



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FORUM

INTEGRATED APPROACHES
TO CLIMATE ACTION AND
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION:
STRENGTHENING THE
QUALITY AND IMPACT OF
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

I. Introduction

The 2018 High-level Meeting of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) called on all development actors to prioritize making international development cooperation more risk-informed and climate smart. In the years since, risk considerations have become critical to the pandemic and economic recovery. Meanwhile, the climate emergency and climate-related disasters have continued to ravage countries, communities and livelihoods. Development cooperation now and in the period ahead will have to address multiple risks simultaneously. Addressing climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR) through an integrated approach is one way to optimize the use of precious development cooperation resources to do so - promoting country-owned policies that highlight interlinkages and prioritize impact. This policy brief explores country-led policy innovations already initiated at the national and regional levels to integrate climate and DRR policies and attract risk-informed development cooperation, particularly in least developed countries (LDCs) and small islands developing states (SIDS). Lessons learned are gleaned with a view to informing efforts to strengthen quality and impact of international development cooperation to support a sustainable recovery.



II. The opportunity presented by the COVID-19 response and recovery

Before the pandemic, climate change was already slowing and, in some cases, reversing progress in health, decent work, food security, human security and economic growth across the world, particularly in the most vulnerable communities.¹ Between 1980 and 1999, more than 4,200 disasters were linked to natural hazards worldwide, claiming 1.19 million lives and negatively impacting over 3 billion people. Economic losses totaled US\$ 1.63 trillion.²

As climate change persists, so do its human and economic consequences and the need for development cooperation to support developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable, through tailored, context-specific approaches. According to the OECD, there was an upward trajectory in climate finance from both bilateral providers and multilateral development banks (MDBs), which increased from \$58.6 billion in 2016 to \$78.9 billion in 2018.³ Despite this upward trend continuing in 2019, it was not sufficient to reach the \$100 billion commitment in 2020.⁴ Meanwhile, only 73 donor and recipient countries have reported on international cooperation with developing countries to implement the Sendai Framework, as per Target F,⁵ and in the last 10 years, ODA to DRR averaged 0.1 per cent of total ODA.⁶ Resources to support climate action and DRR have not responded to the scale of what is required in developing countries. And then came the pandemic. While there has been wide support in public statements for sustainable recovery, stimulus packages paint a different picture. A recent report of the Independent Experts on Climate Finance noted that “stimulus to date will have a net negative environmental impact in 16 of the G20 countries and economies,” with \$250 billion having been directed to fossil fuels.⁷

While global average temperatures have declined as a result of reduced emissions from the slowed economic activities due to COVID-19,⁸ spikes in emissions and the continued upward trend in global warming is expected throughout recovery. It is therefore necessary for economic recovery to be tilted toward stimulus that promotes sustainable development, including climate adaptation and reducing fossil fuel investments.⁹ Climate action and COVID-19 economic stimulus measures should be mutually supportive and

reduce underlying exposure and vulnerability to multiple hazards. The cost of inaction is too great: left unchecked, climate change alone could cause social and economic damages far greater than those caused by COVID-19, and with irreversible consequences.¹⁰

COVID-19 response and recovery present an opportunity to advance development cooperation that promotes and supports policies and practices that normalize and enhance integrated efforts on climate action and DRR within the larger context of 2030 Agenda. As the next section will explore, countries and regions are already moving forward on their integrated approaches to climate action and DRR, efforts which will require continued support and resources throughout pandemic recovery. But this will require developing countries and their development partners to move beyond ‘business as usual’.

III. Integrated approaches to climate and DRR policy at the national and regional levels

International development cooperation – financial and non-financial – has a central role to play in supporting developing countries with the capacity building, policy and technical support, and financial resources to develop climate-smart DRR strategies.¹¹ A number of initiatives at the global level are encouraging development partners to align their support toward the coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework.

