

Final Report

F2F Event 2016: Urban DRR and Urban Resilience

6th - 8th December 2016

The Swiss NGO DRR Platform is looking back at a multifaceted three-day F2F Event that revealed important insights from different organizations and institutions and facilitated interactive and inspiring discussions on the topic of how to work on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in cities while strengthening urban resilience. The event was well attended with 57 participants, half of them from Swiss NGOs, about 25% from Swiss Government, and the remaining from international NGOs, civil society networks, international organizations, private sector, academia and other. Discussion topics focused on key learnings and best practices from work and practice in urban DRR, the possible niche and contribution of NGOs in urban DRR, as well as possible partnerships with different organizations and institutions.



Figure 1: The workshop participants in Thun

More than 50% of the world's population live in cities with 828 million people living in slums, and urbanization is expected to further increase particularly in small and medium-sized cities of Africa and Asia that often are less equipped with infrastructure, services, resources and capacities. Where cities are ill-prepared to anticipate or absorb, regulate and prevent the various adverse effects of their rapid growth, rapid urbanization can result in considerable disaster risks that threaten population and sustainable development which can be further exacerbated by a changing environment and climate change. In addition, urban areas are often located in areas highly exposed to natural hazards, such as floodplains, coastal belts and fault lines, resulting in a high density of assets and people being vulnerable to disastrous effects should an extreme event strike.

Effective disaster risk reduction and resilience building therefore will become increasingly important, and building urban resilience that is inclusive in terms of population and sectors as well as the capacity of



cities to conduct transformational change will be key determinants to both urban resilience and sustainable development in future cities.

Recognizing the increasing relevance of urban areas and urban-rural interdependencies, Swiss NGOs - that have long focused on rural DRR in their work - are starting to consider expanding their DRR work in urban areas and are exploring on how they could contribute to urban DRR and urban resilience in the near future. Therefore, there is increasing interest in learning more about the current practice and experiences of working in urban DRR.

F2F Event 2016: Workshop and Public Event

In this regard, the Face-to-Face (F2F) Event 2016 was organized by Caritas Switzerland, together with the Swiss Red Cross and Save the Children, on behalf of the Swiss NGO DRR Platform, with the overall aim to facilitate the sharing of current experiences and learnings from the work of different organizations and institutions in urban DRR and to promote the networking and exchange among these organizations and institutions.

The F2F Event was structured into a two-day workshop comprising 4 thematic blocks (I-Introduction, II-Analyze, III-Apply, IV-Advocate) and a half-day Public Day.

F2F Workshop

I - Introduction: Disaster risks in the face of increased urbanization

Reflecting on the current state of knowledge on urban DRR, John Twigg from ODI set the scene for the workshop by outlining the overall scope of urban DRR and how it relates to urban resilience and urban development. Further, he elaborated on the urban context including stakeholders and actors as well as the hazards, vulnerabilities and communities to be in the focus of interventions, and provided an introduction to existing frameworks that could guide the work in urban DRR.

Key learnings were that risk needs to be understood in the urban context and that cities can be understood as complex systems by focusing on their interconnections and dynamics such as the rural-urban and informal-formal linkages. Also, there was agreement that although various frameworks exist, they mostly are very context-specific and can be used as a starting point for conceptualising the scope of work in urban DRR.

II - Analyze: Understanding urban disaster risks

Experiences on how urban disaster risks and urban disasters are being addressed internationally were shared by Mathias Spaliviero from UN-Habitat who presented the mandate and activities of UN-Habitat focusing on the regional perspective of Sub-Saharan Africa and Joel Bolnick from SDI who provided insights into a voluntary railway resettlement story in Mumbai, giving a reality check on how civil society

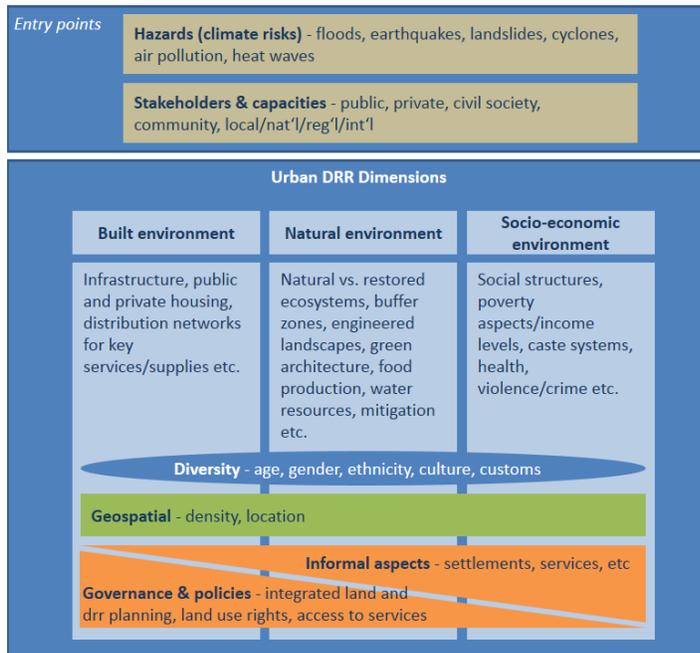


Figure 2: Dimensions when working on Urban DRR and Resilience (Source: Caritas Switzerland)

can work with diverse urban communities through investing in social capital for achieving better social cohesion and community engagement.

