

# Emergency Capacity Building Project

## EMERGENCY CAPACITY BUILDING PILOT PROJECTS



## PROMISING PRACTICES FOR RISK REDUCTION

October 2007

---

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	3
Networks are crucial to shaping the future of disaster risk reduction	3
Keep talking - more trust translates into better performance	3
New tools, and a new understanding of the importance of DRR	3
Cast the net wide when working with government and local partners	3
Play a convening roll around natural points of agreement, and strengthen existing capacity	3
Put local knowledge and culture center stage in all DRR efforts	4
Visible impact counts - preventing the worst is not enough	4
<b>Emergency Capacity Building Pilot Projects</b>	5
Purpose	5
Context of the sector - an emerging field with no clear home	5
<b>Country overviews</b>	8
Ethiopia pilot project summary	8
Guatemala pilot project summary	9
Indonesia pilot project summary	12
<b>Strengthening relationships with government</b>	14
What is government? Why are strong relationships important for effective DRR?	14
Understanding government by mapping these complex networks	14
Decentralization, increasing roles for more local structures	15
Continuity of government engagement is vital to sustainability	16
Capacity building should not be underestimated	16
<b>Empowering local communities</b>	18
The power to convene - giving communities a seat a the table	18

Helping communities to understand risk	18
The importance of local culture and context	18
<b>Practical Risk Reduction demonstrations</b>	20
Practical demonstrations of what is possible	20
<b>Local partnerships and coalitions</b>	21
Local NGO partnerships are points of leverage	21
Bringing actors together adds value	21
Focussing coalitions and framing the discussion	21
<b>ECB member organizational change</b>	23
The origins of the ECB, the impetus for change	23
Increased trust and cooperation leads to greater effectiveness	23
A stronger voice in advocacy is possible when we act together	24
Mainstreaming - a clearer role for disaster risk reduction in development goals	25
Highlighting donor interest in collaborative efforts and encouraged others to act	26
New tools for disaster risk reduction	26
<b>Conclusions</b>	28
Significant learning has emerged from the projects	28
Changes in organizational behavior have already occurred	28
Opportunity and risk	28

The Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project is a collaborative effort of the seven agencies of the Inter-agency Working Group on Emergency Capacity: CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Oxfam GB, Save the Children, and World Vision International. These agencies and their partners are jointly addressing issues of staff capacity, accountability and impact measurement, risk reduction and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in emergencies, with the goal of improving the speed, quality and effectiveness of the humanitarian community in saving the lives, safeguarding the livelihoods and protecting the rights of people affected by emergencies. For further information, please visit [www.ecbproject.org](http://www.ecbproject.org) or email [info@ecbproject.org](mailto:info@ecbproject.org).



# Executive Summary

The Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) pilot projects showcase the activities of three countries (Ethiopia, Guatemala and Indonesia) to identify models and promising practices for disaster risk reduction based on practical programs. This report summarizes some of the more significant learnings and promising practices, and highlights some key examples that give ideas for moving forward with risk reduction in other areas. The following is a summary of the most important themes that emerge in this report.

## **Networks are crucial to shaping the future of disaster risk reduction**

Disaster risk reduction is an emerging field in development work that has yet to solidify around concrete best practices. A number of networks have emerged that are working in this area, convened around non-governmental organization (NGO) coalitions, donor agencies or other rationales. The [Interagency Working Group](#) (IWG) and others have a window of opportunity to influence practice and donors as this field crystalizes. Collectively, through vehicles like the ECB, they have a chance to shape the way donors allocate money from emergency budgets (for example, the ratio between prevention and response) and the role of risk reduction in development activities. Conversely, unless there is continued concerted effort, there is a risk that this window closes, and that an opportunity to create systematic change in the development community is lost.

## **Keep talking - more trust translates into better performance**

The ECB has led to an unprecedented degree of communication at many levels within the agencies involved. This frank exchange of ideas, cooperation and sharing of systems and approaches has led to clear examples of increased effectiveness in response and preparedness. At the most basic level, the fact that we know each other better than we did before, and have developed a connective tissue of trust and understanding that did not exist before makes working together easier, safer, and more productive. This cooperation must be continued - as individuals change jobs, and country programs change, these relationships must be passed on, and developed if these benefits are to be maintained.

## **New tools, and a new understanding of the importance of DRR**

Working together has produced new tools for implementation of DRR in the field (most notably in Ethiopia), and has spurred agencies to think more seriously about where risk reduction fits in their development models. Some have established new departments, others have chosen to mainstream DRR within their development units, still others have placed it under their emergency response units, all have spent time thinking about how it relates to other programs, and how best to leverage it for development advantages.

## **Cast the net wide when working with government and local partners**

Local governments and the various associated agencies that influence disaster risk reduction, including zoning, planning, courts and legislative functions, disaster response and planning agencies, and the various quasi and non-governmental groups that have legitimate roles are a vast and complicated landscape. Understanding this, and being able to navigate it fluently is crucial to effective action, whether at the community level, helping people to understand the structural environment they are in, or at a national, or regional advocacy level.

## **Play a convening roll around natural points of agreement, and strengthen existing capacity**

While there are many roles that international agencies can play in risk reduction, one of the most effective can be to bring various groups together around issues of common concern, by using the 'power to convene' that international NGOs often enjoy to facilitate cooperation between stakeholders. Whether this is using school curricular to promote

risk reduction, or sponsoring conferences to search for local best practices, international NGOs are able to lend legitimacy to groups who might not otherwise have a seat at the table.

**Put local knowledge and culture center stage in all DRR efforts**

Good practices in disaster risk reduction are highly contextual - while there are commonalities in terms of frameworks, approaches and tools, the end results need to reflect local needs, capacities and traditions. While this is true of most development activities, explanations of risk, and approaches to mitigating it, seem especially tied to cultural norms and values. Without enlisting local religious leaders, community structures, values and communication norms, activities will not be optimally successful.

**Visible impact counts - preventing the worst is not enough**

It can be difficult to gain enthusiasm for projects when success means that *nothing happens*. DRR projects that have tangible outcomes that benefit communities regardless of whether disaster strikes have more likelihood of success. Whether this means radio systems that can do double duty as disaster coordination tools or vital links to the outside world, or negotiation skills that can be used to bring attention to disaster risks as well as other development challenges, communities and organizations, as well as donors, find it easier to mobilize around projects with clear, concrete benefits.

# Emergency Capacity Building Pilot Projects

## Purpose

The purpose of result 3.1 of the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) project is to identify models and promising practices for disaster risk reduction based on experiences in the three pilot countries (Ethiopia, Guatemala and Indonesia). This report summarizes some of the more significant learnings and promising practices, and highlights some key examples that give ideas for moving forward with risk reduction in other areas.

## Context of the sector - an emerging field with no clear home

The field of disaster risk reduction is relatively young, and the leading international development agencies, national governments and international organizations have yet to reach a stable consensus on best practices. While recognition of the importance of taking a risk reduction approach to development is growing, around the world, different approaches are being tried, and knowledge about the most promising practices in each context is still emerging. This is one reason that the team has chosen to use the terms 'promising', or 'emerging' practices, rather than 'best practices'.

*"only 4% of the estimated \$10 billion in annual humanitarian assistance is devoted to prevention [and yet] every dollar spent on risk reduction saves between \$5 and \$10 in economic losses from disasters"*

- UN Secretary General's Deputy Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery

The question of whether disaster risk reduction is a 'field' that should have its own technical support elements and professional specialization is one that different organizations have answered in different ways. Some have chosen to integrate risk reduction as a cross-cutting element within development programming while others have established dedicated risk reduction departments. Still others have placed disaster risk reduction within emergency response units. Whether any clear solution to the relative efficacy of these approaches will emerge remains to be seen, but one thing is clear - however it is structured, effective disaster risk reduction demands the full participation of those planning and implementing long term development programs. It cannot work effectively where it is stove-piped and divorced from other activities. It is not something that is done only by emergency practitioners - development and poverty alleviation staff must be involved from the start and DRR must form a part of the agency's core strategy. For example, World Vision has incorporated risk reduction as a key part of its approach to transforming communities. The consensus of staff involved is that best results are emerging where there are genuine partnerships between all relevant stakeholders. This means both within international agencies and between the large array of actors in the field, be they communities, governments, local civil society, or international organizations.

