



Reducing Disaster Risks to Food Security in Southern Africa: Towards Integration and Co-operation

REOSA Policy Brief ► 04

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Regional Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office for Southern Africa

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This policy brief highlights some of the key findings of a study that reviewed the links between Food Security (FS), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), within the southern Africa policy and institutional environment.

The study:

- Clarifies the interface between FS, CC and DRR and advocates for integrated policies & programming around this nexus;
- Identifies gaps and opportunities in policy frameworks and institutional platforms; and
- Encourages a paradigm shift in thinking between development and emergency, to be able to effectively build the resilience of agriculture systems and livelihoods to reduce risk of disaster.

• For the full study, see FAO REOSA Network Paper to be published in August 2012

The Context of the Problem

Increasing risks of unpredictable rainfall and climate-related disasters are progressively eroding agriculture-based livelihoods across southern Africa. Food production is declining and increasing numbers of impoverished farmers and their dependents are sinking into chronic food insecurity. "Disaster" has taken on a new meaning.

A shift in mindset is required urgently. There is a need not only to prepare and deal with acute, life threatening disasters, but there is an urgent need to build farmers' resilience to climatic shocks, stemming the tide of hunger and loss of livelihoods. By reducing and mitigating climate and disaster risks using appropriate technologies and improved farming practices, not only can we reduce the risk of crop losses due to climate shocks, but yields can also be stabilized and even increased. Resource bases can also be protected and nurtured to support sufficient nutritious food production for all in an uncertain future.

The dialogue required to translate this into strong policy and implementation is just starting, but action must be taken now to create and drive the forward-thinking, multisectoral platforms that can lead the policy and programming renewal and alignment processes.



Agricultural strategies aimed at reducing the impact of natural hazards on crops can help to address food insecurity.

The Key Messages

- The nexus between climate variability and change, climate-related disasters, food security and agriculture must be understood and fed into policy development and alignment.
- Strong integrated policies from global to national level will play a critical role in encouraging and facilitating the prioritization of climate and disaster risk reduction and resilience building in an agriculture-dependent region.
- Policies, planning and programming must be underpinned by strong regional cohesion and cooperation within and between the regional economic communities (RECs) and active commitment from member states.
- All stakeholders must be brought together for greater dialogue, synergy and coordination at regional, sub-regional and national levels, driven by mandated and resourced regional institutions.

Maize fields in Malawi are awash with water.
©FAO/J.SanzAlvarez (2011)



WHY A PARADIGM SHIFT?

- Food security and agriculture are becoming crucial features of climate and disaster risk reduction responses;
- There is an urgent need to strengthen the resilience of farmers livelihoods to climatic shocks and hazards, to reduce the risk of food insecurity and disasters;
- A paradigm shift from an “emergency response” to a “prevention and risk mitigation mindset” is critical;
- This shift requires adaptive policies, strategies and programmes that not only focus on saving lives, but also saving and strengthen vulnerable livelihoods; and
- “Champions” and shared platforms for this paradigm shift are needed to drive this forward.

A Paradigm Shift from Lives to Livelihoods

Southern Africa is a region that is at high risk of natural disasters, primarily climatological and hydrological – droughts, floods and storms. Many millions of people have been affected in the past 30 years (CRED, 2011). The frequency and intensity of such disasters appears to be increasing globally, widely believed to be driven by climate change. In addition, climate change is manifesting in increasing rainfall variability and changing seasonality both within rainfall seasons and between years. The start and end of the rainfall season have become less predictable and dry spells are of longer duration. Rain-fed agricultural production is under increasing pressure, with low and variable yields and losses. These are already showing, with negative effects already on chronic food insecurity and fragile livelihoods.

This is of concern, particularly in southern Africa and the southwest Indian Ocean regions, where 68% of the population is rural and 80% is dependent on agriculture for food security and livelihoods. To strengthen the populations’ resilience, food security is becoming an integral feature of climate and disaster risk reduction response.

In the past disaster management focused primarily on logistical efforts to remove people from dangerous areas, provide food and shelter and help with post-event socio-economic recovery. The emergency preparation and response approach became entrenched in policies, plans, strategies and programmes.

