

A photograph of a person standing in floodwaters during a heavy rainstorm. The person is wearing a striped shirt and purple pants, holding a white umbrella. The background shows a wooden building and a tree trunk. The water is murky and splashing around the person's feet.

Minimum Standards for local climate-smart disaster risk reduction

Version 2
November 2013

Acknowledgements

The Minimum Standards have been developed through a collaborative effort between many individuals and organisations; version 1 (2012) of the document was built on valuable feedback received from the Indonesian and Philippines local partners of the *Partners for Resilience* (PfR) Alliance. This version 2 further incorporates recommendations received from various PfR partners in Africa and Central America as well as ideas generated during the Partners for Resilience Working Conference, September 2013.

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The Climate Centre would appreciate requests and comments directed to climatecentre@climatecentre.org

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Cover photo: More intense rainfall events is among the many effects of changing climate that are already being felt by people in many parts of the world – here in Indonesia.

Photo: Climate Centre

Introduction

Climate change is increasing the risk of extreme events and disasters.¹ While disaster risk reduction (DRR) offers an important opportunity to adapt to current climate variability, in order to be successful, DRR efforts must also take into account changing climate-related risks in the medium to long-term. Many national climate change adaptation plans consider the need to plan over various timescales and acknowledge the essential role of local communities² in addressing these changing risks.

The *Minimum Standards for climate-smart disaster risk reduction* were created to serve as an essential bridge between national climate policy and local capacities for DRR. The standards are not idealized solutions, but rather practical approaches to implementing climate-smart DRR activities in a way that is achievable by many communities with relatively limited external support.

The Minimum Standards are presented in two tables:

The first table outlines standards meant to guide local leaders, oftentimes selected by their community (e.g. Red Cross local disaster preparedness volunteers), to inform and facilitate resilience building across the wider community.

The second table focuses on the role of national and provincial civil society organizations (CSOs) in providing supplemental guidance for improving the flow of information between various types of scientific 'knowledge centres' and vulnerable communities, to enable implementation of climate-smart DRR.

For local actors and their counterparts in CSOs, the Minimum Standards are intended as a practical tool, allowing them to integrate changing climate risks into their efforts to support communities reduce risk to extreme events and disasters. When the Minimum Standards are met, local DRR actions can be considered to be climate smart and contribute to climate change adaptation.

This lends importance to the Minimum Standards for national actors as well, who may use the standards to guide integration of community-level action on DRR into national adaptation and climate risk management strategies. National strategies that consider these standards will be able to go to scale, knowing that they are realistic and achievable. Overall, these standards provide assurance that DRR goes beyond business as usual and truly addresses changing climate-related risks.

The minimum standards are based on ample local experience and consultation, including lessons learned during the first years of the Partners for Resilience program³, the largest program of its kind focusing on local-level climate-smart DRR. **The Minimum Standards are a living document** that should continue to be discussed, tested, revised and validated through local-level activities around the world.

¹ Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation. SREX findings have been formally approved by all UN member governments. Available online at <http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/>

² "Communities" are groups of people who interact frequently and share location or identity. Neighborhood groups, religious groups, and kinship groups are some examples. They work through informal networks based on trust, reciprocity, and social norms; in this way, communities can help their members by sharing and confronting common risks and opportunities ([World Bank Development Report 2014](#)).

³ In 2011, five humanitarian, development and environment organizations, with support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, formed an alliance called "Partners for Resilience" (PFR, <http://www.partnersforresilience.nl/>) to reduce the impact of hazards on vulnerable communities in nine countries around the world and generate lessons on best practices for strengthening community resilience.

**Climate-smart DRR activities to be implemented by the community
with facilitation and assistance from Civil Society Organisations (see CSO roles in next table)**

	Minimum standard	Actions
1.1	Community is aware of changes in weather patterns, and that some weather-related risks in the future are likely to be different from the past	<p>Community assigns a group (e.g. a "Red Cross Action Team" or similar, usually supported by a larger CSO) to assist in the following steps to have appropriate climate-smart risk reduction measures and plans</p> <p>Community seeks the latest climate change information for their country from a knowledgeable person/institution (e.g. observed trends as well as projections for future sea level rise and how average and extreme temperature and rainfall are expected to change)</p> <p>Community (assisted by CSO, where needed) reflects on how changing risk patterns may affect decision-making processes and planning for their community, so future investments are better protected from emerging risks and more extreme events</p>
1.2	Community receives and understands locally available weather information, and households know appropriate actions to take when inclement weather is approaching	<p>A core group of community members (e.g. a volunteer DRR team) are assigned to proactively check or receive daily weather forecasts (through media/internet or mobile phone) including 1-5 days weather forecasts and hydrological information</p> <p>When the forecast signals dangerous weather, a phased plan of action is activated with the community (see 1.4 on contingency planning, and 2.3 on CSO assistance in helping define which 'dangerous weather' may cause impacts)</p>
1.3	Community accesses seasonal forecasts and understands the implications of this information (see role of CSOs, next table)	<p>The community maintains contact with CSO and/or other relevant partners that may help interpret seasonal forecasts and appropriate preparedness actions to take</p> <p>When seasonal forecasts with a relevant signal (e.g. more or less rain than normal in the coming three months) is released, the community is informed by their national counterpart with acknowledged skills (e.g. CSO – see 2.3), of the forecast's relevance, its range of uncertainty, and its connection to a local contingency plan. A contingency plan is activated based on this information</p>