*"Disasters are unresolved development problems that occur when risks go unmanaged. Disasters such as floods, landslides, drought, and earthquakes tend to be viewed in isolation by development planners as a humanitarian issue to which ad hoc responses are only made in the form of immediate relief." - a humanitarian worker in Ethiopia*



Practical demonstrations of risk reduction.



Community led planning and practice.



In the chaos after a disaster, planning pays off.



The definition of ‘disaster’ has yet to be standardized, leading to some confusion remaining about what risks DRR is to focus on. While so-called ‘natural disasters’ with rapid onset seem to be the archetype, whether or not longer term public health disasters such as HIV / AIDS, or man-made problems like war or global climate change should be included in this category is a live debate and was an initial source of debate within the pilot project teams. Some saw these issues as crucial to risk reduction, while others saw them as distracting from the core of the initiative. It is becoming clear that the intersection of climate change and disaster risk reduction is an area that will receive an increased focus in the future.

The ECB agencies have tended to adopt the UNISDR definition of disaster risk reduction as *“the systematic development and application of policies and practices to minimise vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society, to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) adverse impact of hazards, within the broad context of sustainable development”*.

Several networks of organizations attempting to improve practice in this area have sprung up in the past few years, including the ProVention Consortium, the IFRC (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), Asian Disaster Preparation Center and the various organizations involved in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. All of them share an interest in identifying practical strategies for risk reduction that work well to reduce vulnerability to disasters. The table below summarizes some of the more important networks that IWG agencies are involved with. These networks are in the process of establishing good practices, refining approaches, and making joint representations to donors and other stakeholders - it is vital that the ECB agencies reach out to colleagues in these networks to ensure that there is industry-wide collaboration.

SECTOR NETWORK	PURPOSE
<a href="#">Asian Disaster Preparation Center</a>	Advance safer communities and sustainable development, through programs and projects that reduce the impact of disasters on countries and communities in Asia and the Pacific.
<a href="#">Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction</a>	Bring together various sectors of development and humanitarian work, and in the environmental and scientific fields to expand the political space dedicated by governments to disaster risk reduction. Helping to hold governments accountable to the <a href="#">Hyogo Framework for Action</a> .
<a href="#">UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction</a>	Build disaster resilient communities by promoting increased awareness of the importance of disaster reduction as an integral component of sustainable development.
<a href="#">ProVention Consortium</a>	Reduce the risk and social, economic and environmental impacts of natural hazards on vulnerable populations in developing countries in order to alleviate poverty and contribute to sustainable development.
<a href="#">IFRC</a>	The Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies risk reduction group.
<a href="#">Interaction DRR working group</a>	The largest alliance of U.S.-based international development and humanitarian non-governmental organizations
<a href="#">BOND DRR working group</a>	A network of representatives from UK NGOs from emergency and development. The purpose of the group is to share information on an informal basis, to exchange experiences and knowledge, explore opportunities for closer coordination and collaboration and to advance common issues.

Major donors have begun to signal that they might be ready to take DRR more seriously. The UK’s DFID, for example, in their March 2006 policy paper [Reducing the Risk of Disasters](#) commits to *“allocate 10% of the funding provided by DFID in response to each natural disaster to prepare for and mitigate the impact of future disasters, where this can be done effectively.”* (although the [white-paper](#) issued later that year commits to the slightly more ambiguous promise of *“investing up to 10% of our response to each major natural disaster in preparing for future disasters”*). The challenge for

implementing partners is to hold donors to their commitments, and to encourage individuals donor officials in control of country and regional budgets to push the envelope in using more funds for risk reduction. The willingness of major donors (including the UN, USAID, and the EU) to look at these approaches is clear. A coherent voice from partner agencies is required, however, to make sure that they are held accountable to the commitments that they make in the wake of large disasters.

The ECB and its individual members can play an enormous role in ensuring that disaster risk reduction retains the momentum it has gained, but only by continued effort and collaboration. Without that, there is a danger that ground will be lost, and that interest in DRR will wane, until the next major disaster highlights its importance.

*“The achievements of the project, and particularly the Writeshop pilot project, owes its success to the contribution of the external agencies as well as the IWG. More than 40 individuals, the majority of whom come from external stakeholders, participated” - Ethiopia final report.*



# Country overviews

## Ethiopia pilot project summary

Ethiopia is one of the most disaster-prone countries in Africa, with numerous small and large scale incidents including drought, famine, floods, hail storms, plant pests and insects, as well as epidemic health issues and the threat of violent conflict. The Government of Ethiopia's Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Commission (DPPA) is the main point of focus for DRR work.

The Ethiopia ECB team, of the three countries, took an approach that was most related to documentation of emerging practices and constituency building. None of their projects were operational in the sense of carrying out DRR activities. Their four projects look at reporting promising practices, studying effective approaches, compiling practical learning and disseminating findings. Their partnership with Bahir Dar University is perhaps the most involved academic partnership of the ECB pilots, and their outputs the most polished in terms of learning documentation. The four pilot projects were:

### 1. A study of disaster risk reduction strategies employed by Mercy Corps, Catholic Relief Services, and CARE in East and West Hararghe

A comprehensive report on the key features of past and present interventions in the area, with specific attention to response, rehabilitation and mitigation activities as well as community risk reduction strategies. The report was widely disseminated to stakeholders in the United States and Ethiopia. The resulting document be valuable beyond the area studied, since many regions share similar characteristics.

### 2. A study of flood risk mitigation strategies by CRS and partners

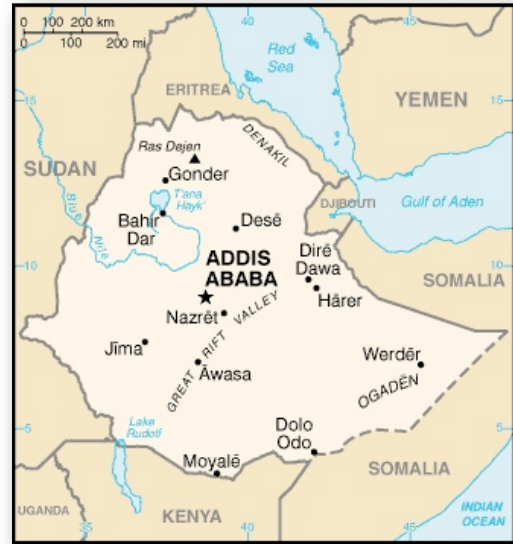
A study and review of common flood risk mitigation strategies in Dire Dawa Administrative Council, and East Hararghe and Shinile Zones was conducted, looking at CRS and their partner SDCOH's programs with government agencies to draw out best practices in flood mitigation.

### 3. A DRR sensitization workshop entitled 'Breaking the Cycle of Disasters'

The workshop brought together government, donors, UN, academics, and NGOs to build consensus on incorporating DRR methodologies into development policies by all parties. The proceedings were widely circulated and the findings and recommendations presented to the national level government Disaster Prevention Agency the DPPA (responsible for the National Policy on Disaster Prevention and Preparedness). The workshop also raised awareness by receiving significant media coverage on Ethiopian TV and in newspapers.