Key learnings were that the fastest urban growth will take place in small and intermediate cities where the lack of capacities is biggest, that urban population in Africa is expected to triple until 2050 but cities also do not grow endlessly, that social movement can be critical in contributing to improved resilience and DRR in informal settlements. Group discussions revealed that the role of NGOs was seen rather to facilitate, convene and link up than to coordinate, that NGOs should work based on multi-stakeholder involvement and that they should build social capital and empower local

stakeholders and aim at longer term engagement. For NGOs to work in informal settlements the focus should be on the most vulnerable, on the informal while taking into account the formal, and on slum-friendly cities, while the work should aim at incremental improvements.

III - Apply: Interventions for Urban DRR

Representatives of different organisations and institutions including NGOs, International Organisations, Swiss Government and the private sector shared their knowledge and experiences from working in urban DRR and urban resilience building.

The **Global Market Place** offered insights into a variety of best practices and approaches presented by the representatives from different organisations, including:

- Frontline tool and outline proposal 2017, by Nicole Stolz from Caritas Switzerland
- Building City Coalitions towards connectedness for resilience-essential components, by Gavin White from IFRC
- Integrating DRR into a project with a focus on social inclusion – The experience of the Red Cross in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, by Anton Joehr from Swiss Red Cross
- Integrated Flood Management (IFM) in urban areas, by Maud Poissonnier from WMO
- Comprehensive needs and risk assessment in a slum in Tongi, Dhaka, by Eva Syfrig from Swiss Red Cross



- The use of Household Economy Analysis (HEA) tool to understand household vulnerability to shocks and stresses in urban context – the case of Niamey, by Christophe Belperron from Save the Children
- City Resilience Action Planning (CityRAP) tool – how it works, by Mathias Spaliviero from UN-Habitat
- How to reduce the risk of disasters in the built environment, by Alexander Angermaier from Caritas Switzerland

Important learnings from the Global Market Place emphasized on the wealth of knowledge and tools and resources on urban DRR among different organisations, land ownership as a key issue, the strong linkages between building codes and DRR, the need to link communities and government, the need for diverse organisations in the urban context to work together, as well as the need to bridge and link the formal and the informal.

For gaining a better understanding of the **perspectives of different Swiss institutions**, representatives of the Swiss Government (SDC, SECO) and the private sector (Swiss Re) presented their approaches and experiences from working in the urban context, by reflecting on climate risk resilient development and climate change adaptation as well as on disaster preparedness and response. Lukas Sundermann from Swiss Re provided insights into the DRR perspective from the insurance sector illustrated by the example of the city of Barisal and its climate risks. Mirjam Macchi from the Global Programme of CC at SDC presented the work of SDC while focusing on a project on climate resilient and low carbon urban planning in cities in India. Alain Geiger from SECO elaborated on the urban DRR work of SECO. Simon Tschurr from SDC Humanitarian Aid and SHA showed how SDC is engaging at different levels in preparedness and response. In the following discussion they acknowledged the role of NGOs in contributing to urban DRR in various ways and particularly by linking up with the local level.

In the next session, three **case studies from Swiss NGO DRR Platform members and partners** were presented to share and discuss good practices and approaches from different geographic regions, including:

- A business case for DRM in Bosnia/Herzegovina with regards to how infrastructure investments in high-economic areas can spur economic growth and greater public-private dialogue, by Marina Filipović from NERDA
- Urban resilience building among children and mothers in slum communities in 4 cities in India, by Ray Kancharla from Save the Children
- Scaling up traditional DRR interventions in urban settings: how the Red Cross branch in Riohacha, Colombia, redefined its audience, scope and methodology, by Gavin White from IFRC

Key learnings were that participatory processes can bring different communities together to (1) build social cohesion, (2) identify common issues, and (3) come up with solutions. For working at scale partnerships, networks and coalitions can be used. Further, investing in social capital can get slum dwellers engaged in solutions and become actors instead of beneficiaries. Upgrading informal settlements can come with a risk for the inhabitants as the value of land will increase and they may get

evicted, therefore there should be consideration of ensuring inclusive redistribution and sharing of increased value of land. In many urban contexts, integrating DRR through integrative, multi-sectoral approaches was perceived more promising than standalone DRR project approaches as it creates important synergies and co-benefits for the different stakeholders. Last but not least, the use of opportunities was highlighted such as a disaster for investing in DRR or infrastructure investment to mainstream DRR.

IV - Advocate

Building on the different perspectives and the various learnings and insights shared in the blocks I to III, the workshop participants identified expectations from other actors and stakeholders and developed key messages from the workshop to be brought forward on the Public Day.

