



DanChurchAid

Disaster Preparedness Strategy

Final Draft

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Introduction

Whenever disaster strikes a population, the initial response will always be from the affected community itself. The earliest response by outsiders, both domestic and overseas, usually does not have a direct impact on the affected population before crucial days or even weeks have passed. Even the most professional emergency response teams who are on stand by in case of an earthquake will usually only arrive after the most crucial hours where appropriate action could save large number of lives. Media attention often focuses on the rescue of single individuals who defy the odds and manage to survive several days after the disaster struck. The vast majority dies long before the camera teams arrive. Even during creeping disasters like droughts, it is primarily the coping mechanisms of the affected communities which determines how, in particular the most vulnerable, manage to overcome the crisis.

When relief supplies finally do arrive, the reliance on community-based groups can help ensuring accountability and that the most vulnerable are reached. There is thus a strong case for DanChurchAid to strengthen local communities ability to prevent, mitigate and respond to disasters.

1. Conceptual Framework

1.1. From Disaster Response to Disaster Preparedness

DanChurchAid has been active providing relief since 1922. DanChurchAid has been providing a platform within the Danish Church and more generally for the promotion of public willingness to help disaster victims. Gradually DanChurchAid evolved from primarily providing charity related assistance to becoming a more holistic relief and development organisation. Until the nineties usually started its work in a given country after disaster had struck. In many cases the support continued after the first immediate disaster relief through a sequence of rehabilitation and development activities.

Due to a number of “setbacks” in the eighties and nineties the assumption that the disaster/rehabilitation/development continuum would necessary secure a continuous improvement provide sustainable livelihoods had to be challenged. The initial cynical reaction by some observers were to brand in particular some African countries as hopeless cases. However, within the aid community a more appropriate analysis of the cause-effect relationship between poverty, vulnerability and disasters were developed. DanChurchAid reacted by developing the concept of “integrated approach” consisting of “development oriented relief” and “relief oriented development” combining disaster mitigation, rehabilitation and development in one coherent approach. The approach requires a high degree of flexibility and adaptability – while disasters used to be regarded as major risks to traditional development process, the integrated approach meets disasters as challenges which prompt the project staff to adapt the planning and implementation to the altered circumstances.

For DanChurchAid disaster preparedness is regarded as essential as an important precondition for strengthening the integrated rights based approach to relief and development. Disaster preparedness has been given a particular important pivotal role in the strategic approach of DanChurchAid, apart from being highlighted as a one of eight strategic focus types, it is essential in securing the appropriate link between development and relief.

1.2. DanChurchAid's Definition of Rights Based Disaster Preparedness

Disaster preparedness is essential in securing the right to life with dignity. Through disaster preparedness it can be insured that the authorities, agencies and staff involved in providing relief assistance to appreciate that help should be provided in a non-discriminatory manner and that the recipients are not to be treated in degrading or humiliating ways, but rather as dignified citizens who are enduring serious challenges. They should not be treated as passive recipients, but rather citizens who have right to be heard and right to participate.

DanChurchAid defines disasters as crisis that - at least for a time - overwhelm groups of people's capacities to manage their own lives and cope with circumstances that threaten their survival. It is, however, important to stress that the ability of communities to help themselves are of essential importance and appropriate credit to the active care and support given by fellow citizens in emergency situations. This is why DanChurchAid particularly stresses the strengthening of the local disaster preparedness capacities.

In this context disasters are understood as either natural disasters or complex emergencies such as civil war or communal violence, which challenges the population and in particular puts the most vulnerable groups at risk. It is also important to distinguish according to predictability of disasters: "creeping or recurrent disasters" or "sudden disasters", as the appropriate planning and mitigation measures are very different. Most disasters affect primarily the poorest, because they tend to live on marginal lands, prone to flooding and droughts. The concept "disaster preparedness" covers both prevention measures and contingency planning initiatives.

The DanChurchAid's strategies towards particular challenges such as HIV/AIDS and landmines are described in detail in separate Strategy Papers, and the particular preventive measures against the danger posed by these are thus, in order to avoid duplication, excluded from this paper. Food insecurity can be caused by various reasons, in most cases the DanChurchAid Strategy Paper on food security should provide appropriate guidelines, however there should be little doubt that disaster preparedness measures can also help securing support to the most vulnerable during disasters, sudden economic meltdown or breakdown of law and order.

Many communities are faced with momentous challenges from communal diseases and frequent traffic accidents, but though the impact to society can be of disastrous scale they are every-day challenges needing to be tackled through specific initiatives, which are beyond the scope of this strategy.