### 4. A workshop to develop a handbook of disaster risk reduction in Ethiopia

A workshop was held using the 'Writeshop' methodology of intensive workshops to write information materials, distilling the experience of 40 subject matter experts to write a definitive 207 page handbook on best practices in DRR in Ethiopia over the course of a week. As well as being an excellent resource for practitioners, it will also serve as a tool for advocacy helping to persuade government and donors to adopt effective programming strategies.



*"The agencies have a stronger say as a group to advocate for DRR than they would as individual agencies." - Ethiopia final report.*

### Guatemala pilot project summary

Guatemala is one of the poorest countries in Central America, with the vast majority of its rural population living in vulnerable conditions as a result of poverty, war and environmental degradation. The most common types of disaster are floods, landslides, hurricanes, droughts, fires, and earthquakes. Floods and cyclones are by far the most damaging in terms of human life lost.

The table below summarizes the pilot projects, with their locations, dates of implementation, and agency. The activities ranged from community planning, installation of radio communication systems for early alert and coordination, training, and coalition building amongst government and non-government actors, and built on a history of relationships and work in the country by ECB agencies and others.



PROJECT NAME	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES	AGENCY
Strengthening capacities for risk management and emergency response.	Senahú, Alta Verapaz and neighboring communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen community organization (municipal and local levels) for prevention, mitigation and response to disaster risk.</li> <li>2. Reduce physical vulnerability in the community through structural and nonstructural mitigation measures.</li> <li>3. Strengthen alert and alarm systems in the municipal capital of Senahú, Alta Verapaz.</li> </ol>	CARE and Mercy Corps
Strengthening risk management at local and municipal government levels.	Chiquimulilla, Santa Rosa	<p>Advocate for and strengthen risk management capacity to reduce the impact of future disasters at the local level in four communities and two municipal governments in Santa Rosa.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen risk management capacity in two municipal governments and four communities by forming, training and strengthening response units and developing contingency plans.</li> <li>2. Installation and operation of four community radio communication systems and four rudimentary flood early alert systems and establishment of a signage program in four communities at high risk of floods.</li> <li>3. Coordinate efforts with other organizations and educational institutions to establish social support networks and plans for information and public education campaigns on Risk Management.</li> <li>4. Design and implementation of flood mitigation measures.</li> </ol>	CRS and the Social Services of the Santa Rosa de Lima Church
Strengthening Capacities in Emergency Preparedness.	The Slum Nuevo Amanecer, Zone 21, Guatemala City	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve the organizational capacity of the residents of Nuevo Amanecer for disaster preparedness and response.</li> <li>2. Five trainings (ESFRA and ISMU) with the community to teach them concepts, tools and skills for risk reduction and develop a solid work strategy for disaster preparedness.</li> </ol>	Oxfam

PROJECT NAME	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES	AGENCY
Integrated Risk Management as a tool for disaster reduction and mitigation in four municipalities of the department of Sololá.	Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, Nahualá, San Lucas Tolimán and Santiago Atitlán	1. Promote a culture of integrated risk management in the three municipalities that have project interventions. 2. Identify risk levels and use them to make preparedness and risk reduction plans. 3. Establish criteria for local, municipal and departmental assistance. 4. Identify and implement alert and alarm procedures and systems to facilitate a fast and efficient response in emergency, contingency and disaster situations.	Mercy Corps and Save the Children
Workshop: Emergency Response Planning	May 25 - 26, 2006	Present and discuss the benefits of a complete emergency response plan at a national, institutional and community level. There was time designated for designing plans and sharing of institutional and community emergency plans. The workshop was attended by personnel from IWG agencies.	All ECB
Workshop: Sphere Training	June 26 - 28, 2006	Provide training on minimum standards according to the Humanitarian Charter and Sphere Project for IWG agency personnel at a local level. This training helped improve the quality of the initial assessment, project and program design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian performance in emergency cases.	All ECB
Workshop: Damage Evaluation and Needs Analysis	September 12 - 14, 2006	Discuss cooperative Damage Evaluation and Needs Analysis (EDAN) to avoid duplication of efforts in the field during response activities; design of an inter-agency EDAN strategy.	All ECB
Workshop: Earthquake-resistant Housing Construction Techniques and Land Use	September 8th, 2006	Present options for earthquake-resistant construction techniques using local resources. Community planning and its relationship to land use.	All ECB
Workshop: Shelter management	March 1-2, 2006	Train IWG agency personnel on shelter implementation, organization and administration.	All ECB
Workshop: Best Practices in Risk Reduction	April 2006	Find and systematize adequate practices for risk reduction among the IWG agencies in Guatemala, which might be replicated in other contexts, with other agencies and in the formulation of pilot projects that could enrich identified experiences.	All ECB
Workshop: Impact Measurement and Accountability	19th-20th July 2006	Training in basic concepts of impact measurement/ accountability, and the good enough guide to impact measurement/ accountability was given to officials and project managers with some experience in the field. This incorporates the work of NGOs and intra-agency initiatives, including <a href="#">Sphere</a> , <a href="#">ALNAP</a> and <a href="#">HAP</a> .	All ECB

The pilot projects in Guatemala focussed on strengthening the capacity of local communities, government agencies, and organizations. Some of the principle government partnership relationships are:

- The Government [CONRED](#) (Coordinadora Nacional para la Reduccion de Desastres) agency is responsible for pulling the various threads of risk reduction and disaster response together.
- The Secretary for Planning and programming of the Presidency of the republic of Guatemala - SEGEPLAN (ECB worked with SEGEPLAN on the Territorial Zoning Policy risk reduction approach, within the framework of the Social Development law).

- The Ministry of Education - MINEDUC - (ECB influenced the implementation of a new curriculum that incorporates Risk Management in elementary school and high school levels).
- Presidency Executive Coordination Secretary - SCEP (ECB worked to help create a national strategy for shelter management).
- The Republic Congress, supporting the reform to the Disaster Reduction Law.

The other clear commonality in most of the projects is the degree of work with local communities, and coalitions of state and non-state actors. This came across as an important component for success.

## Indonesia pilot project summary

Indonesia is one of the most populous countries in the world, with enormous numbers of people living in hazard prone areas. It has a high frequency of natural disasters, and experienced a moderate sized earthquake during the period of the ECB pilot projects, in the area where they were working. Work focussed on the West Sumatra region, prone to earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and floods. This, and other criteria, including presence of at least one IWG member, and local government and community interest, factored in its selection. The nine pilot villages in Padang Pariaman that were chosen are all lowland areas with flat topography. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and community focussed risk reduction planning were carried out by the ECB agencies and Kogami (a local NGO).

A design workshop was convened that included local government, local NGO partners, ECB member agencies and others, at which the program methodology was agreed. A disaster management team would be established in each area that would be responsible for mobilization of community members. This team was to work with the district level Disaster Management Executive Board (SatKorLak) and the village level committees. The Indonesian Red Cross, local government and youth organizations agreed to replicate the preparedness planning activities outside the ECB project areas, and, from the start, the expectation was set that the government would take over activities.

Training was carried out in all nine villages, with a team made up of local government, local NGO, ECB members, and community members, followed by a detailed community led risk assessment and hazard mapping. A disaster evacuation simulation was held in each village, which included many of the key stakeholders, and helped to familiarize residents with the disaster plans. The basic model includes five steps: a preliminary survey, a participatory disaster risk assessment, participatory planning, plan implementation, and appropriate monitoring and evaluation.



