

## Food security, agriculture and livelihoods

The three Rome-based United Nations agencies – the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme – are exploring ways to jointly promote Disaster Risk Management (DRM) for vulnerable people in high-risk countries prone to disaster in the food and agricultural sectors.

The agencies have food security, agriculture and livelihoods protection as common themes for their work in development, emergency response, financial services and risk transfer.



Disaster Risk Management is an umbrella concept covering:

- ▶ risk assessment and reduction;
- ▶ preparedness and early warning and
- ▶ response and rehabilitation.

The Rome-based agencies are studying the relationship between the food and agricultural sector and national DRM systems, and are working together to integrate humanitarian and development activities in DRM.



**Rome Partnership for  
Disaster Risk Management**

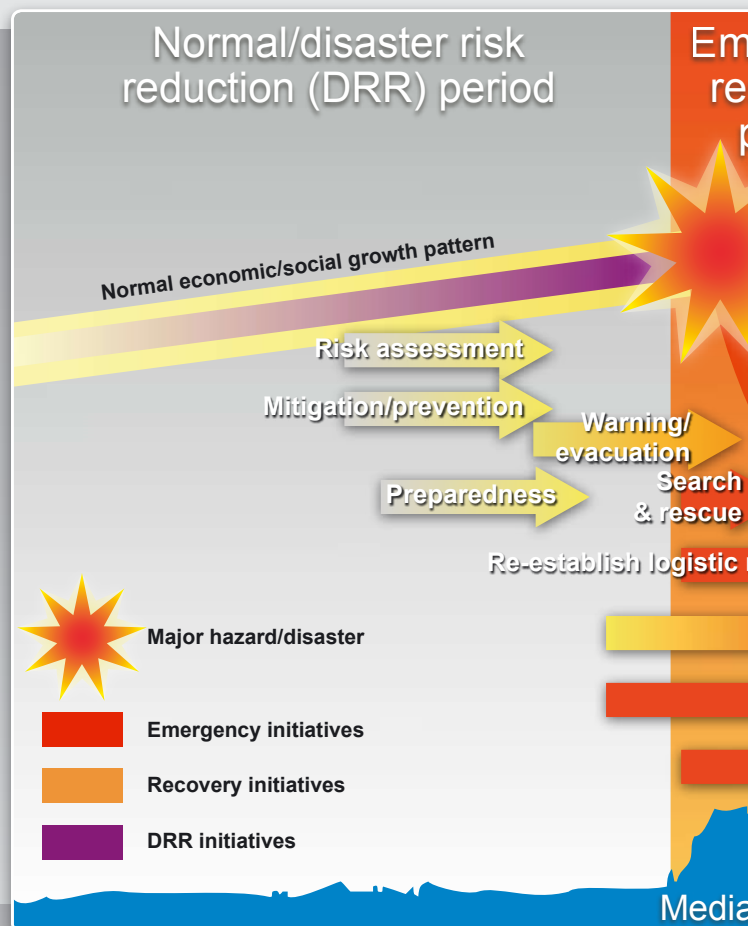
# Disaster Risk Management in food and agriculture

# Disasters and agriculturally dependent populations

**Three out of four people in developing countries** live in rural areas and are highly dependent on agriculture for their food security and livelihoods. Disasters tend to have the most severe consequences on poor, vulnerable and agriculture-based populations. Official declarations of disasters are closely monitored, yet other impacts on agricultural activities, particularly those related to traditional small-scale farming systems, are often neglected or considered to be of minor economic interest. Recurrent hazard exposure and disasters often move people off the development track. Even worse, such shocks can push people into perpetual poverty.

Disasters are not limited to natural events. Human-induced crises – such as soaring food prices or civil conflict – also have disastrous consequences on vulnerable populations. While high food prices threaten the well-being of millions of poor people, they also present an opportunity for those land-holding small-scale farmers who are in a position to increase production and reduce risk.

Urgent action is needed on two fronts: 1. making food accessible to the most vulnerable, and helping small producers with seed distribution, fertilizer and other farm inputs to increase their output and earn more.



## Conceptual framework of the Rome partnership

**Disaster Risk Management** in the context of the three Rome-based UN agencies is focused on food security and the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors, and the needs and livelihoods of vulnerable people. Although FAO, IFAD, and WFP have differing entry points to reduce disaster risk, the three agencies share the overarching objective to reduce loss of life and assets while focusing on enhancing the livelihoods of targeted populations, particularly the most vulnerable and poor.

Government ownership, public-private partnerships and capacity-building are key to developing coherent and collaborative programmes based on three primary tasks:

- explore the fundamentals of risk management in rural areas and establish good practice;
- prevent disasters by avoiding and reducing risk;
- mitigate disaster impacts through better preparedness, early warning and appropriate response mechanisms.

Scaling up the supply side response, supported by collaboration between the Rome-based UN agencies, is but one example of a response that bridges the humanitarian-development gap.

2. Proactive strategies are essential if vulnerable countries are to avoid large-scale loss of life and livelihoods, and the destruction of the environment, economic activities and infrastructure. Risk reduction is an essential component of DRM, and in the context of food security and agriculture it aims to reduce the additional vulnerability of people caused by exposure to hazards and crises.

The anticipated increase in the severity and frequency of extreme weather events (IPCC 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report) will make it more difficult for many people, particularly those in high-risk, low-capacity countries, to recover before facing the next crisis, making these populations even more vulnerable to hazard and disaster risks. Assistance is required at the global, national and local levels to improve preparedness and early warning systems, and to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations.