It is the firm position of DanChurchAid that governments should assume their responsibility as duty-bearer when it comes to providing appropriate disaster preparedness facilities for its population, however, pragmatically DanChurchAid will through its partners seek to promote and enhance the facilities benefiting the most marginalized and vulnerable groups. While supporting the enhancement of the capacities and capabilities of its partners and local communities DanChurchAid will continuously advocate for governments to assume their responsibility to invest in and promote appropriate disaster preparedness facilities. DanChurchAid will seek to avoid that disaster preparedness is merely seen as an issue for NGOs, rather the governments should see it as their duty to develop their disaster preparedness capacity at central, regional and local level so that eventually sustainability can be ensured by the states and the populations own resources.

2. Strategic Framework

2.1. The Problems to be Addressed by Disaster Preparedness

Disaster preparedness shall be understood as both a natural integrated part of the DanChurchAid relief and rehabilitation and the longer-term development approach. While one of the aims of the relief and rehabilitation is to focus on capacity building of local partners and active involvement of the target groups, the disaster preparedness initiatives help securing the base for true community participation and accountability¹. DanChurchAid will in co-operation with its ACT (Action by Churches Together) partners seek to strengthen the local capacities for dealing with disasters. Whenever a relief intervention is initiated it should be considered if a disaster preparedness component could with benefit be incorporated.

The role of disaster preparedness as part of the DanChurchAid development efforts is securing and safeguarding the hard-earned gains towards providing sustainable livelihood for the poor and marginalized². In connection with all development programmes supported by DanChurchAid, it should thus routinely be explored what appropriate disaster preparedness initiatives could be initiated in order to make the target populations able to respond when faced with emergencies.

2.2. Overall Objective

- Enhancing the capability of local communities and groups of poor and marginalized populations to prevent, mitigate and cope with disasters.

It is on purpose that the strengthening of the organisational preparedness of both DanChurchAid and its partners has not been included in the objective. In order to avoid to primarily focus on our own and our partner organisations needs the Overall Objective directs its attention towards the beneficiaries. Obviously DanChurchAid will seek to strengthen both its partners and its own capacity to provide appropriate response when trying to deal with disasters, however, this should be seen as important means contributing to achieving the Overall Objective.

2.3. Identifying Beneficiaries

In accordance with the constitution of DanChurchAid the aim will be to build disaster preparedness capacity among the poor and marginalized. Disaster preparedness initiatives will primarily focus on geographical areas where DanChurchAid has already been involved in development or emergency relief work. Disaster preparedness shall thus be seen as a part of the integrated approach of DanChurchAid.

DanChurchAid emphasises that its support shall be directed towards securing lives and livelihoods of the poorest, who are disproportionately affected by, and vulnerable to, disasters. Most disasters affect primarily those, who live on marginal lands, prone to flooding and droughts. DanChurchAid maintains that the poor and marginalized have resources, skills, talents and rational coping

¹ Thus facilitating the successful implementation of DanChurchAid Programme Objective 6: "*Provision of Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation Support Based on a Development-oriented Approach Building on Local Capacities*".

² DanChurchAid's second Overall Objective: "*Sustainable Livelihood for Marginalized Groups*", in particular Programme Objective 3: "*Strengthen the Food Security for Marginalized Groups*" and to a lesser degree "*Strengthen the Access to Basic Social Services for Marginal Groups*".

strategies that shall be recognized, while seeking to strengthen and reinforce these. In particular emphasis is given to securing the most vulnerable of the poor: women, children and disabled.

2.4. Focus Areas of Intervention

Whenever development initiatives are initiated DanChurchAid needs to carefully identify whether the recurrent disasters are likely to erode effect of the planned outputs, or if disaster has been a contributing factor in relation to making the intended beneficiary group disadvantaged or marginalized. The possible inter-linkage between recurrent disasters and poverty needs to be explored and understood. If the analysis shows that disasters are likely to occur, disaster preparedness should be an integrated part of a community development or empowerment programme.

It is appreciated that the aftermath of a disaster provides an opportunity to initiate disaster preparedness initiatives. A specific initiative can with benefit be launched as part of a rehabilitation programme. If the beneficiaries in the aftermath of a disaster feel a need for creating a stronger community-based disaster prevention or preparedness capability DanChurchAid is obliged to work towards this end. Activities such as training of trainers for the establishment of community-based disaster preparedness committees, can very well be initiated during the rehabilitation phase. Later, the continuous work by these committees can with success be continued and supported as an integrated part of a longer-term development programme.