For example, the Adaptation Committee, Least Developed Countries Expert Group, and the Loss and Damage Executive Committee of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have developed technical guidelines on the inclusion of disaster risk in the development of national climate change adaptation plans (NAPs). In 2019, UNDRR and UNFCCC launched the “Target E Coherent Approach,” which aims to strengthen synergies between DRR and climate change adaptation, identifying opportunities across policies and programs and enhancing country capacities for cross-sectoral planning. Despite these efforts at the global level, challenges such as siloed approaches to governance, finance structures, and communities of practice have proven difficult to overcome.¹²

National and regional efforts to overcome these challenges in the context of the 2030 Agenda have highlighted the value of greater integration of climate and DRR policies and practices. The various benefits include: reduced climate-related losses through widespread DRR measures; strengthened management of resources (financial, human and natural); enhanced impact and sustainability of climate change adaptation and DRR approaches;¹³ reduced duplication and confusion at the operational level;¹⁴ strengthened risk governance; and improved communication and mutual learning between stakeholders.¹⁵ Integration of climate and DRR is advancing, with the support of conceptual tools and practical guidance¹⁶ that have been developed at national and regional levels and across sectors.¹⁷

National Level

Joint National Action Plans (JNAPs) aim to build resilience through greater integration of climate action and disaster risk management. Some Pacific SIDS (PSIDS) use JNAPs to address a range of national-level challenges, including capacity and resource constraints, lack of coordination and limited sharing of expertise across sectors. They can also help to mainstream DRR and climate action into national sustainable development strategies (NSDS). The Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Tonga, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Cook Islands currently have JNAPs. Their experience has yielded two particularly important lessons. First, bringing together different actors and stakeholders – donors, regional organizations and diverse government entities – at the design stage has helped to better support implementation. Second, ensuring the coherence of the JNAPs with the NSDS, or the equivalent policy, also helped to advance implementation.¹⁸

According to UNDRR analysis, some donors (e.g. Australia [AusAID] and European Union) and multilateral development banks (e.g. Asian Development Bank and World Bank) have referred to integrated climate action and DRR approaches in their allocation of ODA and concessional finance, and they have experience in supporting JNAPs through targeted development cooperation policies and programs.¹⁹ For example, the EU's 10th European Development Fund identi-

fied JNAPs as an important priority for implementation in its regional program on “Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific”. The program was allotted a budgeted of Euro 20 million for implementation between 2013 and 2018.

Other developing countries have integrated climate action and DRR directly into their NSDS, sectoral policies and plans, including in some cases by institutional restructuring. For example, Vanuatu has integrated climate action and DRR into its four-year development cooperation plan (2016-2020), developed a Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy (2016 – 2030),²⁰ and created a policy, knowledge and coordination hub at the national level.²¹ Similarly, the Cook Islands formed a strengthened National Climate Change Country Team. The Federated States of Micronesia has undertaken integration initiatives from a common institutional platform for DRR and climate change adaptation, the Office of Environment and Emergency Management.²²

In the Caribbean, Saint Lucia has developed a results-based and climate-smart 2020-2024 Country Work Programme, which brings together the normative frameworks for DRR, sustainable development and climate change.²³ Similar policy and institutional reforms are gradually increasing in African countries, including Benin, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia and Zimbabwe, among others.

Countries have noted that benefits of more clearly emphasizing and prioritizing integrated approaches to climate change and DRR in their NSDS (or similar policies) include both: i) strengthened risk-informed budgetary allocations at the domestic level; and ii) further engagement of development cooperation partners for building resilience.²⁴

Regional Level

The PSIDS have developed the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP), based in part on their national experiences in benefitting from stronger integration of climate action and DRR.²⁵ Those experiences also revealed persistent barriers preventing greater integration including: national capacity constraints, particularly in coordination, communication, funding and expertise; a lack



of political will; separate global and regional frameworks for climate change adaptation and DRR; and difficulty quantifying the benefits of integration.²⁶ The FRDP was designed to foster partnerships through a multi-stakeholder platform to help overcome these challenges. It has shown progress, particularly by encouraging countries to reflect climate change adaptation and DRR into their NSDS (or their equivalent) and sectoral plans.^{27,28}

The “Programme of Action (PoA) for the Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in Africa” aims to strengthen mechanisms, frameworks, and capacities to implement and coordinate DRR strategies with climate action, in line with Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. The biennial report (2015 – 2018) on the PoA documented improvements in integrating climate action and DRR into several distinct priority areas, such as environmental policy-making. However, major challenges persist, including inadequate technical capacity and institutional weaknesses especially at country level and insufficient access to financing for DRR and climate adaptation.²⁹

In the Caribbean region, a Comprehensive Disaster Management regional strategic framework has provided an entry point for disaster risk management and climate change adaptation to be integrated into national public investment systems. A recent assessment of four Caribbean countries (Bahamas, Guyana, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago) shows that such integration was most successful when countries were able to link (via evidence and policy) the impact of reduced exposure and socio-economic vulnerability to multiple hazards with stronger likelihood of achieving sustainable development objectives.³⁰

