

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Conference “Upscaling ecosystem based disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation investments to reduce disaster risks”, 13 October 2017

According to the recent Global risk landscape report¹, extreme weather events, water crises, major disasters caused by natural hazards, and failure of climate adaptation and mitigation actions are among the 5 top global risks in terms of impact. UN water estimates that 90% of all disasters are water-related: floods, droughts and storm surges. In Europe for instance the key risk is flooding[1]. Climate change is not the sole driver for the increasing frequency and intensity of disasters caused by natural hazards. Lack of integrated management of water and land resources is another key driver. These man-made disasters contribute to damages, losses of lives and displacement of people.

International Day for Disaster Reduction is an opportunity to raise awareness, to promote key messages and to present best practices to prevent creation of new risks and to reduce existing risks. European Commission, UNISDR, UNESCO, Wetlands International and VOICE joined forces to support the Sendai Seven Campaign, aiming at promoting each of the seven targets over seven years, by holding an event in Brussels on 13th October. Overall objective was to present evidence on the multiple benefits and cost-effectiveness of community-managed, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation (Eco-DRR/CCA). There is a general need to increase societal and environmental resilience in the anticipation of increasing disaster risks, through cooperation among different stakeholders at all levels and the need for upscaling investments in Eco-DRR/CCA strategies.

Applying Eco-DRR/CCA means choosing ecosystem-based solutions, such as for example “Building with Nature” and other engineered solutions which include ecosystem values and services. Ecosystem-based solutions contribute to disaster and climate risk management, increase community resilience and reduce vulnerability of ecosystems and people and their displacement.

While the multiple benefits offered by Eco-DRR/CCA solutions² are well known and many successful examples are available in the European context and outside, there is a commonly experienced “**Implementation Gap**”. There is sufficient science-based knowledge on design, planning and finance widely available, but the upscaling and take up by authorities is lacking. It is therefore crucial that ecosystem-based approaches are fully integrated into strategies on climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development. These strategies do not replace traditional disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures, but can complement them.

KEY MESSAGES

IMPLEMENTATION OF ECO-DRR/CCA CAN BE FOSTERED THROUGH STANDARDIZATION OF EXISTING PRINCIPLES AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT

- **Embedding Eco-DRR/CCA into all relevant sectors, ministries and national plans** for local level implementation. There should be a coordinated effort at the central level to achieve a strong national and sub-national policy engagement, to scale up ecosystem-based approaches from local to national level. Where institutional structure is lacking, the **role of civil society organisations** is essential and must be supported.

¹ Global Risks Report 2017, World Economic Forum

² (ie. sustainable ecosystem management can increase resilience to climate change and disaster risk and at the same time contribute to sustainable livelihoods by maintaining the ecosystem services that provide clean water, food and fiber; hydrological regulation, supporting poverty reduction; heritage conservation, and preservation of local identities)

- **DRR cannot only be a humanitarian concern**, but it should be part of development cooperation to be effective.
- **Strong coordination between focal points for multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)** such as the Paris Agreement, Ramsar Convention, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), UNFCCC, ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is needed.
- **National, Regional and Global (ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement context) Adaptation Plans and NBSAPs** can be effective instruments for mainstreaming Eco-DRR/CCA into development processes and plans and into sectoral policies and could mutually reinforce each level.
- SFDRR (Sendai Framework for DRR), Haichi targets, SDGs **indicators** can help monitoring and evaluation of Eco-DRR/CCA
- Enhancing **capacity building** of governments that would lead to coherent policies and consistent vulnerability assessment should be a priority.

