

Disasters and resilience in the SDGs
An analysis of the Co-Chairs' Working Document
prepared for 5-9 May Session of the Open Working Group
23 April 2014

Disasters have an overwhelming human, environmental and financial toll on development and poverty eradication efforts. This was clearly recognised in *The Future we Want* which called for 'disaster risk reduction and the building of resilience to disasters to be addressed with a renewed sense of urgency in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication' (para 186).

On 17 April, the Co-Chairs of the Open Working Group (OWG), Ambassadors Kamau and Kőrösi, produced a new working document to guide deliberations at the eleventh session of the OWG. This document reduces the number of Focus Areas from 19 to 16, uses language more typical of targets, and lists which states have publically supported each target.

This document has been written to propose refinements and improvements to the targets on disasters and resilience, to propose new targets where necessary and to encourage states to express their support for these targets to the Co-Chairs, as they finalise their annex on goals and targets.

Delegations are invited to send any additions to the Secretariat by 30 April 2014: email to montes-de-oca@un.org, copy to li39@un.org.

Focus area 1: Poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality

We fully support inclusion of resilience and DRR under a poverty goal as disasters play a major role in pushing households below the poverty line. However, we would like to adapt the language as follows:

- 1.d) Build resilience of ~~the poor~~ *people* and reduce by x% ~~deaths~~ *social, household* and economic losses related to disasters.

Disaster mortality is a highly imperfect metric for human cost as it neglects the many physical, social, economic and psychological impacts that disasters have on survivors – many of which are long term impacts. It is likely to continue the focus on major disasters, rather than small-scale but frequent disasters which cumulatively have greater impact and which are a cause of relentless attrition for poor people. We propose 'social losses' because this will provide a more accurate description of direct human impact by including numbers of people injured, displaced, made homeless and directly affected in other ways, as well as working days lost (to represent the impact on livelihoods), and school days lost (to represent the longer-term impact on poverty).

This also includes a target for 'household losses' which is included in order to increase the focus on poor people, who bear a higher burden of disasters as their wealth is often more based in physical assets which are vulnerable to disasters, and who have reduced financial protection This could be measured as the ratio of household losses to household income, or the number of people pushed into poverty as a result of disasters.

A further target is needed to mainstream risk reduction into development planning. There is a huge amount of evidence which shows that disasters can derail development, and therefore it is important that development plans at every level include risk assessment; this should be undertaken in a participatory way, as there is equally strong evidence that risk reduction is best achieved when involving those most at-risk.

By 2030, all development plans and poverty reduction strategies - at the national, sub-national and local level - include risk reduction measures based on local participatory risk assessment.

Focus Area 2: Sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition

We fully support the references to drought preparedness policies (f) and climate-smart agriculture (g). A change is required to (g) to ensure that agriculture can withstand the gradual impacts of climate change, as well as extreme weather:

(g) Achieve climate-smart agriculture that is resilient and adaptable to all climate change impacts including slow onset, extreme weather and natural disasters.

Focus Area 6: Water and sanitation

We fully support inclusion of DRR under a water goal as the majority of disasters and losses come from hydro-meteorological events. However, we would like to adapt the language as follows, for the same reasons as explained in Focus Area 1 above:

6.h Reduce by x% ~~deaths~~ social, household and economic losses caused by water-related disasters.

We also propose a new target, which focuses on the particular need to have effective water, drainage and sanitation services to reduce the probability and impact of a water-related disaster.

By 2030, all water, drainage and sanitation infrastructure built to and operated at locally-appropriate hazard-resistant standards.

Focus Area 8: Economic growth, employment and infrastructure

We are concerned that the reference to disaster risk reduction has been removed from the previous Focus Area on **Infrastructure**, and the potential target has been weakened with only a reference to 'sustainable infrastructure'. The target should clearly specify that infrastructure needs to be resilient to disasters. We therefore propose a new target as follows:

By 2030, all new infrastructure investment over \$x (including energy, communications, transport, housing, public buildings, schools, health centres etc) built to locally-appropriate hazard-resistant standards.

A key indicator for such a target would be the number of days function of infrastructure lost due to disasters.

We would also like a stronger link between disasters and **Economic growth**; there is currently a disconnect between national economic promotion and growth policies and disaster risk management strategies yet the drive for economic growth can expose countries to more risk, as has been seen in Thailand, India and elsewhere¹ and [research](#) finds that a major uninsured disaster causes a short term drop in economic growth of 0.6-1.0% and a cumulative loss of two to three times this magnitude. We therefore propose a new target as follows:

By 2030, increase by x% of private and public investment being inclusive and resilient to disasters and climate change.

¹ See UNISDR Global Assessment Report 2013 Chapter 14

This target would stimulate increases in numbers of national and investment-based disaster risk assessments, domestic revenue allocated to risk-smart development, numbers of investments using longer-term forecasting for climate and other risks and longer periods of return, the involvement of the private sector at national disaster reduction platforms, and comprehensive risk assessments of industrial and economic zones.

Focus area 10: Sustainable cities and human settlements

We fully support the inclusion of disasters under a goal on human settlements as they concentrate the exposure of people and assets to disasters; many are particularly vulnerable as they are located in coastal areas and flood plains. We suggest a stronger target as follows:

(e) By 2020, every human settlement with a population greater than 250,000 will have urban plans and codes to build resilience to disasters and climate change.

Suggested indicators include numbers of risk-smart urban development policies and plans, numbers of effective building regulations enforced, percentage of at-risk population with access to adequate hazard-resistant shelters/safe places, number of days of function of infrastructure (including energy, communications, transport, public buildings, schools, health centres etc) lost due to disasters.