Key messages:

- urban DRR is about urban resilience: that means an integrative and inclusive approach is crucial
- urban planning and development are important in contributing to DRR and resilience in cities: considering the wider environment as well as the existing (legal) frameworks are key for any intervention targeted at resilience to not act in isolation.
- building social capital is the foundation of intervening in complex urban environment: to generate sustainable impacts that benefit residents and communities requires people gathering for a joint goal – and bringing in own initiative and engagement
- inclusiveness is critical to ensure social cohesion: a prerequisite for building social capital
- more flexibility from donors and institutions will be required to accommodate for urban complexity and dynamics: this includes the willingness of donors to integrate process indicators as compared to outcomes in project planning and monitoring frameworks, and allow for truly participatory processes
- a longer term engagement as well as collaborative approaches will be needed to effectively work in urban DRR and urban resilience: the complexity of the urban landscape requires to partner up among complementary organizations in regard to thematic expertise, target groups and scale.

With these key messages at hand, the workshop members attended the Public Day on 8th December 2016, bringing to the fore aspects of inclusiveness and participation.

The Public Day on ‘Tackling the Urban Resilience Challenge’ (8th December 2016, Hotel Kreuz, Bern)

Taking forward the outcomes and key messages from the F2F 2016 workshop with regards to how to approach urban DRR from an NGO perspective, the Public Day of the F2F Event 2016 aimed at elaborating on how to effectively ensure disaster risk reduction and resilience building in rapidly growing cities. Bringing representatives of different key organisations and institutions such as UNISDR, SECO, SDC, SDI, Save the Children, ODI, UN-Habitat and GNDR together, the following topics were discussed on

How to...



- (1) improve coherence and synergies across international frameworks and mandates such as the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for DRR and the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III that all deal with specific aspects of urban resilience,
- (2) get better compliance and accountability of national and municipality authorities for implementing existing safe building and land-use codes, plans and regulations,
- (3) secure capacities and financing required by cities to build resilient infrastructure and prevent new risks, and
- (4) ensure that frameworks and mechanisms better support the institutionalization of inclusive local risk governance that involves different stakeholders and institutions contributing to urban resilience.

Moderated by Marcus Oxley from GNDR, the Public Day started with reporting back and presenting the key messages from the workshop by Nicole Stolz from Caritas Switzerland.

Robert Glasser, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of UNISDR, provided his keynote speech in which he responded to some of the presented conclusions and key messages from the workshop. In specific, he emphasized that the focus should be more on the opportunities of disasters and urban DRR and not only on the challenges. This was underlined by the fact that disasters can trigger risk-informed changes, urban DRR can reach larger populations due to concentration, and DRR can be used to bridge the silos of different sectors for example relief and development. Further, he elaborated on the process of the development of indicators for the Sendai framework and the lack of capacities at the local level to collect and monitor data where civil society could play an important role. Finally, Mr. Glasser emphasized that climate change was the major threat to be tackled: without the substantial and timely reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, efforts in DRR will be overwhelmed by climate change.

These topics were taken further in the following panel discussion that focused on how to achieve inclusive urban resilience which was held among Robert Glasser, Alain Geiger from SECO, Arno Wicki from SDC, Christophe Belperron from Save the Children, Joel Bolnick from SDI, John Twigg from ODI and Mathias Spaliviero from UN-Habitat.

Key findings of the panel discussion were that the implementation of the Sendai Framework would require a realistic approach and support in terms of local monitoring where civil society could play a role. Given the threat of climate change, DRR could be made more sustainable when using synergies with climate change mitigation. It was highlighted that a participatory approach is critical for urban resilience, recognizing that the vulnerable can be a key resource and not just the beneficiary. Also, participatory and inclusive planning can and does save money on the longer term even though more time will need to be invested, and gaps between top-down approaches and local action will need to be bridged. The notion of limited financial resources for resilience building in cities was in stark contrast to the estimated total annual cost of disasters at 300 to 500 billion USD. Due to their density, economies of scale can foster



investment in resilient cities as the biggest impact can be achieved there, when ensuring that no one is left behind.

Overall learnings

Attempting to distil the multifaceted learnings from the F2F Event 2016, four key learnings are proposed that seem relevant for NGOs as well as other organizations and institutions engaging in effective urban DRR:

- Social capital through community mobilization appears as a powerful resource that can facilitate positive change in informal urban areas; positive in the sense of empowering different communities so that they can take initiative thereby enhancing their ownership and the sustainability of resulting actions.
- Risk-sensitive and sustainable urban development should be the overall main goal of all interventions in urban DRR which should be based on processes that are (1) inclusive and (2) participatory.
- Rapid urban growth offers a unique opportunity to use synergies to tackle climate change and disaster risks at the same time by combining low-emission and risk-sensitive urban planning and development as key pillars to urban resilience.
- Working on urban DRR with a focus on the rapidly growing small and intermediate cities can offer the chance to promote low-emission, risk-reducing and sustainable development early on.

Concluding remarks

Despite the rather tightly structured programme, the F2F Event 2016 received a lot of positive feedback from the participants who particularly appreciated the variety of inputs and learnings as well as the fact that different organisations and institutions, both from Switzerland and beyond, contributed to the event.

We take this opportunity to thank all the resource persons and participants for their invaluable contributions that made this year's F2F 2016 a truly enriching and inspiring experience.

The organizers

Caritas Switzerland

Swiss Red Cross

Save the Children