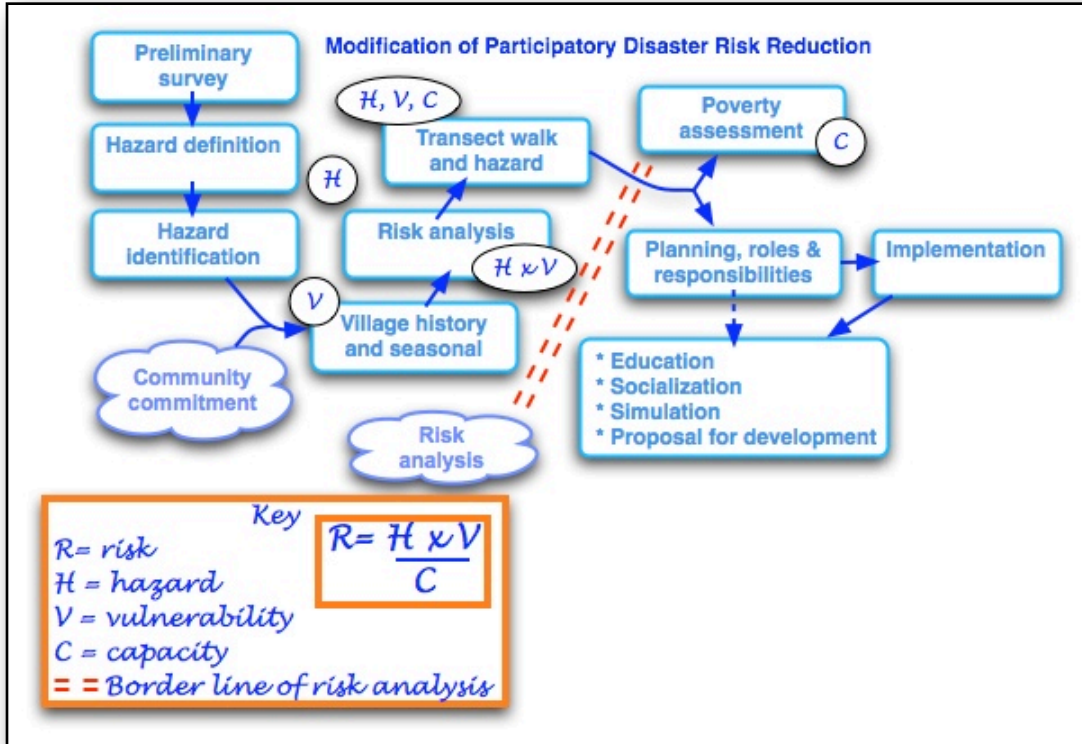
A poster used to communicate potential hazards in Indonesia



School children study materials produced by the ECB in Indonesia



The project management team revised the standard model of participatory disaster risk reduction as a result of their experience (see diagram), producing a conceptual model tailored to the Indonesian context. This reflects a key learning from the pilot projects - that approaches that work well in one environment should be examined closely with regard to local customs, needs, and capacities.



The Indonesia ECB team's adaptation of the participatory disaster risk reduction framework



# Strengthening relationships with government

## What is government? Why are strong relationships important for effective DRR?

The term 'government' describes a complex and diverse group of state structures and organizations. This section describes some of the learnings and practices identified through the ECB pilots. In summary, the importance of strong relationships with local government cannot be overstated. They are, both de-facto and de-jure the most permanent, consistent and, sometimes, well resourced organization in the risk reduction equation.

Their legitimacy and ability to convene and coordinate preparation and response should be utilized, and their capacity to set the conditions for effective risk reduction through the convergence of multiple agencies (schools, zoning, planning, legal structures etc) should be supported and leveraged. Despite the many potentially positive aspects, governments are often plagued by conflicting mandates, inadequate budgets, lack of training and skills, and access to coherent recommendations for policy. International NGOs can play a role in supporting their efforts, communicating successes from other areas, and 'plugging them in' to international networks and standards for DRR work. They can also help governments to understand the need for, and value of, partnership with communities and the civic sector.

*"The military is likely to be involved in any disaster response of significant size, but it is important to remember that they receive their orders through their command structure, and so may not be able to fully buy-into local level planning."* - Indonesia final report

National governments are typically several layers of administration, representing national level and one or more sub-levels. Government structures are key to successful development and risk reduction work for several reasons. They have primary legal responsibility for the preparation for, and response to disaster. They have access to large scale response infrastructure. They are in a position to set national level risk reduction strategies, and help to coordinate various actors to work in concert. They provide legal frameworks within which organizations work, and policy frameworks such as planning and zoning.

*"...Guatemala has beautiful laws - it's implementing them that is the problem"* - Hugh Aprile, Head of Program, CRS Guatemala.

## Understanding government by mapping these complex networks

One of the key learnings from the pilot projects is the importance of fully understanding the relationships between the various structures, the development offices, the disaster response units, the military agencies that might be engaged in response, the local, regional and national level structures, and how they fit in with the planning, zoning, construction codes and other laws that are in place. The Indonesia team highlighted this specifically, suggesting that actor mapping exercises are a useful way to try to understand these regimes. Even once the complex net of government and quasi-governmental agencies is understood, it can be challenging to identify the most effective partners within government. Many agencies in Indonesia maintain a staff member whose job it is to develop and maintain appropriate relationships within government agencies and to guide the agency's decisions in forming

*"Relatively good policies, systems, plans, or regulations are in place but seem to be ignored, or make little impact in practice. For policies to make an impact they must be constantly taken into account in routine decision-making and must be institutionalized (legislated and integrated into the laws, part of the society)."* - Excerpts from ECB 3 Ethiopia

partnerships and making contacts. Others include this role as part of project or program management responsibilities. In either event, it is vital to ensure that these relationships are managed effectively, and that both the operational and the representational contacts necessary to work smoothly are cultivated. In Indonesia, the ECB staff first met with the

most local level government of Padang Pariaman, the Head of District. He referred them to the Dinas Kesbang linmas (KBS) as the agency that handled these issues at a local government level. By working their way through the various layers of government, and making the appropriate introductions, they were able to gain the goodwill and support necessary to work effectively. However, this was balanced by the need to invite the 'right' government officials at the 'right' time, since, in the presence of someone more senior, junior officials were reluctant to offer their ideas. The presence of too high a level government officer stifled debate and contributions from others, yet without their blessing, more junior officials would not move forward.

### **Decentralization, increasing roles for more local structures**

The processes of decentralization looms large in the relationships with some government systems, as power is devolved from centralized government structures to local or regional. While this can often be a good thing (giving more power to people closer to communities), it is not without problems - particularly in the context of disaster preparedness. It can result in government agencies without sufficient scope to plan for large geographic disasters, unfunded mandates from central government, and structures without sufficient expertise and human resources to plan adequately. It can create new frictions between government agencies, for example in Indonesia, while many powers are devolved, the military (which is in practice key to any large response) is under central control and is not directly accountable to local disaster response planners. One of the more sobering learnings from the Indonesia team is that local government agencies that are tasked with preparation and response do not have sufficient relationships with military commanders, who may be rotated regularly and take orders directly from a central command structure. A local plan that has been formed collaboratively and has buy-in from all sides could be de-railed by resources that are controlled from elsewhere. Of course, this problem is not unique to military relationships, it occurs when international agencies, donors and national groups from outside the immediate region do not consult adequately or 'plug into' and strengthen existing frameworks and plans. Time after time we see local planning (where it takes place) washed away by outside actors with more resources who do not seek to build on, and strengthen, local response capacity.