1.4	<p>Community carries out 'vulnerability and risk assessments' that take due note of observed changes in weather, seasonality and hazard patterns and uses the information to develop local action plans</p>	<p>Community solicits scientific information from relevant sources and knowledge centres to compare with local observations (make use of CSO to establish links when needed, see 2.3)</p> <p>Within the action plans, the community identifies what actions it can take with existing capacities and for what actions it needs external support (from local governments, knowledge centres, national governments etc.); this helps prioritise advocacy needs (see 1.6)</p> <p>Community develops a longer term risk reduction plan to address key risks, including potential long-term adaptation needs to gradual, certain changes (e.g. sea level rise, salt intrusion) as well as a contingency plan for unexpected climate related risks (e.g. new extreme events, cyclones hitting new areas)</p> <p>Additional Resources (links): How can climate change be considered in Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments? Community early warning systems: guiding principles Contingency Planning Guide Early Warning Early Action Handbook Community-based Risk Screening tool - Cristal Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis</p>
1.5	<p>Community monitors and evaluates approaches to disaster risk reduction and learns from experience in order to adjust plans to adapt to climate variability and change</p>	<p>Regular (annual?) evaluations of the use of 1-5 day weather forecasts and seasonal forecasts (where possible, see 2.3). When necessary, adjustments in the applications of these early warnings can be made, to make sure the whole community is well informed in time and does take action when the contingency plan is activated</p> <p>After action is taken, community evaluates effectiveness of action and makes adjustments in the overall risk reduction plan accordingly</p> <p>Additional resources: Learning from the Past: Best Practices and Lessons Learned</p>
1.6	<p>Community advocates for its adaptation needs towards appropriate climate-related authorities and stakeholders (e.g. agricultural extension services, meteorological services, water management and health authorities, policy makers, etc.)</p>	<p>On the capacity needs identified in section 1.4. communities have developed and implemented a plan on how to reach to external actors for support</p>

**Role of national and provincial civil society organizations (CSO)
in supporting communities to implement climate-smart DRR**

	Minimum standard	Actions
2.1	<p>Within the CSO, knowledge on changing climate risk is used to adjust work plans and strategies</p>	<p>Assign focal person(s) to gradually build CSO capacity (incl. internal trainings) to access, use and act on weather and climate information relevant for the CSO's work</p> <p>Conduct an initial assessment of current climate trends and projections for the future – based on existing credible internet sources – and use the findings to identify relevant changes to the CSO's areas of work</p> <p>Subsequently, CSO establishes sustainable contacts with relevant national climate knowledge centres, like meteorological offices; directly or via participation in existing platforms like 'national climate committee' or 'national disaster management committee'. Use the contacts to further update CSO plans and their support to vulnerable communities</p> <p>CSO hold annual review meetings to evaluate how climate risk factors are integrated into its policies, operations and tools etc.</p> <p>Additional resources: Climate Guide: getting started Six Entry points for considering Climate Change in Programs Climate-related Stakeholders: Questions to Ask Them Climate Smart Disaster Risk Management</p>
2.2	<p>A core group of staff and volunteers can facilitate dialogue on how natural climate variability and climate change affects the CSO's work – and can explain the basic causes, trends, projections and impacts to communities</p>	<p>Ensure that a core group of staff and volunteers are well-versed in the basic science of climate variability (e.g. El Niño and La Niña, where relevant⁴) and climate change, knows relevant information sources of national/regional forecasts and projections, and know where to get additional information/help</p> <p>The core group train and inform colleagues and partners in impacts of climate change and practical approaches to climate-smart DRR</p> <p>Additional Resources: Climate Centre's Climate Training Kit IRI Climate & Society MapRoom Background Information on El Niño and La Niña</p>

⁴ Availability of *seasonal* forecasts is depending on *how and where in the world* El Niño and La Niña events are influencing the regional weather patterns – see here for [typical consequences of El Niño](#) and [La Niña](#)

2.3	<p>CSO can guide communities on how to consider seasonal forecast and climate risk information in their community action plans including how to define 'Early Actions' that can be triggered by specific 'Early Warning' signals</p>	<p>Ensure that national CSO have staff/volunteers well trained in understanding and using seasonal forecasts and know when and how to interpret and explain the forecasts, and likely implications to local communities and stakeholders, including advice on activating contingency plans (see 1.3)</p> <p>CSO establishes an active communication channel with producers of forecast information (e.g. meteorological agencies, universities etc.) and users (communities and CSO) to improve the information flow (language, advice), understanding and triggers for actions in relation to different warning signals (when is it 'dangerous weather' that should trigger pre-defined actions)</p> <p>CSO establishes collaboration with knowledge centres and organisations with expertise in locally appropriate long-term adaptation options (agriculture diversification, health interventions etc.) that can ensure the CSOs provides quality adaptation support to vulnerable communities</p> <p>Additional resources: Climate Centre webpage on Early Warning Early Action FAO's Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook</p>
2.4	<p>CSO documents community-level climate-smart interventions and share these for replication and to influence policy and practice, where appropriate</p>	<p>Produce case studies documenting good or promising practises in climate-smart DRR, and profile them (inter)nationally (see 2.5 below)</p> <p>Additional resources: Communication and Climate Change</p>
2.5	<p>CSO makes use of dialogue opportunities (e.g. meetings, national days for actions, conferences) to make relevant authorities and agencies aware of local adaptation needs in order to shape adaptation policies and resource allocation so they build the resilience of the most vulnerable people</p>	<p>Use experiences and cases to initiate or reinforce dialogue with government about climate change and DRR: focus dialogue on the needs of most vulnerable people to be supported in adapting to more uncertain and extreme weather conditions</p> <p>Additional resources: How to engage with National Adaptation Plans Climate Centre webpage on Climate Change Advocacy</p>

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