PRODUCTION OF RELIABLE SCIENCE-BASED EVIDENCE BASE AND DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESS CASES FOR ECO-DRR APPROACHES

- Private sector and other major stakeholders need to **understand the social and economic value of Eco-DRR/CCA solutions** and ensure the speed up of their implementation.
- Need of a **clear communication on the benefits of investing in DRR** to incentivize and to encourage the implementation of ecosystem-based approaches when appropriate.
- Develop business cases for specific Eco-DRR solutions which have been piloted and researched.
- **Contextualization** is crucial through an assessment covering the landscape at relevant scales, analysing the root causes of disaster risk caused by natural hazards, for understanding the local ecosystem and its services and for mapping opportunities for EcoDRR/CCA solutions on the basis of services that can be utilized and strengthened, available space and availability of materials. This will deliver important inputs for selecting feasible cost-effective solutions. This is important within the African Caribbean & Pacific (ACP) Group –EU context, as reflected in the ACP Compendium of Risk Knowledge which identifies and analyses existing risk data at the local, national and all-ACP levels³.
- Promote **sharing and growing of the evidence base** by utilizing existing open source and open data structures, but finance additional research for information tools for specific audiences and for scoping, design and implementation phases.
- Promote a better understanding of (required management to maintain) the long term effectivity of Eco-DRR/CCA solutions on relevant scales in delivering (minimum levels of) required services as these solutions develop dynamic behaviour due to the inherent cyclic nature of living components of such solutions.

ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS AND PROMOTION OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS APPROACH

- Adopting an **integrated, inclusive, people-centered, multi-hazard and landscape approach** to overcome barriers by sector and contribute to effective risk management by connecting all stakeholders involved, starting with the communities at risk (including the most vulnerable eg. elderly, disabled, orphans) in the landscape.
- **Eco-DRR/CCA are cross-disciplinary fields** and require effective intersectoral collaboration and multi governance, engagement and coordination of multiple stakeholders such as engineers, academics, local and indigenous communities, civil society and the private sector. Need to take into account ecosystems/biodiversity, adaptation, development, CO2 reduction and disaster (risk) reduction when designing interventions that deliver multiple benefits.

³ <http://www.acp.int/fr/content/acp-compendium-risk-knowledge>
https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/acp-compendium-risk-knowledge-released-world-conference-disaster-risk-reduction_en

- Local authorities should **engage local communities** through representatives of communities considered under UN Major Groups and other stakeholders, especially persons with disabilities, refugees, displaced persons, migrants, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups, in national and local strategies for DRR.
- Promoting and strengthening **inclusive participatory processes** right at the beginning of the adaptation efforts and throughout the planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases by including local risk perceptions and community based solutions (e.g. ecosystem-based or hybrid measures and optimized initiatives on water governance as part of disaster risk management strategies and investments).
- **Natural heritage resources** contribute to the proper functioning of ecosystems and for the delivery of vital ecosystem goods and services. Natural heritage sites can contribute towards reducing the effects of disasters and represent powerful platforms to raise awareness on climate change impacts on human societies, cultural diversity, biodiversity and ecosystem services at national and international levels.
- No partner alone can achieve scale and impact. **Partnerships** between public authorities, private sector, academic institutions and civil society have proven to be effective in mobilizing innovative DRR measures that reconcile different stakeholder demands and foster innovation, for example combining use of hard (grey) and soft (green) infrastructure.

UPSCALING RISK-INFORMED INVESTMENTS

- Maintaining and restoring ecosystems, like wetlands, should be considered a **major opportunity for investment of climate finance** including by the private sector, which could have a great impact setting examples of and upscaling nature based solutions.
- **Increasing risk-informed investments** in the public and private sector to build climate and disaster resilience: as stated in the Sendai framework, public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment. They can drive innovation, economic growth and job creation. Such measures are cost-effective and instrumental to save lives, prevent and reduce losses, reduce risk of displacement and ensure rapid recovery and rehabilitation. Providing risk reduction related information to the investment community for inherently dynamic Eco-DRR solutions needs additional research.
- There is a **major gap in terms of implementation at scale**, and investments in ‘business as usual’ solutions in terms of hard infrastructure and coastal defence prevail. As over 90% disasters are water-related, ecosystems such as wetlands, the water regulators in the landscape, deserve much higher attention in DRR strategies and investments. Sustainable land and water management practices and integrated landscape approaches in drylands, such as agroforestry and assisted natural regeneration, offer potential for rapid low cost solutions for upscaling Eco DRR/CCA and re-greening degraded landscapes.
- **Funding should also be subject to appropriate timeframes** which reflect the different potentials of DRR activities within humanitarian versus long-term development programmes.

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