The growing risks associated with climate change have made this insufficient. Farmers have sent a clear message that it is their livelihoods and food

security that are at the greatest risk to climatic shocks and hazards and that, over time, these repeated shocks are undermining their ability to cope. It is clear we need to reduce the risk to climate and disasters and mitigate against these by building the resilience of communities and systems. This shifting focus requires underpinning adaptive and flexible policies, strategies and programmes that save lives and save and strengthen vulnerable livelihoods. Within the disaster risk reduction (DRR) approach, it is also important to address underlying environmental and other hazards to prevent detrimental impacts and losses (HFA, 2005). For agriculture, this demands the introduction of adaptive and more resilient “climate-smart” farming practices (FAO, 2011), such as Conservation Agriculture (CA), integrated crop and livestock systems, diversification and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The shift from an “emergency response” to a “prevention” and “risk mitigation” mindset is critical. It requires integrated multisectoral policies, plans and strategies, strong cooperation and joint planning and implementation by multiple stakeholders and partners. Southern Africa has not risen to the challenge, partially because policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms are lagging behind. Climate change underlines the urgent need to rectify this. “Champions” and shared platforms are needed to drive this forward.

This policy brief assesses the status of the links that exist — or are weak or absent — between DRR, food security and climate change within the southern African policy and institutional and environment, with particular focus on what is needed from policy-makers.

DEFINITIONS

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessening the vulnerability of people and property, wise land management and the environment

and improved preparedness for adverse events (ISDR Terminology, 2009).

Climate Change (CC): Is any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity. (IPCC WGII, 2007)

Food Security (FS): Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (World Food Summit, 1996)



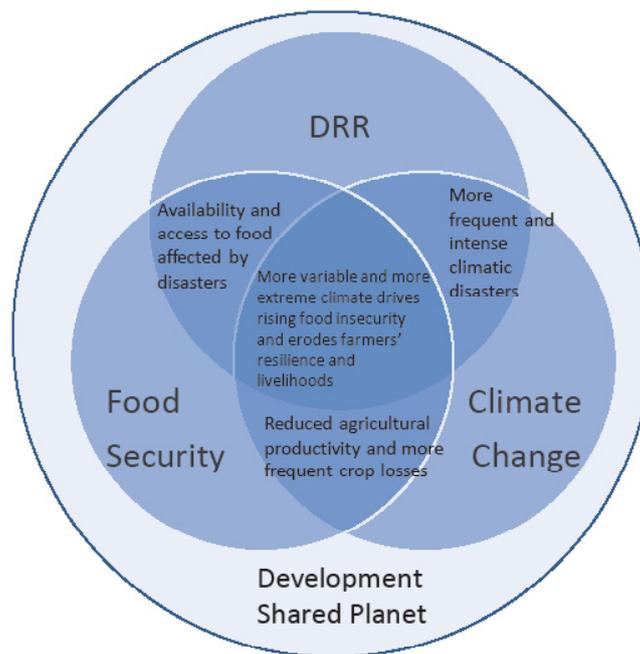
Building the resilience of people's livelihoods to climate shocks and hazards, and strengthening the capacity of institutions to do this, is an important part of addressing the challenges of food security, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Understanding the DRR, FS and CC Nexus

Disaster risk reduction (DRR), food security (FS) and climate change (CC) are relatively young concepts that continue to evolve. Global platforms, for example the climate dialogues under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the FS dialogues driven by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the milestone Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) on DRR, are setting the course internationally. However, the dialogue is only now starting to move towards identifying and acting on the multiple inter-linkages between DRR, FS and CC.

This is not easy because there are different sets of actors at global and regional level, who seldom find each other at shared platforms and remain ignorant of the nature and importance of this nexus. Definitions that fail to formulate the links, confusing terminology and the lack of a common language, do not help.

The diagram simplifies the complex dynamics that characterize the DRR/FS/CC nexus. The linkages (intersections in the diagram) sometimes operate in both directions. For example, agriculture (implied within the FS



The diagram that shows the nexus between DRR, FS and CC is not well understood or discussed and is poorly reflected in policies, planning and programming, resulting in a lack of shared purpose and fragmented implementation

circle) is affected by climate change, but it also contributes to global emissions of greenhouse gases, which causes climate change.

