

Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction: a tool for development organisations¹

Sarah La Trobe²

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Introduction

Hazards are having an increasing impact on society as a result of rising levels of human vulnerability. In this respect disasters are not isolated events, but a manifestation of the deficiencies and weaknesses within society, induced by human-determined paths of development. As a relief and development NGO working in many disaster-prone countries, Tearfund's response has been to develop closer links between its emergency and development programming, including undertaking steps to integrate disaster risk reduction into all our relief and development structures and processes.

In 2003, Tearfund undertook an extensive piece of research into the policy and practice of institutional donors on disaster risk reduction.³ The research revealed that most organisations needed to make significant progress with 'mainstreaming' risk reduction into their planning and programming. However, while there was much recognition among donors and others of the *need* to mainstream, very little work had been undertaken to identify *how* this could be done. Consequently Tearfund, in wide consultation with experts, has developed a new tool of performance targets and indicators to help organisations integrate and expand risk reduction initiatives into their relief and development planning and programming.⁴ Organisations can use the targets and indicators to measure which level of mainstreaming they have achieved (on a scale of 1 to 4) and subsequently monitor their progress with it.

Donor policy on risk reduction

In 2003 Tearfund researched institutional donor policy on disaster risk reduction (DRR). Nine institutional donors were canvassed including the European Commission, the United Nations, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the governments of the UK, USA, Canada, Switzerland and Sweden. The research revealed that donors awarded a relatively low priority to disaster risk reduction within their planning and practice. This conclusion was based on key informant interviews, as well as an overview of the level of funding and staffing allocated to risk reduction within each organisation.

Donors were, nevertheless, convinced of the importance and cost-effectiveness of disaster risk reduction. As one interviewee stated, *'There's no doubt in our minds that spending money now on good mitigation and preparedness activities more than pays off.'* However, risk reduction was not systematically incorporated into relief, and particularly development, planning, processes and practical implementation. As another interviewee stated, *'Many of*

us...talk about this, but in practice I think very little is done in terms of integrating these issues into development planning'.

Through the research three key issues were identified which act as barriers to mainstreaming risk reduction into development: lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject within development sectors; lack of ownership of the issue by either relief or development staff; and competition with other pressing development agendas such as HIV/AIDS and conflict. It was clear from the research that while there was increasing recognition among donors of the need to mainstream risk reduction, a key constraint was a lack of tools to assist with the process.

A tool for development organisations

In response to this, Tearfund worked with experts in the field of risk reduction to develop a tool of performance targets and indicators to help organisations make, measure and monitor progress with mainstreaming. The targets and indicators are intended to enable organisations to recognise what stage they have reached in mainstreaming, to identify priority issues to be addressed, and to develop a mainstreaming strategy with definable, realistic and measurable goals.

Six aspects of a development agency's work within which mainstreaming should be addressed were selected: policy, strategy, geographical planning, project cycle management, external relations and institutional capacity. (These were based on the 'Indicators of Institutionalisation' identified within Twigg's *Good Practice Review* on disaster risk reduction).⁵ In Tearfund's paper *Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction: a tool for development organisations*,⁶ targets and indicators for measuring mainstreaming in each of these six areas are presented and categorised under different levels of progress. Thus organisations will be able to determine their level of progress for each of the 6 areas, and subsequently their overall level of progress with mainstreaming. Levels of progress are defined as follows:

Level 1: 'Little or no progress'

The organisation undertakes risk reduction in an ad hoc manner and has little or no awareness of the importance of adopting a systematic approach to reducing disaster risks.

Level 2: 'Awareness of needs'

Level 2 refers to an early stage of mainstreaming. The organisation has a growing level of awareness and understanding of the value and requirements of mainstreaming, and recognises the need for action. (It may also have *decided* to take action.)

Level 3: 'Development of solutions'

Level 3 refers to an intermediate stage: the organisation is developing plans and tools to address the requirements of mainstreaming.

Level 4: 'Full integration'

Level 4 refers to a situation where risk reduction is fully absorbed into relief and development processes - disaster risk reduction is 'institutionalised'.

Two key points should be noted with regard to levels of attainment. Firstly, when attempting to determine whether an organisation has reached level 1, 2, 3 or 4, it may be

discovered that the organisation is *between* levels, where it has progressed significantly beyond one stage without achieving the next. This mid-stage should be recognised and recorded as it may represent significant progress. An organisation may also have made *uneven* progress, where it is strong when measured against some targets/indicators and weaker when measured against others.

Secondly, the targets and indicators are generally broad, providing a template for organisations which can adapt them to suit their own context. Users can re-shape targets/indicators to relate to individual agency decision-making processes and culture as long as the underlying *purpose* of a given indicator or target is understood. Organisations may find it more appropriate to relocate some to different levels. New levels can also be created to increase the number of levels overall.

The following table shows targets and indicators for measuring mainstreaming in the area of geographical planning.

