomenon is most likely going to have increasingly large consequences. However, communities' vulnerability to disasters is not fatal: when empowered with appropriate tools, they have the capacity to prevent, mitigate and prepare for disasters, and to trigger the appropriate response strategies to recover from the negative impacts of disasters.

In both humanitarian and development projects, we see an urgent need to integrate Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Poverty Reduction (PR). Climate Change needs to be fully integrated into DRR planning in order to prepare for future risks; CCA programs can learn a lot from the long and well-documented experience of DRR actors; and neither CCA nor DRR can happen without addressing the root causes of vulnerability and community-level poverty.

"Resilience" is the common denominator that can bring actors of CCA, DRR and PR around the same table. Resilience is defined as *"the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions. [...] The resilience of a community in respect to potential hazard events is determined by the degree to which the community has the necessary resources and is capable of organizing itself both prior to and during times of need."*¹

Although the concept of "resilience" makes sense for most stakeholders facing disasters, three main challenges remain in integrating DRR, CCA and PR:

- 1) The distinct conceptual frameworks used in DRR, CCA and PR, and the assumptions, values and worldviews behind them, cause confusion and ineffective interaction or cooperation;
- 2) The lack of scaled integration of the diverse actors and the different institutional policy frameworks pose a 'governance' challenge: how to proceed in this political arena?
- 3) There is a dire need for guidelines and training materials to build the capacities of national and local actors to analyze the risks to be addressed, define appropriate action and implement these actions.

¹ UNISDR, 2009: Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction.

OUR APPROACH

The RESILIENCE project was born from the firm conviction that linking CCA, DRR and PR in humanitarian and development projects would improve greatly the livelihoods of local communities facing repeated disasters. Although various attempts have been made to share integration experiences and publish “best practices”, these are hard to apply in different settings and do not sufficiently help address the barriers that exist between the three realms. That is why CARE Nederland, Groupe URD and the Disaster Studies group of Wageningen University, which have each gained substantial experience through years of efforts and research in the fields of CCA, DRR and PR, have decided to come together to identify the challenges and opportunities for more effective integration.

The study is based on data collection from many different stakeholders. In parallel with extensive desk-studies and efforts to analyze the existing literature on resilience, the RESILIENCE team organized six field studies and workshops in three developing regions facing different disasters: Eastern Borneo in Indonesia, the Borana zone in Ethiopia and Pando region in Bolivia. In the field, they have managed to gather representatives from local communities, civil society organizations, governmental agencies and the private sector acting in the fields of CCA, DRR and PR. Together, these representatives have identified gaps and opportunities towards an improved local resilience.

The main challenge now is to turn these observations into recommendations and guidelines for European stakeholders acting in the fields of CCA, DRR and PR, to function as reference for good practice. The upcoming workshop will gather EU policy-makers, researchers and NGOs with the aim of identifying the efforts and progress made so far in integrating the three realms, understanding the obstacles and opportunities in this regard, and offering a first set of solutions.

OUR ROLE IN THE EUROPEAN POLICY DEBATE

We strongly believe that the RESILIENCE project can contribute to the on-going European policy debate regarding CCA, DRR, PR and their integration. The EU stakeholder workshop will not only help to better understand the challenges towards integrating CCA, DRR and PR in European policies, it will help to develop useful tools for practitioners and policy makers. We see this event as an opportunity for European stakeholders to directly learn from each other's experience and to better take into account each other's views of resilience, strengths and limits in contributing to an improved integration.

Based on our experience of bringing together different stakeholders of the three realms in developing countries, we want to pose the following questions:

- **How can local resilience be promoted, without compartmentalizing CCA, DRR and PR?**

In the field studies we found that:

- Concepts of and expertise of CCA, DRR and PR are not very meaningful to many local stakeholders, who experience all kinds of changes and hazards they need to adapt to. Resilience does resonate, and a coherent approach needs to be used in programming
 - There is a lack of exchange of information, both horizontally and vertically, as well as a lack of coordination. This means that the impact achieved is not optimal.
 - Local stakeholders find multi-stakeholder workshops useful – it brings social capital, it builds capacities and forms a good source of new information.
- **What stands in the way of an effective involvement of the private sector in building resilience?**

In field studies we found that:

- Involvement of companies in development is limited, and not clearly structured.
- NGOs often do not know how to approach the private sector, and vice versa. Governments have their own agenda related to the private sector and are not effective intermediaries between NGOs and the private sector.

- *How can proper in-depth baseline research and context analysis be promoted?*

In the field studies we found that:

- The possibility to do in-depth research is hindered by short project spans. Missing out on proper needs assessment and in-depth baseline research before developing projects limits the opportunity to assess and evaluate, increases the risk of not learning from mistakes and not reaching objectives, and in some cases even creates more problems than solving them.
- Competitive Calls for Proposals means pandering to donors, not beneficiaries. Funding stakeholder workshops for some promising proposals would increase quality and ownership.
- Creating a mechanism to retrospectively (after winning a grant) charging costs covered by an organization for undertaking a proper needs assessment/in-depth baseline, would increase the commitment of NGOs and raise the quality of targeting the areas that are really in need.

- *How can a more programmatic way of working improve the situation on the ground?*

In the field studies we found that:

- Due to short project spans and lack of strategic follow-up, it remains challenging to reach sustainable results. Because of this, materials often go unused, or remain unrepaired after breaking down.
- Local project staff often lacks knowledge and ownership due to local job insecurity (when the project ends, the contracts end). The turnover of project staff is high, qualified staff tends to leave the field once they have acquired sufficient experience. This results in limited capacity building of project staff and thus limited increase in quality programming.
- Shifting to a programmatic approach would help overcome these shortcomings. As most organizations are already undertaking this shift, we should stimulate donors to support this development with long term support of programs rather than projects.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about the RESILIENCE project, please contact Wouter Bokdam, bokdam@careneland.org