Climate Centre

Resilience, Social Protection and Integrated Risk Management

Using social protection to increase resilience to climate and ecological risks

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The resilience challenge: changing risk patterns

The rise in climate uncertainties and ecological degradation are increasing the risk of disasters and the need for humanitarian responses. Weather-related disasters account for 90% of natural disasters (UNISDR and CRED, 2015) and since 2000, their prevalence has increased by 46% (Watts et al, 2017). 'New' global warming-induced disasters like heat and cold waves, sea-level rise, meteorological droughts and flash floods (WMO, 2016) are indicative of the changing patterns of risks and will push more people into poverty.

Many people, especially in developing countries, are already living on the margins due to high levels of socio-economic vulnerability and high exposure to climate risks. It is estimated that climate change and extreme events will push an additional 100 million people into poverty by 2030, which puts at risk efforts to achieve zero poverty (SDG1) (World Bank 2015). Weather shocks are expected to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and make vulnerable communities even less resilient to climate shocks (UN DESA 2016).

IRM and the Partners for Resilience Programme 2016-2020

Integrated Risk Management approaches are being promoted in ten countries around the world, through the Partners for Resilience (PfR) programme.

Implemented by a global alliance comprising Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, Netherlands Red Cross, Care Netherlands, Wetlands International and Cordaid. The programme works with grassroots communities, meteorologists and climate scientists, DRR, landscape and ecosystem experts, policy makers and (local) authorities, as well as the private sector to influence change at three levels:

1) community-based practices
2) governing policies and institutions;
3) in public and private investments.

A risk reduction strategy must help at risk populations and institutions anticipate threats, absorb impacts of extreme events and adapt to long-term climate and ecological risks. Designing effective policies to support this is a continuous challenge faced by policy makers and practitioners.

Resilience and effective integrated risk management

In the context of changing risk patterns, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and its allies aim to support resilience building from the bottom-up by using the participatory integrated risk management (IRM) approach. IRM builds local resilience by preparing local communities to deal with disaster risk, both over time and space. It does this by strengthening community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR) plans and investments with interventions on climate change adaptation (CCA) and on ecosystem management and restoration (EMR) with a focus on land- and water-use risks (UN Ramsar Convention on Wetlands 1971).

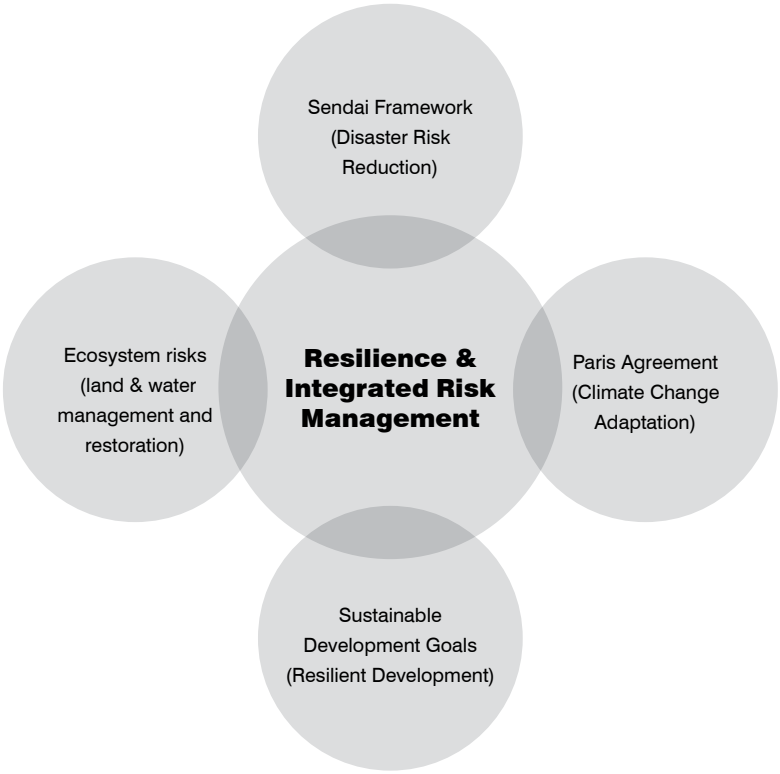
Adopting the IRM approach enables communities to effectively use available weather and climate science information and knowledge on DRR, CCA and EMR practices to mitigate current and changing risks. These risks can be related to seasonal variations, extreme events and/or slow-onset disasters. Communities learn to assess risks inherent in their environment to better manage their land and water resources for more sustained social, economic and environmental benefits.

