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OPINION: Ambitious and coherent? Reviewing the pre-zero draft of the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

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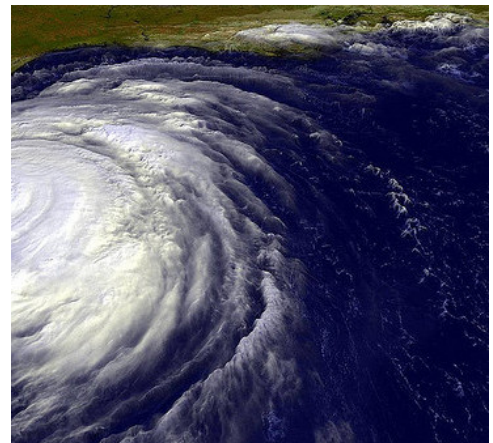
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A team* from Overseas Development Institute and CDKN respond to the Pre-Zero Draft of the *Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, the HFA2.

After 18 months of consultations across six continents, we have the first glimpse of the new post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (DRR). Released on the 8th August 2014 by the Thai and Finnish co-chairs of the Bureau overseeing the process, this [pre-zero draft](#) is the basis of a negotiating document to succeed the existing [Hyogo Framework for Action](#) (HFA). If all goes to plan, it will be agreed in March 2015 at the [3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (WCDDRR) in Sendai, Japan. But how good is this initial offering? What have the co-chairs got right and what do they need to improve?

There are many aspects to applaud, such as the commitment to quantified and concrete disaster reduction targets, a strengthening of the system for monitoring national and global progress, and a reasonably robust and inclusive set of principles. Language on the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups has improved from the HFA, as has the importance of protecting ecosystem services as a way of reducing risk. There are also numerous areas that require strengthening as one would expect of a pre-zero draft, including significant structural and conceptual deficiencies.

Using our [Guide to The Future Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) as an input to this analysis, we have chosen 10 aspects that need improvement when the co-chairs prepare the zero-draft in October 2014. This is a summary of our longer, more extensive review.



- **Developing an ambitious narrative:** The pre-zero draft's preamble includes a well-rehearsed DRR narrative of growing hazard exposure, and lack of attention to underlying risk factors. **The post-2015 DRR agreement needs a refreshed narrative more clearly rooted in development and climate change agendas**, including that DRR is critical for (i) avoiding reversals in development progress, (ii) minimising impoverishment given the Sustainable Development Goal of eliminating extreme poverty, (iii) reducing the impacts of changing climate extremes and; (iv) sustainable economic growth. This change is important because the success of the post-2015 DRR agreement will depend on the extent to which it captures the imagination of those most involved in processes that create or reduce risk, and the way DRR is viewed by development and climate change communities. For a decade, the HFA has suffered from being a niche concern rather than one well-known across governments and the international community. This is an opportunity to reframe DRR in a way that appeals to audiences beyond the DRR faithful.
- **Rethinking the structure:** The pre-zero draft includes five targets, three goals and four 'priorities for action'. We cannot understand the logic of how these fit together, and there appears to be little reference to how one layer supports another. The priorities for action of (i) understanding disaster risk, (ii) strengthening governance to managing disaster risk, (iii) preparedness for response, recovery and reconstruction and (iv) investing in social, economic and environmental resilience, also form the main organising structure for the bulk of the draft. **The goals (see point 3) should become the main organising logic, and each target should be focused on achieving progress in each of the goal areas. The goals themselves should then be used as the main organising framework for the 'implementation section' (Section D)**, recognising that some cross-cutting aspects will be important, such as knowledge, integrated risk governance and resourcing. Additionally, the pre-zero draft needs to clearly state that the five part organising logic of the existing HFA will be superseded, something it is rather vague about.
- **Refocusing the goals:** The goals themselves can be briefly summarised as 'preventing disaster risk creation', 'reducing existing disaster risk' and 'strengthening disaster resilience to absorb losses, minimise impacts and aid recovery'. This formulation does not work for two reasons. Firstly current use of the term resilience includes dimensions of anticipation to reduce risk and minimise risk creation, meaning it should cover all three goals, not just be referred to in the third. Secondly,

the nature of economic growth often involves taking risks, so rather than 'prevent risk creation', 'minimise risk creation' would be a more appealing formula. Instead, building on what is already in the draft and maintaining conceptual coherence, **we recommend that the goals should aim to 'strengthen disaster resilience for sustainable development', by (i) minimising risk creation, (ii) reducing existing risk and (iii) managing residual risk.**

