

Phase II – Theme II: Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience

Introduction

This guidance document focuses on the second of the four themes identified by the Irish Consultative Process: ‘Greater focus on disaster risk reduction and resilience initiatives’. It should be read in conjunction with the ‘Overview of Phase II – Irish Consultative Process to the WHS’ document. It summarises the key findings from Phase I of the Irish Process plus the update on thematic work by the global WHS process to date. It also suggests key questions developed from the work already conducted (at both an Irish and global level) which will be used to guide further study in Phase II.

Background to Theme Area

Resilience and disaster risk reduction are well established concepts but they have not yet been sufficiently operationalised. The need to unlock the potential of resilience and disaster risk reduction interventions is highlighted by the challenges posed by the increase of protracted, recurrent crises that exacerbate humanitarian needs and divert resources from disasters of larger scale. Extreme poverty, fragile governance, weak social infrastructure, insecurity and low level conflict, protracted displacement, periodic natural hazards and economic shocks combine to create humanitarian need. The solutions are as complex, yet the current international response can only address small parts of the problem, often in a patchy way.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a running debate on linking relief and development. Despite many efforts, the core problems have remained. However, there are signs this is beginning to change. The resilience agenda has started to break down barriers, notably through a number of initiatives launched in the past few years. There is growing recognition that new approaches are needed to tackle risk differently. If some of the less intractable crises can be dealt with differently and some of the more intractable crises can be dealt with more efficiently, then perhaps the humanitarian system can be reserved for genuinely unforeseen and urgent events.

The WHS presents an opportunity to close this debate. It requires setting basic building blocks to bring these communities together: common analysis; joint planning and strategies; common outcomes; a shift towards longer term finance (or different instruments in middle income countries); enhanced leadership and coordination arrangement; and, the right set of incentives. It also requires better linkages at the macro-policy level, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) process, including Financing for Development; the Hyogo framework renewal and climate change discussions in late 2015, and the urban agenda through Habitat III. Coming after the first three, the WHS can focus more on how to operationalise what is agreed

Findings from Phase I of the Irish Consultative Process and the Global WHS Working Groups

The five stakeholders groups involved in the Irish Consultative Process are: Public Sector Group (PG); Private Sector Group (PvS); NGO Group (NGO); Diaspora Group (DG); and Education Group (EG). The Phase I consultations in Ireland and the Global WHS working groups yielded the following proposals concerning disaster risk reduction and resilience initiatives:

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- Long-term disaster management and resilience building at the local level ought to be improved through community-led programmes;
- Further emphasis ought to be placed on disaster risk reduction in relief programmes;
- Risk management should be boosted by linking the WHS process with the different policy domains of relevance to resilience-building (HFA, SDGs, CCA) (NGOs, PG);
- It should be ensured that funding is provided in a flexible manner based on the context (PG; NGOs; DG);
- Political empowerment and representation around responding to early warnings, the use of technology, and the capacity development of institutions and local NGOs, CBOs and regional organisations ought to be promoted (NGOs, PG, EG);
- Effective participation of populations, especially urban populations, in preparedness planning should be promoted (PG);
- Research, training, education and knowledge transfer is required to better understand and anticipate the changing nature of risk and vulnerability (DG & EG)
- Determine the core building blocks and commitments required for a more effective integrated approach to managing risk between the humanitarian and development sectors, including solutions to protracted displacement. This will also involve: making close links with the post-2015 processes; exploring a new approach and commitment to preparedness finance; and better understanding risk.
- Assess opportunities for mechanisms that directly channel funding to national and local actors for preparedness and response.
- Explore the opportunities for closer links with risk financing, including making use of best practice from the insurance industry.

Suggested Guidance Questions for the Focus Group Discussion meeting:

A paragraph¹ will be prepared on each suggestion bulleted indicating the ‘problem/ issue’ under review as identified in phase 1 and the WHS documentation. Then the focus groups will be asked the following questions:

- What needs to be done to address the issue/ problem?
- What should Ireland’s position be on this issue?
- What can the different stakeholders in Ireland do to address the issue? (public sector/ private sector/ NGOs/ diaspora/ education)
- Are there examples of how this issue has been addressed that can be documented as models/ case studies?

¹ These paragraphs will be developed in the coming days and may result in slight changes/ the merging of some of the above suggested bullet points.