The result of devolution is that the importance of relationships at a local level are more important than ever, but at the same time, IN-GOS play an important role in bridging local plans and centralized or outside actors. Tom Hensleigh from Mercy Corps Ethiopia reported that *"many of the ECB agencies have become much more diligent about maintaining close relationships with the government agencies typically involved in response. That way, when something happens, you can just pick up the phone, and you have the permissions you need to act."*

*"In Ethiopia, there is currently a drive toward devolution of powers, authorities and responsibilities from higher levels of government... to lower levels of administration. However, local governments particularly in the pastoral areas do not yet possess adequate resources, expertise, and... capacity." Excerpts from ECB 3*

*"There has been a real change in attitude ... the ECB really filled a gap that was not present in the government's planning. Most efforts focussed on response, no one else was doing prevention and risk reduction. The project brought a new perspective."*

*"Many of the IWG agencies were involved with the review of the 2005 National Law on Disaster Risk Reduction. The facilitator of the ECB learning event was an advisor to the government on the law. Myself and others who have been involved in the ECB are attending a series of workshops along with government and military to finalize the details of the implementation of the law." - Yenni Suryani, CRS Indonesia.*

### Continuity of government engagement is vital to sustainability

The government and its constituent parts are long term partners, both for international organizations and for local communities, but there is an issue in that the individuals within government structures can either be political appointees, who either have different agendas to the communities, or are frequently replaced as government administrations change. For example, in Guatemala, there is a chance that many of the officials with whom the ECB teams and communities have built relationships may be replaced when elections take place in 2007. As in all development work, the key to success is sustainability. In Guatemala, when the ECB project set up radio services, the agreement was that the government would maintain it - the challenge for the ECB and the communities will be to make sure that the policy survives the administration change. *"It's such a long term process - in some ways we may end up being [the government's] institutional memory"* (Hugh Aprile, CRS). Helping the local community to hold governments to their promises and keep them involved is a key role that international agencies are well placed to fulfill.



Local government present plans at a community meeting.



Military coordination can be problematic, but relationships forged before a disaster can pay dividends when they are needed.



Planning that includes all relevant government agencies helps for a speedy and coherent response.

### Capacity building should not be underestimated

Part of the challenge of engaging communities is to help them to gain the advocacy skills to interact with and engage government officials and to help them to achieve continuity of government commitments, even when administrations change. There is a high degree of confidence that the communities and organizations will be able to present their work to an incoming administration and achieve buy-in and ongoing support from them, but this is not something that can be taken for granted - coalition building is an ongoing task that is never fully completed.

A theme that emerges from all three countries is the need to recognize the legitimate authority and obligation of the government to coordinate and manage disaster preparedness and response in their territories. The aim of supporting governments to step up to this role was embraced across the pilot countries. There was also a recognition that government capacity often looks better on paper than it is in practice, and that passing a resolution, or a law in the capital is not the same as genuinely rolling out structures and expertise to the local level. Craig Redmond, Mercy Corps Indonesia's Country Director reported *"after the earthquake in Yogyakarta the people we had been working with began to take this more seriously. Some government officials had been 'going through the motions' of putting plans in place. After the earthquake they realized that these were plans that they might have to implement. There had been a Presidential Proclamation after the tsunami that every place must have a plan - now it is really going to happen."* This sense that disaster systems are something that exist mainly on paper is echoed in many comments of people involved in the projects. The Indonesia experience of witnessing another major disaster is not something that can be reliably replicated, but disasters can sometimes serve as the impetus for breathing new life into disaster plans, or launching new initiatives. There is a window of opportunity for all parties after a major disaster when the memory is fresh in people's minds and legislative and spending priorities can be more easily influenced. For example, in Indonesia, ECB member agencies are invited to meetings in May and June of 2007 to help plan the implementation of new legal structures and shape the roles of the

civil and military agencies involved in response. Similarly, in Guatemala, CRS and CARE had successfully lobbied to get disaster risk reduction into the national school curriculum, but for the first time during Hurricane Stan the ECB presented itself to CONRED as a unit that they could interact with cohesively and easily. This was new, and had some kinks that needed to be ironed out, but ultimately, the experience of having sat down with each other prior to the disaster, coupled with the impetus for change, set the scene for a productive dialogue.

Another approach is to work with communities and local organizations to help them to communicate to officials that DRR is important to them. In Guatemala the ECB adopted a national strategy, working with the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (SE-CONRED), SCEP and others to come up with a National Shelter Strategy. This harmonized the language that different agencies used to describe similar concepts, vastly improving the ability to cooperate and coordinate. Working to help produce an effective and valid legal framework in the country was seen as highly valuable by the government, leading the Executive Secretary of the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (SE-CONRED) to actively endorse the pilot projects. Later cooperation and lobbying led to elaboration of the National Risk Reduction law and reform to the CONRED law. The regional plan for disaster reduction was also built on this relationship of trust, allowing the ECB agencies to influence the CONRED Law, Territorial Zoning Policy (SEGE-PLAN), Social Development Law and the Ministry of Education's new curriculum for Risk Management in elementary and Secondary Schools. Other legal and structural achievements included strengthening the health commission of the Municipal CONRED's ability to work inside the COCODE, reducing overlap and increasing effectiveness. Successful elements that were duplicated by government agencies elsewhere included the 'Situation Room' model, used to monitor and control responses and disseminate information with one voice.

# Empowering local communities

Local communities are the heart of the work of development, and disaster risk reduction is no exception. The ECB pilot countries have focussed on improving community involvement and capacity in several key areas, and emerged with some core learnings about how best to empower and motivate local communities:

## **The power to convene - giving communities a seat at the table**

International NGOs can often play a role in helping to build relationships between communities and local governments. Through their perceived status and access to resources they have an ability to convene meetings and bring diverse actors to the table that communities often lack. NGOs can help to give local communities a seat at the disaster risk reduction table with other actors.

*“You can’t overestimate the importance of communities and leaders being involved as the driving force in these types of activities. People are really interested - they know how vulnerable they are. It’s just a question of finding the right leaders, the right people.” - Hugh Aprile, CRS*

When they are able to frame and articulate their needs, and have effective negotiation skills along with a forum to express them, communities more easily gain the respect and recognition they deserve as primary stakeholders in planning for, and responding to, disasters. In Guatemala, for example, teams reported that this newly gained respect from local government had a virtuous circle effect in helping to galvanize even higher levels of community participation when people saw that they were being taken seriously by officials. Seeing a process yield positive change that makes a real difference is a powerful motivator.

## **Helping communities to understand risk**

People do not always view their world through a risk lens. When people do not have much disposable income, it is not always obvious that risk reduction is a good use of their time or resources. When DRR is incorporated as part of community organization, it can be a powerful way to keep communities from sliding backwards into poverty, and even provide opportunities for development advances. By helping communities to understand risk as a threat to development, we are helping them to make educated decisions about their resource allocation. It is important that communities and the organizations that work with them understand disaster risk as a direct cause of poverty and a threat to everything else that is done to help. It is easy for decades of development to be wiped out in a day by a natural disaster, and if this is not seen as central to the development process then opportunities to prevent people from slipping into poverty will be lost.

*“Most of what we do [as aid agencies] is behavior change” - Hugh Aprile*

## **The importance of local culture and context**

Different cultures interpret risk in different ways, and this can have huge impacts on their ability to respond effectively to them. While respecting local norms and beliefs, INGOs need to work with them to make sure that they adopt a locally appropriate culture of risk mitigation. For example, in Sumatra, Indonesia, it is traditional to explain natural disasters as being sent by divine force, and not something that can be avoided. Looked at in this way, no amount of disaster risk reduction will prevent divine will. But by talking to Imams about this, and seeking their help in reducing risk, we can respect local cultures and increase resilience - after a series of sermons about disasters at the local mosques, the Imams and the mosques became key points of focus for preparedness in the area.

In Ethiopia, there is a recognition that *“there are gaps in properly approaching the community through existing traditions, culture, knowledge and local capacities and enable them choose their development options. Using local knowledge to improve*



DRR is yet to be developed." That is to say that, while we may identify good practices internationally, they must always be applied in the context of local situations and cultures. The Ethiopia Writeshop workshop is a significant attempt to tailor international standards in DRR to a country context.

