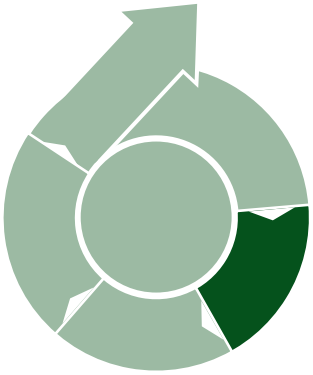
Thematic Brief 4: Preparing societies for disasters and potential displacement – community-based disaster risk management



Before and during disasters and crises, mobility may be considered as an effective survival option that allows people to flee to safer places, far from hazard-affected areas and where basic needs (e.g. shelter, water and food supply) are available and accessible. People who lack the capacity to move in the face of hazards and man-made crises (i.e. trapped populations) are therefore among the most vulnerable. Adequate preparedness is essential to ensuring that mobility can be tapped as a viable life-saving strategy for all the people at risk and that these people only remain mobile the minimum time necessary for a swift recovery.

Actions

- Involve community members in hazard and vulnerability assessment and mapping exercises, in order to better expose local risk conditions and capacities. *Example: the Philippines*.
- Build on existing indigenous knowledge, embedded in local cultures and lifestyles (e.g. language, customary land use practices and pre- and post-event behaviours), to define a set of disaster management actions that is better understood and trusted by target communities.
- Ensure that everybody in the target community is prepared and mobile, by identifying those who might not receive or understand warnings and targeting them with awareness-raising and education measures and by supporting those who might be unable or unwilling to move (e.g. due to physical status, gender and cultural or ethnic discrimination).
- Make use of existing local capacities in order to make communities at risk as autonomous as possible before and during disasters.
- Integrate technical and community-based approaches to empower individuals, better identify risks and increase preparedness at the community level (e.g. through community-based mapping exercises). *Example: Indonesia*.

CASE STUDY 5: Community-based disaster risk management in Indonesia

The community-based disaster risk management initiative of IOM in Indonesia was aimed at creating the conditions for protecting and sustaining livelihoods once the IOM projects are completed. In addition, it aimed at demonstrating viable and low-cost approaches to DRR programming.

The programme consisted of a series of training sessions addressing risk reduction at the household and community levels. Beneficiaries were instructed on DRR principles; housing and environment from a DRR perspective (including safe construction techniques, domestic risks and preparedness measures); disaster risk reduction and preparedness of affected households; and basic response, evacuation and first aid measures.

In addition, the programme allowed for the establishment of the community DRR teams, village contingency plans and standard operating procedures and included disaster response simulations to provide a chance to test the contingency plans and measure the level of preparedness that the community had achieved.

The simulation involved a range of local stakeholders, including the newly established community DRR teams, the local branch of the Indonesian Red Cross (PMI, or Palang Merah Indonesia), the Social Department, the subdistrict Security and Community Protection Forum (Muspika), local health centres (*puskesmas*), heads of villages and other institutions. The community DRR teams led the simulation, which included early-warning activities, evacuation, administration of first aid, logistics, public kitchen mobilization, security and information management. A public debriefing session allowed for the definition of a set of measures the community DRR teams should implement to better prepare for disasters.