- **Improving progress monitoring and accountability:** The pre-zero draft acknowledges the need to improve the way progress on DRR is monitored, including through alignment with other mechanisms, regular progress reporting, a strengthened evidence base, voluntary peer reviews and co-ordinated action on five headline targets. While the focus on monitoring progress is welcomed, the draft is short on the detail of who needs to be involved in the monitoring and how accountability may emerge. This is tough political territory for a non-binding international agreement, but one widely acknowledged by member states as a major weakness of the HFA. At minimum, **the draft needs to spell out how targets, indicators and monitoring systems will align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – the same language, timeframes and reporting mechanisms.** It should also recognise that a system for accountability can be strengthened by having clear legislative mechanisms at national level, an active civil society on DRR, peer reviews as trialled in Europe and an independent international technical body charged with systematically reviewing DRR evidence on a periodic basis.
- **What about climate change?** While the pre-zero draft flirts with climate change when referring to risk drivers, mainstreaming and the need for mutual reinforcement across frameworks, its absence is conspicuous on three fronts. First, there is no detail on how the post-2015 DRR framework and a climate change agreement can help each other, except for a brief mention of the Cancun Adaptation Framework. 'Loss and damage' for example, where DRR is considered as a key way of avoiding such losses and damages in the 'Warsaw mechanism', is not mentioned. We would assume this is because the co-chairs are scared of political cross-contamination. Second, the IPCC SREX report (2012) broke ground in its summary of the way climate change impacts hazards, vulnerability and exposure, yet there is no mention of how climate change is altering climate extremes or reference to SREX. Given this could be one of the starkest dimensions of the DRR challenge to 2030 and beyond, the omission must be corrected. Third, SREX confirmed that increased concentrations of greenhouse gases are already affecting the frequency and severity of some hazards in some regions, but there is no statement about limiting climate change to 2°C to avoid the most dangerous impacts. **The post-2015 DRR agreement simply cannot duck a thorough treatment of climate change, whatever the politics, when the stakes for poor and vulnerable people are so high.**
- **And conflict?** While conflict is explicitly considered as a risk driver, the draft is weak on the specifics of advancing DRR in fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS). **Conflict and fragility should be tackled more systematically throughout the draft,** to include the need to adopt conflict-sensitive and 'do no harm' approaches to DRR to ensure investments in DRR are sensitive to conflict contexts, and that DRR measures should be built in to efforts to manage and reduce conflict risk. FCAS should be considered as 'special cases'.
- **Financing disaster risk sensitive development:** The draft is very weak in its discussion of finance for DRR, and will need to reference international finance processes associated with climate change and SDGs more specifically, particularly given their relative scale. It will need to make a clearer statement that all financial investments must be sensitive to risk and build resilience, and that governments and international finance should align to support the achievement of the post-2015 DRR agreement's goals, targets and priority areas. There is mention of support to the UN DRR Trust Fund, a UNISDR managed fund, but this will not be a modality to drive funding at scale and may risk proliferation. **A much more integrated approach to support DRR through more mainstream investment in all aspects of sustainable development is required.**
- **A role for vulnerable people?** Consultations have been very clear that the post-2015 DRR framework must promote the empowerment and inclusion of individuals, communities and local institutions in DRR and take gender more seriously. The draft acknowledges this, but is light on detail. **The document needs to say how progress on social and cultural dimensions of DRR (including poverty, gender, age, and disability) will be promoted, accounted for, and by whom.**
- **The role of stakeholders in implementing DRR:** The language of the pre-zero draft on the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders allows for considerable flexibility and encourages local solutions, although it is relatively weak on monitoring and accountability at subnational level. **A clear set of principles or minimum standards for action by specific stakeholder groups would add substance to the post-2015 DRR framework** and ensure the confusion about relative roles identified in the mid-term review of the HFA is reduced.
- **Means of Implementation:** The pre-zero drafts section on 'means of implementation' (section E) is scant, and requires a much more thorough treatment, particularly on the roles of specific stakeholders at different scales and the way that the post-2015 DRR agreement will align with other frameworks and policy processes (climate change, SDGs, World Humanitarian Summit) in a greater level of operational detail. It also includes reference to the post-2015 DRR agreement as being open-ended, something that appears to be rather curious given the changes since HFA was signed in 2005 and the extent to which disaster risk is rapidly shifting. **Limiting the post-2015 DRR framework to a timeline to 2030 (or aligning with the SDGs) would make sense,** especially given the rapid changes being observed in the nature and geography of disaster risk. More thinking is required on the role of UNISDR and its function within the UN system, where greater clarity would

be welcomed, as well as the roles and responsibilities of other international actors including bilateral donors, multi-lateral development banks and regional organisations.

As the co-chairs embark on a series of 'open-ended, informal consultative meetings' with governments and major groups on the pre-zero draft, we urge them to ramp up the level of ambition. October's zero draft must be conceptually coherent, have a strong logic and bold development narrative, recognising that intergovernmental negotiations are likely to erode rather than foster ambition. The zero draft should also present more detail on the way that goals and targets will be reached and recognise the role of the post-2015 DRR agreement in the ecosystem of policy frameworks due in 2015 and early 2016. In October, CDKN and ODI will also be releasing an update to our Guide to the Future Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in advance of the second [Prepcom for the WCDRR](#). This update will add modules on science, ecosystems, accountability and the interface with the SDGs.

See our [full review of the pre-zero draft](#).

See further details on the ODI [website](#) about our work to support the post-2015 DRR agreement.

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