Area 3: Geographical Planning

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<p>The organisation has little or no awareness of the need to consider disaster risks within geographical planning.</p>	<p>A/ There is widespread understanding of the disaster-risk-vulnerability relationship at relevant geographical levels, and of the impact of disasters on the organisation's work in a given geographical area. ----- B/ There is widespread understanding of the need to apply policy commitment to risk reduction within geographical planning (including Direct Budgetary Support mechanisms). ----- C/ The organisation is considering how existing geographical planning tools⁷ can be (re)designed to take account of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities. -----</p>	<p>The organisation is developing a process to ensure that all planning frameworks include disaster risk reduction (in order that planning is undertaken as outlined in level 4). -----</p>	<p>A/ There is ongoing analysis of the disaster environment in any given location (i.e. assessment of hazards, disaster impact, vulnerabilities and risks).⁸ This analysis involves the perspectives of local communities, NGOs and other stakeholders. ----- B/ Appropriate risk reduction strategies are developed on the basis of the above and integrated into new geographical plans as a matter of course. ----- C/ Where the organisation focuses on Direct Budgetary Support, it seeks the inclusion of disaster risk assessment and risk reduction in the national planning frameworks of disaster-prone countries (e.g. NSSDs and PRSPs). -----</p>

Applying the targets/indicators

As is evident from the table, the indicators are generally broad, allowing organisations flexibility in developing their own criteria for measuring progress against them. However, it is crucial that when an organisation's 'score' is presented, evidence for this score must also be presented in the form of the type and source/s of data collected to support it. Collection, collation, analysis and presentation of data will be crucial to producing a meaningful score.

Organisations can apply the targets and indicators to themselves (perhaps with the involvement of an external facilitator/s) to measure their progress and take charge of their own development. Alternatively, to apply independent checks and balances, an external body such as an audit office or parliamentary committee could use the targets and indicators to monitor an organisation's progress.

Organisations will need to decide whether to undertake a 'quick and dirty' assessment or a more in-depth audit of their approach. The benefit of a thorough audit is that it could help an organisation to gain a better understanding of what its own departments are doing on the issue. Whichever method is used, it should be routinely and frequently applied so that progress – or the lack of it – can be monitored.

Testing the tool

In developing the tool, Tearfund asked a number of donor organisations to assess its relevance and usefulness. One donor organisation informed us that it had used the tool to assist with the development of its mainstreaming strategy. This strategy began with an inventory of ongoing development projects and programmes with a risk reduction perspective. The organisation assessed the extent to which risk reduction was included in country assistance plans and strategies as well as approved project documents. The information gathering also consisted of analysing staff training as well as holding one-to-one and group interviews.

The organisation reported that the performance indicators were a significant help in disaggregating the overall results of the inventory. The inventory discovered that quite a few projects addressed disaster risk, but this was done in an ad hoc manner and disaster risk reduction frequently constituted a sub-component in a more extensive programme with several objectives. In this perspective, the risk reduction work that was implemented was a more or less planned 'side-effect' of other development cooperation activities. As for the level of staff awareness of the relevance and importance of reducing disaster risks in relief and development, the result was varied. Generally, every department within the organisation contained at least one or two programme officers that recognized the importance of disaster risk. However, the majority of personnel had not reached a high level of awareness.

When assessing its overall position within the performance indicators scheme, the organization reported that as a whole it was positioned between level 1 and level 2. This was a result of a fairly uneven progress, where *some* departments/divisions had taken clear steps towards developing a strategic approach to disaster risk, and others had not. This unevenness existed for all six themes and level 2 was rarely accomplished by any

department. This illustrates, as aforementioned, that it is possible for an organisation to be in between levels and to have made uneven progress within or between levels.

In providing comment on the targets and indicators the donor organisation reinforced the point that the tool should be viewed as a template to be adapted as necessary. The consultant who tested the tool stated: *'As the (mainstreaming) process evolves further the indicators will be of great use as a basis for defining our own criteria for measuring progress and distinguishing the obstacles and windows of opportunities that lie within (our) efforts of mainstreaming disaster risk in development cooperation work.'*

Conclusion

It is important to note that the tool should be considered as a 'work in progress' – a means to open dialogue on how mainstreaming may be achieved. In this context, Tearfund invites comment and feedback from relevant organisations, especially those which have tried to use it.

When seeking to mainstream disaster risk reduction into development, the importance of staff *ownership* cannot be over-emphasised. Lack of ownership was identified within Tearfund's research as a key 'barrier' to mainstreaming. Therefore, achieving staff ownership of risk reduction and the process of mainstreaming itself is crucial to attaining 'full integration' (i.e. Level 4). If staff 'own' risk reduction as their responsibility, it has an excellent chance of becoming sustainable within an organisation. In *Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction: a tool for development organisations*,⁹ a number of barriers to ownership are identified. It is wise to anticipate potential barriers to ownership and consider how to address them, in order that mainstreaming may be regarded as an organisational asset rather than a liability.

Notes

¹ This paper was presented at the Integrated Planning Against Risk (IPAR) series seminar on 'Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Management: Organisational Learning and Change' at University College London, 21 April 2005. For details of this seminar and the ESRC-funded IPAR series see <http://www.swan.ac.uk/cds/research/ESRC.htm>

² Sarah La Trobe is Tearfund's Public Policy Officer for Environment and Disasters and can be contacted by email at sarah.latrobe@tearfund.org

³ Tearfund (2003), *Natural Disaster Risk Reduction: the policy and practice of selected institutional donors* available on Tearfund website www.tearfund.org/campaigning/policy+and+research

⁴ Tearfund (2004), *Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction: a tool for development organisations* available on Tearfund website www.tearfund.org/campaigning/policy+and+research

⁵ Twigg (2004), Good Practice Review no.9, *Disaster risk reduction: Mitigation and Preparedness in development and emergency programming*, Overseas Development Institute

⁶ Tearfund, 2004

⁷ e.g. guidelines for preparing country strategy papers/assistance plans and funding agreements.

⁸ Geographical Information Systems, and vulnerability and risk indices may be used.

⁹ Tearfund, 2004