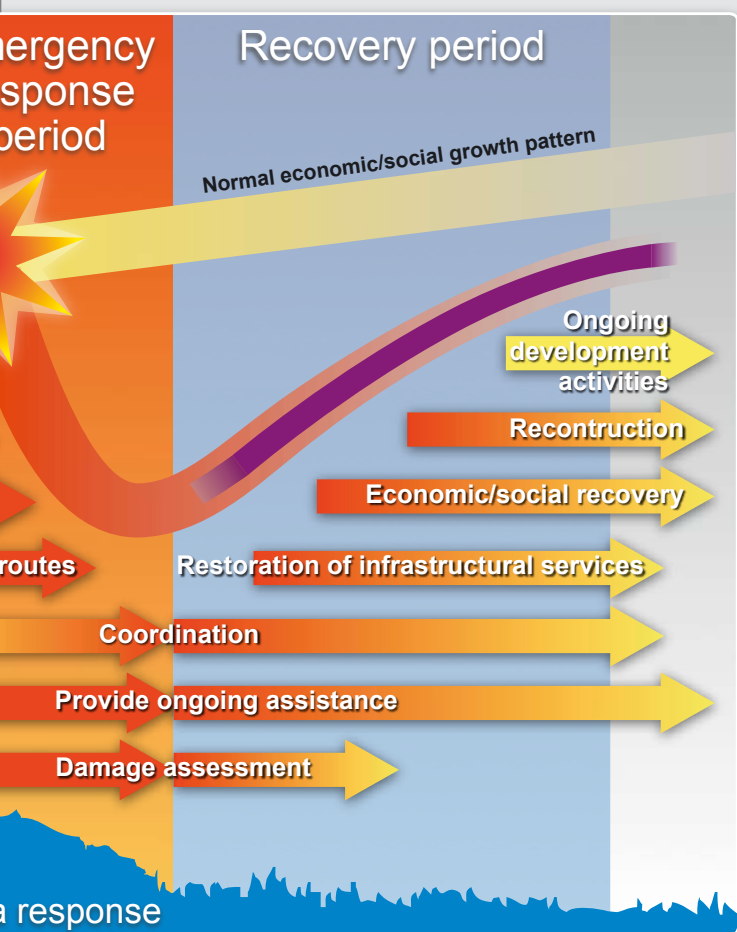


Diagram adapted from TorqAid



Country-specific DRM strategies and programmes must first establish the fundamentals of risk management, including comprehensive risk assessments, early warning systems, institutional and policy bases, and a culture of safety and resilience. Prevention aims at avoiding damage by reducing vulnerability to natural disasters through physical and socio-economic measures, better land-use planning and weather risk transfer mechanisms.

Strengthening mitigation and disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels requires disaster preparedness planning, logistical preparedness, contingency planning and contingency funding. Different entry points can be used in a variety of country contexts including, for example, community-based DRM, countrywide DRM and a fully fledged DRM framework with private sector participation.

## Contacts



### WFP

Ulrich Hess  
Chief of Risk Reduction and Disaster  
Mitigation Policy  
E-mail: [Ulrich.Hess@wfp.org](mailto:Ulrich.Hess@wfp.org)

### IFAD



Michael Hamp  
Senior Rural Finance Technical Advisor  
E-mail: [M.Hamp@ifad.org](mailto:M.Hamp@ifad.org)

### FAO



E-mail: [Disaster-Risk@fao.org](mailto:Disaster-Risk@fao.org)

Stephan Baas  
Sustainable Rural Development Officer  
E-mail: [Stephan.Baas@fao.org](mailto:Stephan.Baas@fao.org)

## The challenge

The number of reported disasters increased significantly between 1987 and 2006 – particularly hydro-meteorological hazards (such as droughts, floods, tropical storms and wild fires) from an average of 195 per year in 1987-1998 to 365 per year in 2000-2006 – and this trend is likely to continue in coming years.\*

- ▶ Every year more than 230 million people on average were affected by disasters between 2000 and 2007.
- ▶ Disaster losses are steadily increasing due to a number of factors - such as increased extreme weather events associated with climate change, population growth, unplanned urbanization and environmental degradation.
- ▶ The IPCC 4th Assessment report points to a future where climate induced hazards and disasters will further increase.
- ▶ The possible breakdown of agricultural systems due to climate change, such as increased exposure to drought, rising temperatures and more erratic rainfall, could result in malnutrition for an additional 600 million people.

Disasters undermine development progress, constrain economic growth and threaten food production. Systematic disaster risk management – as an integrated component of development – plays a critical role in assuring future agricultural production and access to food and water by the world's most vulnerable people.

**The primary challenge for FAO, IFAD, and WFP** is to mainstream DRM effectively into development policies and programmes related to food and agriculture, as well as emergency response, recovery and rehabilitation initiatives, all while seeking the most effective ways to address the livelihood gaps of vulnerable people. The three agencies are exploring how to work together more effectively in both concept and practice, from finding ways to address livelihood gaps to including best practices in policies and programmes.

The foundation of current partnership is based upon joint contributions to several ongoing projects and case studies in Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Haiti, Jamaica, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan. The Rome Partnership for DRM will focus on selected areas of work including how climate risk transfer instruments can support livelihoods, the ways that good DRM practices can enhance livelihoods and further development of insurance supported risk management.

---

\* CRED, UCL, UN ISDR, *Annual Statistical Review: Numbers and Trends, 2006*, Brussels 2007. This dramatic increase in the number of reported disasters is also related to improvements in reporting of smaller scale disasters.