IV. Lessons learned

This brief has offered various examples of national and regional efforts underway to better integrate climate and DRR policies and practices. To help countries respond to the challenges posed by the systemic nature of risk, including climate-related hazards and biological hazards (i.e. pandemics), international development cooperation should adapt, taking into consideration all forms of risks and their

Good practices on climate change and DRR integration from Benin, Namibia and Malawi

In 2011, **Benin** put in place a National DRR and Climate Change Adaptation Platform (PNRRC-ACC), which promotes prevention and disaster resource management across sustainable development policies, plans and programs, as well as mobilizes resources for prevention, disaster management, recovery and post-disaster development. The Platform is composed of government representatives, UN system, development partners, and NGOs and is replicated at all administrative levels (county, municipality and town) and information flows in both directions.

Namibia has developed a strategy for mainstreaming climate change adaptation (CCA) and DRR into Development Planning 2017- 2021 to enhance integration and support the more efficient use of financial resources. The country’s Climate Change Committee, as well as the disaster risk management (DRM) Committee, serve as coordination mechanisms, including for reporting on the implementation of the strategy. Their inputs are then consolidated by the National Planning Commission for integration into the national development plan.

Malawi’s National Technical Committee on Climate Change and the National Disaster Preparedness and Relief Committee were merged in 2019 into one joint mechanism called the Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management Committee. This structure emerged from the development of the National Resilience Strategy, which pointed to the need to improve coordination of the two sectors. The mechanism is a forum for technical guidance on DRR and CCA and a platform for knowledge sharing, planning and monitoring.

Source: (UNDRR, 2020a), *Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation, Pathways for policy coherence in Sub-Saharan Africa*

inter-linkages across economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

- ODA commitments must be met and access to concessional finance scaled up, in order to ensure that developing countries are able to tackle the dual challenges of pandemic recovery and the climate emergency.

- The \$100 billion target on climate finance must be met, and the speed, predictability and accessibility of climate financing further improved;

- Greater and well-tailored support should be provided in particular to countries with limited capacities to move from managing disasters to managing and reducing risk and building resilience;

- Donors can scale up existing efforts toward allocating ODA and concessional finance to support integrated approaches to climate and DRR to meet the needs of the most vulnerable countries. Donors who are not already doing so can learn from best practices, while tailoring approaches to specific developing country contexts and capacities.

- Financial limitations and capacity constraints continue to be the key challenges to effective integration and implementation of climate and DRR policies in developing countries. Prioritization of integrated climate change and DRR policies both by developing countries and their international development cooperation partners could further optimize the use of precious resources toward addressing multiple risks.

- Integrating and mainstreaming climate action and DRR policies at the highest level of governance and strategic planning could promote the engagement of development cooperation partners as well as local and regional authorities, other domestic actors and beneficiaries.

- Coherence between planning tools (i.e. JNAPs and NSDS/INFFs) can bolster implementation of these integrated climate and DRR policies.

- In many developing countries, the ministries and departments responsible for climate change and DRR still operate in silos. In countries where integrated approaches have

been applied, this has enabled experts and stakeholders from their respective areas to coordinate actions, avoid duplication of efforts, and increase effective use of financial and non-financial resources.

- Building on existing national mechanisms, the establishment of coordination modalities or platforms can further promote integrated technical guidance on DRR and climate action and encourage knowledge sharing, planning and monitoring, including at the local and regional levels so vital in delivery of public services.

- The effective integration of climate action and DRR requires multi-stakeholder engagement across national government entities and with diverse international, regional and national partners, breaking down silos and building opportunities for collaboration.

Addressing the climate emergency is not an option - it is a necessity. Country-level advances are inspiring change, while regional collaboration is identifying and implementing solutions to shared challenges. In these difficult times, with many competing challenges, developed and developing countries alike must keep a clear and firm focus on the climate crisis, understanding that a failure to address climate change will undermine pandemic recovery, and reverse hard-earned gains toward achieving sustainable development. Now is the moment to ramp up high-quality, high-impact development cooperation that lifts up the most vulnerable countries and peoples to support them in navigating the dual challenges of climate change and pandemic recovery.

A reimagined understanding of development cooperation that is informed by risk, oriented to resilience and strongly linked with climate action can serve as a ballast for collective action. Global agreements already in place provide a foundation for building back better. Yet, this demands more concerted, creative and flexible implementation of the global agreements, where efforts at all levels build on and reinforce country systems, policy frameworks and national and local capacities.



Endnotes

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