

Suva Expert Dialogue – Final Report on Risk Reduction

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INTRODUCTION

Prior to the Suva Expert Dialogue, 18 submissions from parties, groups of parties and organisations were summarised in a [synthesis paper](#) that were introduced by the session facilitator. Within risk reduction, approaches described in the submissions entailed structural measures, as well as non-structural measures such as policies and legislations, for example related to land-use planning, early warning systems, building social awareness and community-based approaches to reduce risks associated with floods, droughts and those posed to coastal zones.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Participants described a variety of existing or emerging approaches to support the reduction of climate and weather-related risks listed below. Some of these approaches and themes in the discussion overlapped with topics of parallel sessions on risk assessment (for example conversations around probabilistic risk assessments) and on risk transfer (for instance interventions on the Insurance Compensation Consortium, the African Risk Capacity or the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative). Throughout the session, participants highlighted a number of cross cutting needs including, but not limited to, financing for risk reduction, data and technology, and development of human capacity from local to national scales and different types of actors, including local and national authorities and local communities.

EXISTING OR EMERGING APPROACHES TO SUPPORT RISK REDUCTION – policy, decision-making, programming and financing

1. Convergence of discourses and activities on risk reduction across different policy communities

Barriers, gaps and challenges related to the approach: In particular, the example was given of how national level implementation of the 2015 global frameworks (Sendai, Paris, SDGs) is often approached in silos and typically spearheaded and delivered by different personnel in completely different national agencies. Participants also highlighted that the Sendai Framework identifies the UNFCCC as the body to address climate impacts, which offers an opportunity to address slow onset events that were previously ignored, extreme weather and slow onset events that go beyond adaptive and coping capacity, and a focus on the polluter-pays principle.

What are the organisations that can help support implementation and scaling up of approaches to meet needs in developing countries? UNISDR is doing a lot of work currently on frameworks and indicators for streamlining national level planning and implementation approaches across the Sendai targets and the SDGs. The area identified as needing more work from the discussion is the

integration of the Paris Agreement with this process. IFRC is also working on convening personnel, particularly in the Philippines, to integrate the differing perspectives of disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, and climate change adaptation professionals, and enable them to in a more complementary and mutually supportive way.

2. Community-based approaches to risk reduction

How should the approach be designed and implemented? It was widely recognized in the room – via multiple interventions – that communities have an instrumental role in defining and assessing risks and they are vital partners in generating solutions for risk reduction to ensure that these are adequate to local socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Barriers, gaps and challenges related to the approach: Participants underscored that community members are not always fully aware of the scale of the future risk, nor do they necessarily have the full complement of skills and capacities to innovate adequate solutions alone without external sources of information and ideas. There is a role for awareness raising and it is important to translate information to communities, as well as to channel information from the bottom-up, rather than trying to impose technological solutions from the top down.

Solutions for overcoming these barriers, gaps and challenges: Participants stressed the importance of having demonstration projects that showed communities how risk reduction approaches are feasible and could increase political buy-in and acceptance. This would also help to illustrate how these can, with careful design, deliver ongoing development benefits and enhanced quality of life, as well as reduce risks associated with climate-related extremes. Two key points were: (a) power of persuading-by-showing and (b) selling communities on ‘what they can gain from risk reduction measures in their everyday lives’.

What are the organisations that can help support implementation and scaling up of approaches to meet needs in developing countries? Here the Partners for Resilience programme, implemented by the Netherlands Red Cross and partners was mentioned as working from national all the way down to local levels in the Philippines and in other Asian and African countries.

3. Vertical integration of risk reduction policy design and its implementation from national to local authority level

Barriers, gaps and challenges related to the approach: The need for support to local authorities to enable them to take action on risk reduction was underscored throughout the discussion. To achieve this, municipalities need to understand the full range of current risks, understand future trajectories, and be able to put in place their own risk reduction strategies. A participant highlighted that due to a lack of adequate expert personnel at local government level and the pressure they are under, local authorities are often not able to implement the highest level of risk assessment and management.

Solutions for overcoming these barriers, gaps and challenges: Increasing capacity, strengthening access to risk information and facilitating the translation of scientific knowledge and national approaches into usable knowledge at local level can help overcome some of these constraints. The Global Covenant of Mayors on Climate and Energy, for example, is developing a solution to support risk assessment and reduction. This aims to be applicable by cities of all sizes and can be integrated

into city and national plans for sustainable development, which would facilitate scaling up successful approaches.

The European earth observation system Copernicus has provided further examples where globally accessible free data and technology have been used to support risk management services related to prevention and response, and informed a pilot for resilience initiatives in cities to help address some of the needs of local authorities and allow them to take adequate action on risk reduction.

What are the organisations that can help support implementation and scaling up of approaches to meet needs in developing countries? The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy provides a platform and support at city level. Existing data and technology initiatives and opportunities, such as the EU's Copernicus programme, can be made use of to better understand risks and inform risk reduction activities.

4. Child-centered approaches to risk reduction

Design and implementation: This is an approach that was described as in the early stages of adoption in Bangladesh. It builds on the rationale that children are particularly vulnerable to suffering losses from extreme and slow onset climate change phenomena that cannot be immediately classed as 'economic losses' and therefore tend to be overlooked. Nonetheless, these can have profound impacts on children's individual development, for example related to loss of schooling, and so can have collective societal impacts in the future. The approach aims to integrate a child-centred approach into wider risk management policies. In Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) is working with other Bangladeshi institutions to trial this approach.

