



International Strategy for Disaster Reduction



# Linking Disaster Risk Reduction and Poverty Reduction

Good Practices and Lessons Learned

*A Publication of the Global Network of  
NGOs for Disaster Risk Reduction*

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Please send your feedback and suggestions, including further case studies for consideration, to:

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# Foreword

Disasters are often portrayed as acts of nature, or of a natural order. Yet this is mostly far from reality. The major factors influencing disaster risks are human and social vulnerability, matched with the overall capacity to respond to or reduce the impact of natural hazards. Poverty is therefore a major factor increasing disaster risk, by increasing vulnerability to disasters and reducing existing coping capacities. It is only by addressing these two issues together that we can make the difference between a community trapped in a grinding poverty cycle, and one with secure lives and livelihoods.

Another patch of common ground is that the poor suffer the most from disasters.<sup>1</sup> 94.25% of all people killed by disasters in from 1975-2000 were low income or lower-middle income people. The poorest people comprised 68% of deaths from disasters . These plain numbers are an indictment of socio-economic inequality, and a telling signpost to where disaster risk reduction must concentrate its efforts as of moral necessity. Furthermore, drought, cyclones, and flood seasons are repeatedly depriving the poor of their assets, livelihoods, and labour force, all too often locking them into endemic poverty cycles.

Even in the poorest communities, however, there is a wealth of knowledge and experience on how to break this negative feedback cycle. From this set of good practices, for instance, water and environmental management emerge as a very prominent link between disaster risk reduction and poverty reduction. The examples of drought risk reduction initiatives highlighted in this publication are equally inspiring, and make intuitive sense. There is a need to further promote these initiatives, so that they can be scaled up or replicated on a wider scale.

This publication has been precisely developed with this purpose in mind. We hope that it will inspire further practical action at the community level, and raise awareness on this critical issue.

Mr. Sálvano Briceño  
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<sup>1</sup> 20th Century Asian Natural Disasters Data Book, Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), August 2002.

# Preface

Natural hazards, which are becoming more intense and frequent, have a devastating impact on the world's poor. A large-scale hazard that hits a highly vulnerable community with low capacity to cope, reverses hard-won development gains, entrenching people in poverty cycles, and increasing vulnerability. How to break these cycles is a huge challenge for governments, development practitioners and societies as a whole.

Sustaining and protecting livelihoods of the poor and marginalized is a way to tackle poverty. This, however, is a huge task for poor communities, especially those that are vulnerable to natural hazards.

In this context, the Special Unit for South-South Cooperation in UNDP is pleased to co-facilitate South-South knowledge development and solutions exchange for disaster risk management. This publication captures good practices and lessons learned in linking disaster risk reduction and poverty reduction from Asia, Africa and Latin America. It provides us with a glimpse of how non-governmental organisations are able to undertake projects and programmes that tackle both disaster risk reduction and poverty reduction at the same time.

The cases presented show that communities' disaster risk reduction efforts in mitigation, preparedness, networking, local level insurance, shelter protection and water provision help contribute to poverty reduction. Similarly, it is noteworthy that poverty reduction efforts such as job and livelihoods creation and protection can help reduce disaster risks.

It is therefore the Special Unit's privilege to continue the partnership with the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction in the publication of this series, and to continuously identify and share good practices on disaster risk reduction that benefit poor communities. This reinforces the link between activities that reduce disaster risks with poverty reduction initiatives. This link is vital for the achievement of sustainable development goals, particularly at the community level.

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# Introduction

This is the second publication of the Global Network of NGOs for Disaster Risk Reduction, a network of national and international NGOs and civil society organisations working on disaster risk reduction<sup>2</sup>. A first publication, entitled *Building Disaster-Resilient Communities - Good Practices and Lessons Learned*, was published by the Global Network in June 2007 to make the case for increased community-oriented disaster risk reduction action.

Building on last year's effort, the present publication seeks to highlight initiatives that have successfully linked poverty reduction and disaster risk reduction in various parts of the world. It features several projects and programmes that show how disaster risk reduction can be integrated into poverty reduction initiatives (or vice-versa) to help reduce the vulnerability of the poor and protect their livelihoods and development gains.

Disaster risk reduction and poverty reduction have also been selected as the theme of the 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction that will be produced by the UN/ISDR system for the second session of the GP/DRR<sup>3</sup>. Some of the case studies included in this publication will also feed into the 2009 Report, and will contribute to the analysis of the disaster risk/poverty interface.

For ease of reference, an abstract is provided at the beginning of each good practice, and all are presented in a format that helps the reader to locate a particular section of the case study (lessons learned, potential for replication, and so forth). A specific section, entitled 'The Initiative's Contribution to Poverty Reduction', describes how poverty reduction is approached and achieved by the initiative. Lastly, contact details are provided at the end of each case study for those who may wish to seek further information.

Our hope is that these good practices will generate increased interest in the subject among community leaders, implementing agencies, policy makers and other stakeholders. Above all, it is hoped that they will inspire the replication of initiatives that reduce poverty and build resilience among the world's most vulnerable communities.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Global Network visit: <http://www.unisdr.org/ngos>.

<sup>3</sup> The "Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction – GP/DRR" is the main forum for representatives of governments, UN agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector to address disaster risk reduction issues (<http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/GP/>).

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