2.5. DanChurchAid Strategy of Intervention

While the enhancement of capability of local communities to prevent, mitigate and cope with disasters is understood as the overall objective, it is also important strengthen the capability of DanChurchAid and its partners in order to help these achieve the desired improvements. DanChurchAid is thus determined to continuously strengthen the organisational preparedness both within itself and its partners. DanChurchAid will continuously maintain and upgrade its operational preparedness and its human resources in order to assist its partners and affected populations timely and effectively.

For all development programmes supported by DanChurchAid, it should routinely be explored what appropriate disaster preparedness initiatives could be initiated in order to make the target populations able to respond when faced with emergencies. It should particularly be ensured that all food security programmes, either have some disaster preparedness element, or that the exclusion of such an element is made on basis of analysis.

DanChurchAid, as part of the ACT network, is committed to supporting and facilitating capacities of partner organisations and of local communities to respond to emergencies, and understands this local capacity to be integrally linked to the ongoing process of ensuring sustainability.

Disaster preparedness can help towards securing the right to life with dignity, and more specifically ensuring that disaster affected populations are being provided assistance in accordance with the Humanitarian Charter and SPHERE standards. It helps ensuring that people are not merely seen as passive receivers of aid, but as dignified agents dealing with large-scale challenges requiring help from outside.

2.6. Types of Interventions

DanChurchAid seeks, through its partners, to strengthen the local capacities for disaster preparedness. Though the specific types of interventions are numerous, they fall in three categories: **Primarily, efforts will be targeted towards the poorest and most vulnerable, through participatory interventions in local communities.** However, while keeping the overall objective in mind interventions can also take place through establishing: **Networks between organisations and actors aimed at exchange of experiences and generating new knowledge about links between disaster prevention/preparedness and long-term development,** and finally: **Activities related to advocacy directed towards legislation and national or international actors.**

DanChurchAid recognizes the importance of developing on-going local, national or regional fora among ACT, as well as other, partners, as a relevant and valuable disaster preparedness and response mechanism. DanChurchAid will therefore via its own regional representatives and monitoring visits of programme staff seek to build the understanding of this concept among its field staff and partners, as an appropriate fora for exchange of experiences, for mapping of local capacities and for effective disaster response.

Depending on the local context and the capabilities of the partners, activities will include an advocacy strategy directed towards local, national or international legislation, and can include both national and international actors.

2.7. Approach

2.7.1. Preventive Measures

In areas of recurring disasters DanChurchAid will together with its partners undertake analysis of root causes identifying appropriate preventive measures. Disaster preparedness can range from disaster prevention measures, such as erosion control, introduction of drought resistant crops or construction of protective dams, to emergency preparedness through establishment of emergency shelters, earthquake resistant housing, contingency stocks, early warning systems, communication systems and establishment of emergency response groups through training of staff and local population in disaster preparedness.

The appreciation of the importance of adhering to the “Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and NGOs in Disaster Relief” and Humanitarian Charter and the SPHERE standards will need to be promoted among all programme staff in DanChurchAid as well as its partner organisations. Further the knowledge about the Humanitarian Charter and the SPHERE standards needs to be promoted among the vulnerable groups themselves as this knowledge will strengthen their possibilities of claiming their rights and ensure accountability of providers of relief aid.

The programme staff in DanChurchAid will through training continuously have their skills with regard to disaster preparedness updated and upgraded. They will learn to appreciate that disaster preparedness is essential as an important precondition for strengthening its integrated approach to relief and development. DanChurchAid will enhance its emergency preparedness capacity by maintaining a roster of skilled experts who can be seconded through the ACT network on short notice.

Staff in DanChurchAid and its partners should be encouraged to respond appropriately to the humanitarian imperative, particularly whenever disaster strikes a population whom are already being served by them through development activities. While it is obviously not acceptable to withdraw from a particular project site when disaster strikes, the staff must take initiative to adjust or change activities or, if feasible or scale up operations. Only exception to this rule should be when the security of the staff themselves is threatened.

DanChurchAid will strengthen the capacity its partners to develop appropriate preventive measures through support to development of human resources in analysis of root-causes, identification of the particularly vulnerable and the preparation of contingency plans.

This paper will not seek to provide a complete list of appropriate and meaningful disaster prevention measures, as the appropriate preventive measures are extremely varied and specific to the particular area. Rather, the identification of what is meaningful and appropriate prevention measures, should always be case specific and identified through a close dialogue with the affected communities and partners with insight into the condition of a particular location.