Barriers, gaps and challenges related to the approach: None were explicitly discussed in this session, although the implicit suggestion was that this is a new and emergent area of theory and practice which will take some time to garner recognition and 'bed down' in practice, including a need for capacity building on the approach and financing for implementation.

5. Forecast based early action

Design and implementation: A participant highlighted the opportunities that exist to prevent or reduce risks in the run-up to an extreme event that can be captured by forecasts. While most approaches to risk reduction are longer-term, forecasting hazards and potential impacts on the population and linking this to early action can be a way to deal with risks where longer-term approaches to risk reduction have not yet been employed.

6. Probabilistic risk assessments to support risk management frameworks

Design and implementation: Participants highlighted that out of the existing tools, approaches and strategies, countries need to choose what is appropriate to their national circumstances, taking into account their implementing capacities and wishes of actors. In the Philippines, an example includes the probabilistic risk assessment approach, which is based on multiple criteria and applicable to all sectors and government levels.

Barriers, gaps and challenges related to the approach: High capacity requirements related to the approach are a significant challenge. For example, in the Philippine experience, there was a shortage

in experts to undertake specialist tasks at the assessment level. The process also experienced data challenges in the form of an absence of real-time data regarding people and their social support systems as well as sectoral and other data that would support probabilistic risk assessments.

Solutions for overcoming these barriers, gaps and challenges: Participants highlighted that investment in capacity is needed to better apply the approach. This capacity has to be comprehensive – institutional, social, and supporting a national process. Data collected more systematically by countries under the Sendai Framework could further help to strengthen the underlying basis of probabilistic models.

7. Holistic assessment of social, environmental and economic impacts of risk reduction measures

Design and implementation: Participants highlighted the importance of this approach with regards to understanding impacts from risk reduction activities on ecosystem services and their link with human wellbeing, so that risk reduction interventions do not inadvertently create new risks. A participant described the risks of interfering with, or severely damaging the provision of ecosystem services by taking ‘hard’ engineering approaches to risk reduction. In Cuba, for example, it was due to the assessment of these broader risks to ecosystem services, particularly in coastal areas, that the Cuban government increasingly favours nature-based (‘green’) solutions such as planting mangroves over hard ones, though it was appreciated that a mixed approach is generally needed for effective risk reduction.

8. Decision-support tools for prioritizing risk management investments

Barriers, gaps and challenges related to the approach: A participant highlighted the need to better support decision making and budget allocations to different components of risk management, as in some cases risk transfer mechanisms such as insurance were tending to ‘crowd out’ potential risk reduction activities in developing countries. There is not yet a diagnostic or decision support tool to help governments and other actors determine the optimal allocation of resources (people, money, training, etc) but this could be useful. To ensure that risk reduction activities also address the needs of the poorest and are not biased towards the higher level of assets owned by wealthier people, it was suggested that prioritisation of risk reduction should not only be based on economic considerations.

9. Multi-pronged financing approaches for different types of complementary disaster risk reduction activities

Design and implementation: An example for this approach was offered in relation to the Seychelles, where diverse means of financing climate resilience have been used. This includes tapping into

- bilateral,
- multilateral,
- philanthropic and
- private sector

sources of finance.

Tools and instruments used include:

- debt swaps and debt relief,
- impact investing,
- public private partnerships and
- blue bonds.

It was suggested that some of these may support risk reduction and could be re-directed to communities. Furthermore, the Insurance Compensation Consortium, which is a public private partnership in Spain to support pay-outs in the aftermath of catastrophic events such as strong winds or tornadoes was mentioned by one participant. Finally, participants highlighted initiatives such as the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative or the African Risk Capacity, which combine risk reduction activities with other risk management components such as risk transfer and can facilitate access to contingency finance.

Barriers, gaps and challenges related to the approach: The significant challenges highlighted in relation to these approaches included concerns related to indebtedness of many developing countries: if there is no answer to address loss and damage beyond adaptation under the UNFCCC, then this may be a disincentive for certain countries to step aside and look for other mechanisms and sources of financing for risk reduction that exist outside of the UNFCCC process. This could be the case, according to one participant, because drawing money for investment from other sources may add to the financial burden when a disaster strikes and losses are incurred on these investments. How to finance risk reduction and what tools are available for this purpose was a major concern and country participants highlighted that this needs to be better clarified under the Suva Expert Dialogue and through the technical paper. Finally, it was recognised that the feasibility of financing mechanisms for risk reduction in developing countries and their viability under future climate scenarios needs to be ensured. One participant concluded that approaches should be designed to trigger international support when needed.

Solutions for overcoming these barriers, gaps and challenges: Participants mentioned access to finance made available through NDC and NAP processes. Further, participants cited the open letter published on Climate Home on 2 May by ministers and ambassadors of the Seychelles, Vanuatu, Dominica and Bangladesh calling for finance mechanisms integral to the UNFCCC to address loss and damage, and specifically, international funding based on the 'polluter pays' principle.

What are the organisations that can help support implementation and scaling up of approaches to meet needs in developing countries? It was suggested that there needs to be a long-term process for addressing loss and damage and that this could be set up similar to NAPs, with guidance, capacity building and financing provided through the ExCom, the GEF, the GCF, the LDCF and other existing bodies under the convention.