Climate change is changing the frequency, intensity and duration of disasters and also the type (e.g. hailstorms where they never occurred before, changing and unpredictable rainfall patterns). Disasters impact directly (production) and indirectly (access to food) on food security.

More gradual climate changes (e.g. warming) also impact directly on food production by reducing and destabilizing yields of sensitive crops. In the middle, where all three overlap, the overall impact on agriculture-based livelihoods becomes clear and shows the need for an integrated and longer-term building of resilience, which could save millions of livelihoods.

Importantly, all three issues have component drivers that do not intersect with one another: food insecurity (especially issues of access to food) is driven by numerous socio-economic factors and shocks to the food system; CC has causes and impacts unrelated to DRR and FS; and DRR also includes non-climatic disasters, such as earthquakes and tsunamis.

Currently, the links between the three are only starting to be acknowledged, but this has not yet translated into effective resilience-supporting policies and programmes in southern Africa. The strongest links are between CC and FS, but the DRR community has not engaged sufficiently with CC and FS and the agricultural community has not engaged sufficiently with CC and DRR.

CASE STUDIES MADAGASCAR

Political instability hinders policy development and implementation. Disaster Risk Management (DRM), FS and poverty reduction are high on the agenda but they are not linked to CC. Policies and programmes need to move towards DRR and building climate-resilient practices and livelihoods. This needs support from all stakeholders.

MALAWI

The political drive towards strengthening agriculture and FS is supported by policy, but this is not the case for DRR and CC. This hinders implementation of integrated approaches for resilience-building. Strengthening stakeholder platforms at all levels is needed and this must filter down to the local level for effective implementation.

MOZAMBIQUE

The establishment of the disaster relief agency, INGC, supportive policy development and multi-stakeholder institutional mechanisms are valuable. But institutional coordination in practice is a challenge. FS and nutrition policy and mechanisms are contextualized within vulnerable livelihoods, but agricultural policy does not link sufficiently with DRR, FS or CC.



Locusts swarm into Morondava on the west coast of Madagascar. ©USAID

Conclusion

The multiple players and initiatives urgently require greater co-ordination to ensure that a common vision and approach drives priorities and that scarce resources are used optimally. Synergies should be identified and developed. At sub-regional level, efforts to coordinate Regional Economic Communities (RECs), countries and sectors and governmental and non-governmental role players should be scaled up to develop and strengthen multistakeholder networks and platforms that transcend these groupings and allow for new thinking and discussion. This would reflect better links and synergies between policies, planning and programmes. The coordination mandate lies with the RECs, with support from others, such as key UN agencies and the sectorally oriented platforms that have shown leadership, e.g. the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) and leading civil society representatives.

Although conceptual links have often been made in the policies between the development goals (e.g. MDGs) and DRR/FS/CC, this has not been implemented and the barriers to coordinating with the “development actors” (often the health sector) need to be identified and overcome. Other sectors, such as the environment sector, also play a role and the dialogue must be broadened appropriately. One of the greatest challenges is how to filter this down to national and sub-national level, where a lack of understanding of the complexities and lack of capacity encourages representatives to retreat into their “silos”. National institutions and multisectoral platforms and sub-national structures and role players must respond to this need, supported by the examples, guidance and leadership from sub-regional level.

The private sector needs to become more involved in this transition from profitability to sustainability and resilience (which in the long term will ensure profitability, something this sector is increasingly recognizing). The private sector is best placed to identify and act on market-related opportunities and to provide supporting products and services. Society must continue to play a central and cross-cutting role by ensuring that the voice of communities and people is heard, but they must be informed and capacitated to make the transition to a more secure future.

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NECESSARY ACTIONS

- **Need for improved integration of policy and programming links between Food Security, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction;**
- **Greater dialogue and coordination is urgently required between all the actors involved in the FS, CC and DRR Nexus – to move away from a “silo” and “business as usual” approach;**
- **Strong coordination and leadership is needed at the sub-regional, national and sub-national levels, involving all stakeholders, to begin to effectively strengthen the livelihoods of farmers and reduce the risk to food insecurity and disaster; and**
- **The private sector is an important actor, with growing recognition that their support in building resilience and sustainability, in the long term will ensure continuing profitability and growth.**



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