2.7.2. Promoting "Good Practices"

In order to be able to reach the poorest and most vulnerable, through participatory interventions in local communities, the human resources of DanChurchAid itself, its partner organisations and other implementing organisations need to be continuously strengthened through formal training and informal exchange of experiences. Considerable experience in working with and through communities in connection with emergencies presently exists, both among development and more specialised relief staff in DanChurchAid and its partners. It is thus crucial to build on this knowledge base, while developing skills in designing and implementing appropriate and meaningful disaster preparedness activities. Planning must be based on identification of specific need in given settings while drawing on identification of root-causes, the cumulated experiences, and the development and use of replicable models.

While DanChurchAid mostly implements through partnerships in the church network, all of which are expected to adhere to the concept of *Diakonia* (which means Christian service) and the closely linked humanitarian imperative to assist people in need, it is an obligation for DanChurchAid to promote good practices. It is essential to continuously promote the appreciation, both among government officials, aid-agency staff and beneficiary groups, that help and assistance shall be given to people regardless of religion, geographical area, gender, political belief, and ethnicity. Disaster preparedness activities can help to strengthen community ties, ensuring that minorities and other vulnerable groups are not disproportionately affected by disasters or excluded from assistance.

2.7.3. Participation

Appropriate disaster preparedness activities shall be identified through a continuous consultative process with the active participation of beneficiaries – both women and men. When communities identify relevant activities strengthening their preparedness capability, hereunder mitigation and prevention activities, necessary flexibility shall be shown. It is therefore important to leave room for flexibility for the communities themselves to prioritise. Activism among communities needs to be nurtured as it empowers people to care for their neighbours. Activities with the potential of leading towards sustainable impact shall in particular be encouraged. An example of such sustainable

activity is training of volunteer trainers. Another example is erosion control through bio-engineering practices. If the planted material is considered community asset and is harvested gradually it can provide the community income, which can be reinvested in new activities.

A community-based disaster preparedness capability can help empowering communities so that when relief aid reaches a disaster affected area the community can act as active agents and not merely as passive undignified recipients. Community-based groups can thus help distributing aid, ensuring accountability and that the most vulnerable are reached.

2.7.4. Appropriate Hardware

While the main focus for the disaster preparedness strategy is development of human resources and community-based activities, some well-targeted hardware elements can be included in programmes. According to the felt need of the beneficiaries some communications equipment, cyclone-shelters, elevated land for evacuation, limited embankments and similar hardware elements can be supported.

DanChurchAid takes the position that governments should assume their responsibility as duty-bearer when it comes to providing appropriate disaster preparedness facilities, however, pragmatically DanChurchAid will through its partners seek to promote and enhance the facilities benefiting the most marginalized and vulnerable groups. Establishment and maintenance of early warning systems should be seen as the responsibility of governments, but DanChurchAid can provide funds for radio equipment and more low-tech solutions in order to ensure that particularly vulnerable groups are being reached.

However, it is felt that large-scale infrastructure projects are beyond the field where DanChurchAid and its partners can be said to have a relative advantage. It is felt that international back-donors in the past have used a too high proportion of the limited funds available for disaster prevention on large-scale infrastructure rehabilitation and too little towards the protection of livelihoods. When an analysis of the root-causes for the vulnerability establishes that they could be mitigated through larger-scale infrastructure projects DanChurchAid will seek to lobby for appropriate investments.

2.7.5. Contingency Stocks and Contingency Funds

As timely help is essential during emergencies it is very sensible to establish contingency stocks. In areas prone to recurrent disasters it is essential that stocks of emergency relief items are readily available for relief providers. It is, however, essential that the personnel responsible for the administration of these stocks be well trained, in order to ensure well-targeted and accountable distribution of the items in case of emergency. The efficient and accountable distribution of emergency stocks is important, primarily in order to ensure that the most needy are being prioritised, but also in order to encourage back-donors to increasingly provide funds for such stocks.

Despite the establishment of the ACT network facilitates and helps to speed up the fundraising efforts, it is essential that more relief items can be distributed promptly, while sorting out the details regarding finances. It will be to the benefit of all parties if appeals for relief materials will be primarily for restocking purposes. Back-donors should be encouraged to contribute more to contingency funds, which could significantly speed up the reaction time.

It is also important to encourage the beneficiary communities to prepare contingency stocks themselves. Community-based disaster preparedness groups shall be encouraged to establish and maintain such stocks. For example can some local storage of food grain and water-purification tablets go a long way to ensure the survival of people while evacuated to storm-shelters or higher grounds during floods.

2.8. Networking

DanChurchAid will support efforts to share experiences through strengthening networks between organisations in areas affected by disasters. DanChurchAid will in particular seek to strengthen the networking within ACT International through support to national and regional networks or ACT Committees. DanChurchAid will contribute time and effort to the establishment and maintenance of the national and regional ACT fora. The objective is to establish a true network of partners organisations who know the strengths and weaknesses of each other, and who are able to supplement each others activities, through this aforementioned exchange of information. The preparedness element may include a basic mapping exercise of the different resources each partner has at its disposal, including relevant contact information in case of emergency. In addition, a continuous exchange of experiences should be insured within the ACT network, which eventually can be shared with a broader audience.