*"More vigorous and systematic approach is required in conducting community participation to remove suspicion and ensure successes of DRR projects. For this, carefully identifying cultural contexts and identities of communities and having very clear knowledge on the local socio-political and cultural history before soliciting ideas is crucial."* (Excerpts from ECB3 Ethiopia)

Guatemala's team related how they felt that they were very successful at communicating the concept of risk reduction effectively to communities. They, put a great deal of effort into tailoring risk reduction materials not only into local languages, but incorporating local cultural references and using professional local designers to create radio spots and other media.

*"Traditional methods of early warning and resources management should always be given due attention in designing and implementing any development and/or relief activities. Any DRR intervention particularly with regard to environmental rehabilitation, livestock, water and rangeland development should be strengthened and designed in line with existing traditional systems."* - Ethiopia final report

Beyond getting the message across effectively, another real success of the projects lay in imparting more general skills such as negotiation, decision making and advocacy. By strengthening the community's ability to work as a team, and represent themselves to local authorities, they fostered a renewed enthusiasm for development activities even beyond DRR.



Villagers in Indonesia help to plan for disasters.



Local people map hazards in their community.



The school curriculum now includes information on how to remain safe in disasters.

Ethiopia's ECB team looked beyond their own country focus, and reached out to participants from Uganda, Malawi and Tanzania in June 2006 for a two week training focussed on community managed disaster risk reduction. With a focus on regional hazards, it included field training in facilitating community participatory assessment of hazards, vulnerabilities and capacity.



# Practical Risk Reduction demonstrations

## Practical demonstrations of what is possible

Indonesia and Guatemala both conducted pilot projects that had concrete benefits to communities as a result of their activities, while Ethiopia demonstrated real impact in bringing an unprecedented number of people to the table to take action. It is worth remembering that these pilot projects represent real cases of risk reduction that have impact in the communities and beyond. They can be used to highlight the value of DRR to other communities, to governments, and to donors.

When people see examples of projects that work, they are often spurred to further action, and feel less that the situation is overwhelming.

For example, in March 2007, when a 6.3 magnitude earthquake hit Sumatra, in Western Indonesia, the response from ECB agencies was more coordinated and coherent than ever before. It was the only area that was part of the ECB pilots that was unfortunate enough to be hit by a substantial disaster during that period. Those involved in the response report that (unlike largely un-coordinated responses in the past) *“the ECB agencies jointly agreed that Mercy Corps would take the lead because of its presence on the ground - there was a great feeling of trust.”* Mercy Corps and Save the Children worked more effectively together based on the level of trust and knowledge of each other’s capacity that had been built up.

*“People really welcomed the project - the areas were really vulnerable, as the tsunami had highlighted ... when the Sumatra earthquake happened the level of panic was much lower - people knew what to do - they did not flee in panic, but left quickly, gathering in the assembly points and helping each other” - Yenni Suryani, CRS Indonesia*

Agencies on the ground reported that the risk reduction activities (including an evacuation drill in January of the same year) in Sumatra had a very real impact on the emergency response of Indonesians living in villages where Mercy Corps operated. Villagers were more knowledgeable about escape routes and appropriate emergency behaviors, and reacted faster and with less panic than in previous instances. The engagement and support of local leaders furthered program goals and legitimized disaster risk reduction activities in some communities when they saw the practical value of the training and preparation.



Reconstruction begins after an earthquake.



Villagers in Sumatra flee to safe ground in a practice evacuation in January 2007.



Village notice boards show maps of evacuation routes and instructions on how to behave in an earthquake.

In Guatemala, the ECB project carried out risk mapping in 17 communities, involving all of the three COMRED Municipal Coordinators, forming local groups that produced 30 community plans and the installation of early alert radio systems. These communities serve as a model experience for government officials involved, and strengthen advocacy efforts by providing evidence of success.

## Local partnerships and coalitions

Effective disaster risk reduction cannot be accomplished by any one organization. It requires the building and strengthening of coalitions of local, regional and international actors. These partnerships typically include local community groups, local government structures, development groups, civil structures, disaster response agencies, medical providers, and many other groups. A key element of the ECB pilot project has been bringing these groups together to form functioning coalitions that are able to prepare, and ready to respond. Three things stand out as being important learnings.

### **Local NGO partnerships are points of leverage**

Partnerships with local NGOs were beneficial across the board, both from a sustainability perspective, and because of their effectiveness in working with local communities and structures. A systematic finding was that investing time in training both staff and partners in the basics of what risk is and how it relates to hazards, capacity and vulnerability can pay dividends. At the very least, promoting a common language allows better communication

about program activities and methodology, and can help teams to develop more effective interventions. Nation staff and local partners are often in a position to carry out informal advocacy through their networks of relationships, and can influence policy and thinking in ways that were not anticipated in project plans.

*“In Guatemala, the pilot projects involved the Education Ministry, local health centers, national Civil Police, volunteer firefighters, the judiciary, the Human Rights Office, co-operatives, banks, government social security offices, chambers of commerce, municipal government, churches, foundations, indigenous groups, the national Supreme Court, community groups and ECB member agencies.”*

### **Bringing actors together adds value**

In Chiquimulilla, Guatemala, inter-institutional coordination was an enormous part of the work that was done under the pilot projects. Exchanging experience, perspectives and plans were part of making the district’s plans function together as a unit, rather than each structure having its own set of plans. Simply having all the actors meeting each other for the first time was a huge step forward. Joint work and official points of coordination between structures flowed from this process, and helps to increase effectiveness and reduce duplication.

These functional coalitions sometimes need to be of much larger size than the administrative boundaries. For example, in dealing with flood and erosion issues, analysis at a community, municipality, and river basin level are all necessary. In Guatemala the ECB agencies were able to work at a number of different levels simultaneously, addressing the same issue from a number of different levels and reducing overlapping or counter-productive approaches by different groups.

### **Focussing coalitions and framing the discussion**

International NGOs can help to bring focus to coalitions by framing the issues in new ways, for example, in Ethiopia in December 2006 Save the Children sponsored a national level conference on disaster risk reduction entitled *“Breaking the Cycle of Disasters - Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction into Development Programs”*. The conference brought together regional government Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency (DPPA) officials, related government officers, local and international NGOs, UN agencies, academics, donors and other subject experts. It was task focused - to share experiences and produce recommendations for the design and implementation of a national framework for disaster risk reduction in the context of policy, relief, and development work. An overview of disaster mitigation policy in Ethiopia was presented by DPPA, explaining how the disaster mitigation unit is currently organized in the federal DPPA, and that the needed infrastructure & facilities are being organized. An NGO perspective on DRR

in Ethiopia, highlighting the role that NGOs play in response to acute need, but the lack of large quantities of work to increase the capacity and resilience of people in disaster prone areas. The paper highlighted that disasters are rooted in development failures and working towards mainstreaming DRR into development is essential. The conference raised awareness, and helped to build relationships at every level between the various groups working on implementation of DRR strategies.