Building Resilience and Securing Development: Global Frameworks 2015-2030

In 2015, the world leaders met under the aegis of the United Nations to agree on three inter-related frameworks that together aim to build resilience and promote sustainable development through changes in policies and governance institutions, practices and financing mechanisms. This includes a particular focus on the most vulnerable and exposed communities to address their disproportionate exposure to climate risks.

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out a global agenda to end poverty and promote development and prosperity in a sustainable way.
- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 outlines targets and priorities for action to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks.
- Paris Agreement sets the parameters for national contributions to greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance starting in 2020.

Building IRM components into social protection programmes and policies will contribute to countries' efforts to reduce vulnerability of populations exposed to disaster risks and climate shocks and protect their development gains. This will strengthen implementation of the three global frameworks within these countries.



Reducing risks through social protection policies

One of the key questions is how community-based approaches to IRM can benefit from and link to national social protection (SP) programmes that provide regular cash- or in-kind support to the most vulnerable groups. Most national governments use some kind of social protection policies and programmes to help poor and vulnerable groups of people overcome socio-economic poverty drivers like exclusion and discrimination, un(der)employment, lack of shelter, hunger and malnutrition, sickness, old age, low human capital and disability.

Resilience through Employment Guarantee Scheme
The MGNREGA experience in India

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is India's largest social protection programme that provides 100 days of paid labour to subsistence farmers and landless labourers during the lean agricultural season. Over half of India's agriculture is rainfed and India's poor are concentrated in these rainfed areas.

In the last decade, the programme has continuously evolved - from building roads to building local resilience of farm-based workers through activities such as afforestation, soil and water conservation, water harvesting systems and land contouring.

The scheme is flexible and allows inclusion of local resilience practices. Like livestock protection and building 'grain banks' and 'seed banks' to store and lend seeds and grains during climate shocks. The scheme is managed and financed through local elected bodies which allows for locally relevant actions.

Effective resilience policy frameworks can be created in tandem with national social protection programmes - where the latter provide a platform for adaptive and resilience-building interventions, in addition to socio-economic benefits, to their target populations.

Despite coverage challenges social protection interventions have grown substantially over the last two decades, especially in developing countries, benefiting 1.9 billion people worldwide (World Bank 2015). The programmes are becoming more comprehensive, aiming to 'build resilience, improve equity and promote opportunities' (World Bank, 2016). There is growing acceptance that 'predictable' social protection systems will help build 'long-term' resilience and address root causes of socio-economic inequalities (UN DESA 2016) in the wake of unreliable and erratic patterns of rainfall and temperatures, as well as more intense extreme events.

There is potential for social protection programmes, particularly in rural areas, to incorporate components of IRM to ensure that the people eligible for social protection benefits are also better able to deal with regular disasters, adapt to climate risks and improve management and restoration of their landscapes. Building provisions to maxmise contributions to resilience within SP programmes can cushion vulnerable and exposed people from the negative impacts of environmental and climate shocks and mitigate long-lasting consequences.