DanChurchAid will also promote the networking within the aid-community beyond the ACT system, as it is believed that an environment of openness and coordination is an important precondition for effective response to disasters. Through workshops organisations can explore opportunities for synergies through enhancing collaboration and cooperation. By supporting the networking at national, regional and global levels DanChurchAid will seek to facilitate a sharing environment where its partners replicate models/approaches and build on the experiences regarding best practices from others.

2.9. Advocacy

2.9.1. Documentation of Impact

It is often argued that prevention is far the most cost efficient utilisation of available funds for relief, however it continues to be hard to raise the necessary funds. It is thus imperative to seek to document the impact of disaster preparedness. It is a challenge to illustrate something that did not happen, because the appropriate initiatives were taken in time. It is however important to document the successes achieved both for the general public and in particular the international back-donors. The limited funds available for relief could be utilized better if more emphasis was given to longer-term commitment towards strengthening local capacities for disaster preparedness.

It is particularly important to demonstrate the inter-linkage between disaster and medium- to long-term effects on vulnerable communities. If the general public and donor representatives can be made aware of the shortcomings of the normal “hit and run” practices, when responding to emergencies, it would be possible to attract more funds for disaster preparedness. It is important to raise awareness that investing in disaster preparedness, including mitigation and prevention, can save far more lives and livelihoods than spectacular “airborne” relief responses.

2.9.2. Appropriate Early Warning

The poor and marginalized groups are often not receiving any early warning of an upcoming natural disaster and sometimes merely have to rely on hearsay. DanChurchAid find it an obligation to promote the need for early warning systems, which can serve the poorest. DanChurchAid will, when needed and appropriate, support groups and individuals who advocates for the right of the poor and marginalized to be included in governmental plans for early warning and evacuation. Though ideally it should be the responsibility of a given government to provide its population with appropriate early warning systems, DanChurchAid will refrain from merely criticizing weak governments for their shortcomings, but rather engage in dialogue, facilitate relevant training and support, and assist with lobbying efforts directed at international donors.

DanChurchAid will often benefit from or even rely on the assessments made by UN Agencies such as WFP, UNDP, UNOCHA, UNHCR, and FAO. However, sometimes these agencies are not able to undertake assessment missions due to reluctance by involved governments. DanChurchAid sees it as an obligation to initiate assessment missions either unilaterally or in cooperation with its ACT partners whenever it is found that the plight of particularly vulnerable groups are overlooked by the international community. The aim of advocacy efforts made on basis of such assessment missions will be to seek support for the vulnerable rather than blaming other agencies for their shortcomings.

2.9.3. Appropriate Investment in Infrastructure

When analysis of the root-causes for the vulnerability could be mitigated through larger-scale infrastructure projects such as large-scale embankment projects, protective dams and draining canals, DanChurchAid will in cooperation with its partners seek to lobby for appropriate investments from governments and international donors. DanChurchAid will give particular emphasis to the development of human resources among its partner organisations and beneficiary groups, in order to enable these to advocate for appropriate government attention the vulnerability of the most disadvantaged groups.

3. The role of DanChurchAid (Summary)

The role of DanChurchAid in the implementation of the disaster preparedness strategy can briefly be outlined through the following points:

- Disaster preparedness shall be seen as a part of the integrated rights based approach of DanChurchAid.
- If the analysis shows that disasters are likely to occur in an area where DanChurchAid supports a community development programme, disaster preparedness should be an integrated part of it.
- DanChurchAid will help poor and marginalized to claim their right to life with dignity, even when they are faced with overwhelming challenges due to disaster through facilitating appropriate disaster preparedness.

- Disaster preparedness ensures that people struck by disaster are not merely seen as passive receivers of aid, but dignified agents dealing with large-scale challenges requiring help from outside.
- Appropriate disaster preparedness activities shall be identified through a continuous consultative process with the active participation of beneficiaries – both women and men.
- The main focus for the disaster preparedness strategy is development of human resources and community-based activities.
- In areas prone to recurrent disasters it is essential that stocks of emergency relief items are readily available for relief providers.
- DanChurchAid will support efforts to share experiences through strengthening networks between organisations in areas affected by disasters.
- It is imperative to seek to document the impact of disaster preparedness.
- DanChurchAid find it an obligation to promote the need for early warning systems, which can serve the poorest.