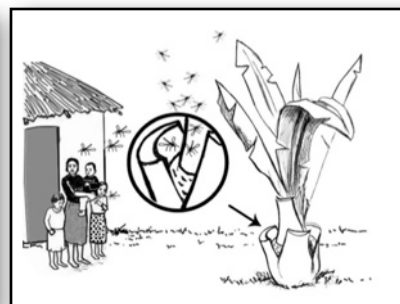
In Guatemala, after Tropical Storm Stan in 2005, IWG agencies, along with other groups, and supported by the ECB, began to advocate for the Ministry of Education to introduce a national school curriculum around disaster risk reduction. The curriculum was a result of a collaboration between the ministry, schools, communities and a group called the Inter-Institutional Forum (an alliance of humanitarian organizations in Guatemala chaired by CONRED). As well as the theoretical elements, the program includes drills and family and community planning, bringing communities and families together to make plans around the vehicle of the school program. Juan Manuel Girón, ECB Pilot Project Manager in Guatemala, commented: *“Given that school reform only happens every forty years or so, this is a very significant step. The process was not easy, and would not have been accomplished but for a huge amount of interagency collaboration, in large part facilitated by the ECB Project.”*



Participants in the Ethiopia risk reduction conference



Children in Guatemala practice earthquake drill



An illustration from the Ethiopia Writeshop book

Again using schools as a community focal point, Indonesia's 'School Road Show for Risk Reduction Day' that brought together the UN Technical Working Group for Disaster Management, the Indonesian Red Cross Society, the ECB Project and Islamic Relief. The road-show communicated key issues around disaster preparedness to students and communities, and trained primary school students on the basics of disaster preparedness. The government and local partner NGOs reinforced these messages, which coincided with the launching of an Early Warning System that included the installation of sirens in coastal areas, implemented by the Meteorological and Geophysical Agency of Indonesia. Acting together, these agencies were able to have a coherent message, and a clearer voice.

# ECB member organizational change

## The origins of the ECB, the impetus for change

While the ECB project is ultimately about change in communities, it is also about organizational change within the ECB agencies. The founding myth of the emergency directors of the agencies meeting together to ‘vent’ about their problems, and discovering that they all had similar kinds of problems, is a microcosm of much of the learning from the ECB project. When we get together and share our stories, our ‘pain-points’, our systems and our experience, we emerge stronger, and better prepared than before, with new networks of expertise to draw on.

In relating this element of the project, it is important to understand that, traditionally, while NGOs have ‘coordinated’ in the past, this has usually involved sharing information about what is being done, and where, not how it is being done, or internal systems, or collaborating on planning processes. Much of the progress on this front is not tangible, and it has not been easy, but for those who have, in the past, experienced how disconnected NGOs can be, the new experiences in coordination and cooperation have felt revolutionary.

*“Approaches organizations adopt in risk reduction management are different. Each of them adopts approaches... This is not a problem per se. The real challenge is when there is little information exchange and networking between the agencies.” Save the Children Ethiopia*

## Increased trust and cooperation leads to greater effectiveness

In getting to know each other, having high level organizational ‘permission’ to share and collaborate, and a clear mandate to work together has led to significant changes in approach in the pilot areas. This high level mandate is important in the context of the kinds of collegial competition that NGOs engage in while hiring staff, selecting communities and seeking out grants and funding. To hear executive level staff endorsing more active cooperation has made a real difference.

While agencies have usually collaborated somewhat in emergencies, the degree of coordination, the ease reduction of ‘friction’ in working together is very clear. Whether it is representing themselves to the government of Guatemala as a coherent group that speaks and acts with one voice, or being able to share information, assessment data, and even put out joint situation reports in Indonesia, the value of a team that knows, and trusts each other, and is explicitly expected by its senior management to work together for the greater good has been demonstrated clearly.

*“When I think about the earthquake in Yogyakarta in 2006, none of [the ECB agencies] took the time to call each other - no one did that. When the Earthquake in Sumatra happened Mercy Corps really took the initiative to call everyone. We did a joint assessment in Padang, and worked much more effectively together. Previously we had only collaborated on an organizational level, not at a field level.” Yenni Suryani, CRS Indonesia*

For example, after the Padang earthquake in March 2007 the ECB agencies jointly agreed that Mercy Corps would take the lead because of its presence on the ground - there was a great feeling of trust. Mara Hardjoko from Save the Children tells her story. *“One of the biggest benefits ... in the field is the informal network and sense of teamwork and trust formed between staff in ECB members. So when an earthquake struck..., we were able to respond in a quick and coordinator manner. An earthquake around 6.2 on the Richter scale struck West Sumatra, near Aceh and displaced around 136,000 people, affecting the area of the ECB DRR pilot project. Within 48 hours of the earthquake, we held a coordination meeting with all 7 ECB organizations in Jakarta and another in West Sumatra to discuss the situation and plan our response. Mercy Corps was the only*



ECB member with an office in the affected area and offered to share their office with other ECB members as well as vehicles or support needs.

ECB members shared rapid assessment tools with one another while Mercy Corps, CARE and Save the Children all sent staff to be part of a joint assessment ... others coordinated with this group. Mercy Corps had general staff on the ground and Save the Children sent education, media and health staff while CARE sent an emergency response expert in water supply and sanitation. Many schools were heavily damaged so it was decided that a response should focus on support to the schools. Since that is Save the Children's expertise, we contributed school tents which were pre-positioned in our warehouse nearby. Mercy Corps took the lead in the response and received funding from OFDA to cover the joint activities which included school kits, household and hygiene kits. Joint situation reports, case studies, and press releases were all issued from this ECB team.

Some people questioned if we could really, truly cooperate between large NGOs in a time of crisis but senior management in Indonesia was committed to making it work for the following reasons: While all ECB members now have experience in emergency response because of the frequency of disasters, we were all stretched in recovering from the disaster the month before and realized we would be more effective if we pooled our resources and efforts. We all had limited relief kits and staff near the disaster location which, if pooled, would have a much greater impact. Since there was a sense of teamwork among the ECB members, we could come together easily."

This was a very different story to the level of cooperation experienced in the tsunami. Charlie Ehle, from CRS said "when I first got to Indonesia, I asked whether the agencies got together, and I was told that they really didn't, that coordination was just too difficult. [The ECB] has pushed people to get into the same room and cooperate."

The ECB has cemented and informally institutionalized inter-agency collaboration. People who did not communicate much in the past now call each other up as a matter of course. When one person come across an issue, it is now much more commonplace to call up a colleague in another agency to see if they have already solved that problem than was previously the case. The agencies now have a memorandum of understanding about how future interagency collaborations should work. 'Reinventing the wheel' is a much rarer occurrence.

### **A stronger voice in advocacy is possible when we act together**

Together, the ECB agencies have shown that their advocacy voice is more effective when they speak with the same voice. Sonia Wallman reports that in Guatemala the ECB agencies came together to ask USAID about a new policy it had in country that they felt was not as productive as it could have been - the discussions lead to a change, where in the past, individual agencies might not have been heard so clearly. In Ethiopia, while there had been examples of previous collaboration (for example the Joint Emergency Operations Plan), this was the first time so many groups had come together. Not only did the agencies have a stronger say when they spoke together, but the Writeshop comprised of over 40 individuals from various agencies created a credible voice that is being listened to. The power of these people being brought together to speak coherently on the need for disaster risk reduction cannot be underestimated. Tom Hensleigh reported that the West Hararghe study highlighted some approaches that had had real impact

*"Nothing ever brought us together as closely as the ECB - the attitudes of the agencies have really changed. Prior to this we coordinated in ad-hoc ways, around projects where it was required. Now, five of the ECB agencies are working together on avian flu and how to prepare and prevent. They are using a similar approach, focussing on education and communication with the target population."* Yenni Suryani, CRS Indonesia

*"I don't think anyone has ever done anything this comprehensive for Ethiopia before. This has been the largest number of organizations coming together to work on the nature of emergencies and response to them in Ethiopia."* Tom Hensleigh, Mercy Corps Ethiopia

that donors had actually stopped funding recently. It opened the opportunity to go back to these donors collectively and question their decisions based on real evidence about the effectiveness of these approaches. By studying these things together, and using a joint advocacy platform, the voices are made stronger and more convincing.

### **Mainstreaming - a clearer role for disaster risk reduction in development goals**

The discussions that the ECB agencies have undertaken have resulted in, if not the adoption of a common vocabulary for discussing risk reduction, then at least a way for us to easily translate between agency vocabularies, and an increased familiarity with the various frameworks that we each use to think about the world. It has facilitated inter-agency information exchange and aided the discourse about risk management activities and where they sit within the various development paradigms that we use. It has caused a change in attitude in some places, moving from emergency response and reconstruction to an approach built around prevention and preparedness and recognizing poverty as a major cause of vulnerability.