Resilience and Social Protection: Policy implications

Social protection programmes benefiting individuals and households can complement community-based IRM approaches in two fundamental ways:

1. Social protection programmes can provide additional support that will help target groups *absorb* the negative impacts of disasters, climate shocks and landscape degradation on livelihoods. To do so effectively, local and national governments will need to use climate science and landscape approaches to inform vulnerability

IRM, SP and Forecast-based Financing (FbF)

Based on improved weather forecasts, local authorities are setting up Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to extend humanitarian assistance to communities when a disaster threat becomes imminent.

Forecast-based financing (FbF) works on the principle of 'early warning early action' and reduces costs of humanitarian assistance as local communities improve their longer-term resilience strategies. A Red Cross study in Bangladesh found that there is a saving of USD 3 for every dollar invested in forecast-based action for floods.

Operational in about 15 countries now, FbF lends itself well to addressing integrated risks faced by target groups of social protection programmes. This is because FbF requires an understanding of all risks - landscape, seasonal and climate-related to effectively respond to any disaster risk. The SOPs can include social protection schemes to ensure that these target groups receive cash and in-kind benefits before a hazard becomes a disaster.

For instance, national governments are increasingly relying on conditional and unconditional cash transfers as the preferred mode of social protection. When tied with FbF, these can lead to better anticipatory actions by the target groups in the short run and build their resilience in the longer term.

assessments and budgetary planning of social protection programmes, to ensure the support provided reaches vulnerable households in an adequate way. *Programmes for the working poor, such as seasonal cash-for-work activities, could be linked to ecosystem management approaches, e.g. through reforestation activities, and thus support IRM. Livelihoods support to plant fruit trees on slopes will also prevent soil erosion, lower peak temperatures and improve groundwater levels. The timing of social protection provision can also be adjusted to climate-induced seasonal vulnerability to prevent recurring crises.*

2. Social protection programmes can build target communities' *anticipatory* and *adaptive* capacities by using weather forecasts, climate science and landscape assessments to ensure the timely delivery of assistance based on recurring disasters or targeting assistance to geographical areas that are particularly exposed to climate hazards or face new climate risks. Forecast-based Financing (FbF) is one tool that is increasingly being used to prepare vulnerable populations to anticipate disasters based on forecasts and act before a hazard becomes a disaster.

   For instance, using FbF allowed the distribution of cash transfers in advance of a flood in Bangladesh which was more cost-effective than ex-post delivery and prevented households from engaging in negative coping strategies. Uganda's NUSAF programme is linked to early warning systems and can deliver assistance before a drought emergency evolves (Maher et al. 2018).

Steps required for integration

- Promoting coordination between social protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation thematic areas in governments, donor agencies and civil society (such as on preparedness, early warning, natural resource management etc.)

- Supporting policies that seek to make resilience programmes and humanitarian action more effective by linking them to nationally owned systems such as social protection mechanisms

- Integrating climate risk management tools such as early warning and forecast-based action or natural resource management approaches into social protection programmes where appropriate.

- Ensuring linkages between different financing mechanisms, e.g. linking long-term funding and contingency financing mechanisms to ensure a streamlined national system response.

Conclusion

The above analysis shows that two policy changes can lead to better linkages between IRM approaches and social protection programmes to make them more responsive to reducing vulnerability to risks posed by landscape-level threats, weather shocks and climate extremes.

One, social protection programmes can incorporate weather forecasts and downscaled climate projections into their design and budgetary allocations. This will ensure that target groups are not further impoverished because they are able to absorb, anticipate and adapt to weather and climate shocks.

Two, social protection programmes must factor in climate risks as part of the vulnerability assessments and budgetary allocations. Incorporating EMR into programme design can complement efforts to protect target groups from 'negative interactions at the landscape level' (FAO 2017) - deforestation, land degradation, soil erosion, landslides, consecutive droughts and flood overruns and help them protect their livelihoods.

These policy changes will also contribute to integrated approaches to achieving the three global agreements (SDGs, Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework) on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development. It will contribute to vulnerability reduction by allowing poor people who depend on natural resources and are exposed to climate risks to protect their livelihoods and better adapt to degraded environments and climate uncertainties.

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