Focus Area 12: Climate change

We are pleased to see the inclusion of target (b) to build resilience and adaptive capacity to climate induced hazards in all vulnerable countries but are extremely disappointed that a key reference to disaster risk reduction from the previous Focus Areas document has been removed. This should be reinserted, as follows:

Reduce the damage caused by climate-induced and other natural hazards through disaster risk reduction.

A further target should be included, and possibly added to target c):

By 2030, all countries have developed and implemented science-based, economy-wide and participatory national climate risk assessments.

Focus Area 15: Means of Implementation

We strongly support the inclusion of the need to build capacity in developing countries to support national plans in disaster prevention and reduction capacity, but would also extend this to building capacity at district and local level, as follows:

(t) develop and implement capacity building programmes in developing countries, especially LDCs, in support of the national, *district and local* plans for implementing sustainable development goals, including in agriculture, water, energy, health as well as in disaster prevention and reduction capacity and sustainable natural resources management.

Comparison of new working document with previous Focus Areas document

The document includes two strong new targets, under Poverty and Means of Implementation:

Focus area 1: Poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality:

(d) Build resilience of the poor and reduce by x% deaths and economic losses related to disasters.¹

Focus area 15. Means of implementation/Global partnership for sustainable development:

(t) develop and implement capacity building programmes in developing countries, especially LDCs, in support of the national plans implementing sustainable development goals, including in agriculture, water, energy, health as well as in disaster prevention and reduction capacity and sustainable natural resources management.²

The document strengthens three targets in Agriculture/Food, Water and Cities:

Focus Area 2: Sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition:

(f) all countries have in place sustainable land-use policies by 2020 and all drought-prone countries develop and implement drought preparedness policies by 2020³

(g) Achieve climate-smart agriculture that is resilient and adaptable to extreme weather including drought, climate change and natural disasters.⁴

Previously there was looser language on drought which did not refer to preparedness and 'strengthening resilience of farming systems and food supplies to climate change'

Focus Area 6: Water and sanitation:

(h) decrease by x% mortality and serious injuries and decrease economic losses caused by water-related disasters, by 2030⁵

Previously: 'reducing risks and impacts of water-related disasters'

Focus area 10. Sustainable cities and human settlements:

(e) by 2020, increase by x% the number of cities adopting and implementing policies and plans towards resilience and adaptation to climate change and natural disasters⁶

Previously: 'strengthening resilience to climate change and natural disasters'

The document leaves one target unchanged in Climate Change:

Focus Area 12: Climate change:

(b) build resilience and adaptive capacity to climate induced hazards in all vulnerable countries⁷

The document weakens a target in Infrastructure and deletes a target in Climate Change:

Focus area 8: Economic growth, employment and infrastructure:

(g) develop sustainable infrastructure accessible to all⁸, with attention to needs of countries in special situations⁹, and by 2030 provide access for 100% of rural populations to basic infrastructure and services¹⁰

Previously: 'planning and building resilient infrastructure including for disaster risk reduction.'

Focus Area 12: Climate change:

Previously this focus area included the following issue, which has been deleted: 'reducing the damage caused by climate-induced and other natural hazards through disaster risk reduction'

There remain no targets under other Focus Areas: Health, Education, Gender, Energy, Industrialisation and Equality, Sustainable Consumption and Production, Oceans, Ecosystems, Peaceful societies and rule of law.

¹ France/Germany/Switzerland; Mexico/Peru; USA/Canada/Israel; HLP Report; Colombia/Guatemala; Ethiopia; Denmark/Ireland/Norway

² References scattered throughout the compendium of proposals

³ Iceland on behalf of Friends group; Africa Group, Australia/UK/Netherlands, Bulgaria/Croatia, Colombia/Guatemala, Italy/Spain/Turkey, Nicaragua/Brazil, Niger, Peru/Mexico, Qatar

⁴ Argentina/Bolivia/Ecuador, France/Germany/Switzerland, Mexico/Peru

⁵ Australia/Netherlands/UK, US/Canada/Israel, France/Germany/Switzerland, Bhutan/Thailand/Vietnam, Mexico/Peru, Pakistan, Egypt, Japan, Jordan

⁶ Australia/Netherlands/UK, Norway/Ireland/Denmark, France/Germany/Switzerland, Pakistan, Belarus, Greece, Benin on behalf of LDCs, Peru/Mexico, Croatia/Bulgaria

⁷ Sweden; Cyprus/Singapore/UAE; Greece; Montenegro/Slovenia; France/Germany/Switzerland; Trinidad and Tobago (CARICOM); Mexico/Peru; Zambia (Southern Africa Group).

⁸ Pakistan, India, Brazil/Nicaragua, AOSIS, CARICOM, Pacific SIDS, Ireland/Norway/Denmark, Benin on behalf of LDCs, China/Indonesia/Kazakhstan, Australia/Netherlands/UK, Ecuador/Bolivia/Argentina, Guatemala/Colombia, Sweden, France/Germany/Switzerland, Zambia on behalf of Southern Africa States, Bulgaria/Croatia, Poland/Romania, Peru/Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iran, supported by Major Group of Children & Youth, Women, Local Authorities

⁹ LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, Africa Group, Ecuador/Bolivia/Argentina

¹⁰ Pakistan, Ethiopia, Ireland/Norway/Denmark; indicators could include measures of infrastructure coverage nationally and rural/urban, including transport, communications, water and sanitation, and clean and modern energy (the latter two also being covered in separate goals).