Risk reduction has shown itself, far from being something that should be only the purview of emergency response departments, something that is actually a very useful starting point for development. It can result in a renewed determination to act for development if it is packaged appropriately. A DRR worker with one of the ECB agencies put it this way - *“when I think about the role of disaster risk reduction in my agency’s development strategy, I think about a soccer team - most of the team is out there trying to score goals, trying to get ahead, but me? I’m the goalkeeper - my job is to try to stop us from moving backwards”*.

*“Because of the ECB, there are more internal discussions. There is increased awareness of the need for DRR amongst HQ staff and Country Programs – especially since there is a clear linkage with CRS’s Integral Human Development Framework. ECB has pushed the pilot countries to think about the future of their own programming.” - Charlie Ehle, CRS*

Much of the work of the pilot projects has shown that mainstreaming of DRR into other development (or emergency response) work not only reduces risk, but can make the other activities more effective. In Indonesia, educational activities and school drills and the use of children as vehicles for change by Save the Children and Mercy Corps has proven extremely fruitful, not only as means to improve the disaster preparedness of the next generation but also as a point of access for risk reduction programming in the community. By mobilizing the community around a non-contentious issue like helping children, adults are drawn in and invited to think about the same issues.

Many of the ECB agencies have initiated changes within their own structures to reflect a new focus on DRR, for example, World Vision has a new DRR unit, while smaller agencies like Mercy Corps and CRS have approved new staff positions in other departments to work on DRR. On a local level, World Vision Ethiopia has set up an Emergency Capacity Building unit to improve its capacity to respond effectively by breaking the vicious cycle of disasters and poverty in Ethiopia and help build community resilience. The unit is tasked with helping to retain experienced humanitarian staff and ensuring program quality.

Part of the motivation for the new unit was the recognition that humanitarian staff are often too busy responding to emergencies to spend time on risk reduction, capacity building, disaster preparedness, prevention or mitigation initiatives. The unit will strengthen the emergency capacity building needs of World Vision programs, vulnerable communities and staff, and coordinate training and workshops. It reviews the annual plans of Area Development Programs (ADPs), helping them to incorporate disaster mitigation activities and develop programs in these areas. It will then track the progress of these projects and programs, and document best practices and lessons learned.



World Vision's response to the concept of risk reduction has been to place it as an element in the foundation of sustainable development, by integrating relief with development through systematic mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction measures, eroding what many see as an unproductive distinction between relief and development.

A recommendation from several groups to facilitate this kind of roll-out of DRR, a guide to risk reduction in the field, in the vein of the Good Enough Guide, should be developed, along with a curriculum for training and evaluation.

*"There is a component of DRR in everything we do, and it follows that DRR project activities enrich ALL our developmental programs. ECB III complements our programs at the community level to better understand how development is linked to risk reduction and how it improves our staff capacity for emergency response." - Mercy Corps ECB team*

### Highlighting donor interest in collaborative efforts and encouraged others to act

Program successes in pilot countries have spurred some countries and organizations to back DRR activities where no money was unavailable in the ECB budget, for example, the ECHO Disaster Preparedness Program in the Ferghana Valley, implemented in neighboring regions of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has continued. Beneficiary communities benefited from the establishment of local DRR offices that drew interest from donors as DRR appeared higher on the list of NGO priorities. *"The [Ethiopia] DRR Manual was expensive to develop, but ultimately very useful"* report the Ethiopia team, not least because it enabled a round of discussions with donors about implementation of DRR practices found to be beneficial.



Part of the ECB team meeting in Oxford



ECB team members share experiences at a learning event in 2007



ECB team members on an inter-agency assessment flight

Another example of this can be found in Ethiopia, where, following repeated severe droughts, the ECB agencies reached out to others including the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to push forward their Drought Cycle Management work. This includes assessments of the impact of drought, coordinated response mechanisms, and analysis of local coping mechanisms.

### New tools for disaster risk reduction

A variety of new tools have emerged, both as specific outputs of the pilots (for example in Ethiopia) and as related efforts, for example Save the Children's "Children's Voices in DRR" Publication and the Save "Child-Led DRR Toolkit" which will include a video and a written manual detailing the role of children in DRR from planning through implementation and M&E. It will represent best practices in DRR to share internally and externally. This series of publications came out of a four day workshop in 2006 in Hanoi for Save staff working on DRR programs in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and

*"Our participation in ECB was key to the establishment of [our Emergency Capacity Building] Unit. There have been attempts to do something similar over the past few years, but the ECB Project greatly helped us to justify the need for the Unit, and ECB documents were our main reference in drafting the TOR. The WV Ethiopia ECB Unit will be the main point of contact for ECB in Ethiopia, and we hope it will contribute a lot, as well as benefiting from the Project in future." - Melisa Bodenhamer*

Indonesia as well as Vietnam and Cuba as a forum to share their experiences in this area. It focused on sharing challenges and lessons learned from the various DRR programs and determining a plan to take DRR forward on a more strategic level in the tsunami-affected region and included a document entitled "Suggested Guidelines/ Principles for DRR".



Guatemalan villagers working on risk reduction activities



Discussions underway in Ethiopia



First aid workshop for community members. Note the high number of women participants

# Conclusions

The ECB pilot projects have been test-beds for a variety of approaches with little precedent for the scale or level of collaboration. In looking at the degree of sharing of internal capacity, resources, and information the journey itself has been a remarkable one, and many of the comments from people involved in the projects point out that the success cannot simply be measured in outputs, but we must also look at changes in process.

## **Significant learning has emerged from the projects**

The Executive Summary on page three draws out some of the more significant learning that has emerged from the projects, while each chapter of this report focuses on an area that has been fruitful in generating new and promising practices, and highlighting existing strategies. The three countries have contributed in different ways to advancing the field; Ethiopia through its focus on documentation of learning, and convening diverse groups to better understand the DRR; Indonesia through its focus on community planning and response; and Guatemala in its broad range of activities bringing together communities, governments and other groups. These projects are a solid foundation for future work in this area.

## **Changes in organizational behavior have already occurred**

The ECB agencies have changed substantially in the ways that they work both independently and individually. The clear improvement in collaboration, with demonstrated increases in effectiveness in a range of activities reflects effort from a range of groups within the agencies. Executive levels gave unprecedented clear mandates to share and work together, leadership allocated resources over and above what was available under project funding, and project and country staff consistently went the extra mile in making these projects work, overcoming obstacles that threatened to de-rail the projects. A clear sense that this was a project that, despite difficulties *had* to be made to work because of its importance to the sector comes across in talking to all involved.

## **Opportunity and risk**

The pilot projects have shown that real-world impact in risk reduction is possible, and that increased levels of cooperation between agencies can have a powerful multiplier effect. They have outlined some clearly successful strategies, some areas for improvement, and some promising practices that merit more attention. However, with the end of the ECB project, there are signs of some of these practices already falling out of use. As memory fades, staff turn over, and priorities shift to other initiatives, there is a danger that the progress made could be lost. A final lesson, and perhaps the most important, is that the level of progress made to date cannot be maintained without continued investment of time and resources by the agencies involved. Without further prioritization, the capacities that have been built will be eroded over time.

Encouragingly, the agencies involved seem cognizant of this risk, and are taking steps to consolidate and move forward together. As the initiative carries forward, in whatever shape it will take, there is recognition that the different groups will likely choose different paths and focusses in developing capacity that provides an effective complement to their organizational specialization and missions. The commonality that remains is the understanding of the common goal of helping communities to be better prepared to face disasters.