Minimum Standards for local climate-smart disaster risk reduction

Version 2
November 2013

RED CROSS/RED CRESCENT CLIMATE CENTRE
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
The Netherlands Red Cross
CDKN Climate & Development Knowledge Network

Acknowledgements

These Minimum Standards have been developed through a collaborative effort: Version 1 of the document was created in partnership with the Indonesian and Philippines local partners of the Partners for Resilience (PfR) Alliance and launched at the Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR (AMCDRR) in Indonesia, October 2012. This second version of the Minimum Standards has been developed based on feedback from civil society organization and government representatives from around the world, and testing in policy dialogues and practical programme planning within the PfR network in Asia, Africa and Central America and most recently at the PfR global Working Conference in September 2013. We are grateful to all civil society, government and international organisation representatives that have been part of the consultation process to date and encourage all users to continue providing suggestions and evidence of impact to help shape the next iteration of the Minimum Standards, which remain a living document.

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

Suggested citation

Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, 2013: Minimum Standards for local climate-smart disaster risk reduction. Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Available online at
www.climatecentre.org/minimumstandards

Cover photos

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 communities[2] in addressing these changing risks.

With this in mind, the *Minimum Standards for local climate-smart disaster risk reduction* were developed as a **practical checklist to help local community leaders and DRR practitioners** ensure their risk reduction efforts are climate-smart and contribute to climate change adaptation, meaning that these efforts consider the future risk patterns induced by a changing climate, often including rising uncertainties. The Minimum Standards are not idealized solutions but rather practical approaches to implement DRR activities in a way that is achievable by communities with relatively limited external support.

At the same time, the Minimum Standards can support national actors to integrate achievable community-level action on DRR into national adaptation and climate risk management strategies. National strategies that consider the Minimum Standards will be able to go to scale and, as donors increasingly require programmes to consider climate-related risks, the Minimum Standards can help establish that strategies are realistic and do indeed go beyond business as usual.

The Minimum Standards are presented in two tables. Each Minimum Standard is supported by practical 'actions' to guide implementation.

Table 1 outlines Minimum Standards for implementation of climate-smart DRR activities at the community level.

Table 2 outlines Minimum Standards for national and provincial civil society organizations (CSOs) – or relevant local government authorities – to support communities implement climate-smart DRR activities.

The **Minimum Standards will remain a living document** that should continue to be discussed, tested, revised and validated through local-level activities around the world. They reflect local experience and extensive consultation including lessons learned from the Partners for Resilience programme[3] – the largest programme of its kind focusing on local-level climate-smart DRR – as well as suggestions from wide range of global civil society, government and international organisations.

A collection of practical tools to support implementation of the Minimum Standards is available at www.climatecentre.org/minimumstandards. This collection will be updated as new good practices emerge from CSOs implementing DRR and climate change adaptation programmes. We encourage all users to continue providing evidence of impact, and suggestions for expanding the collection of guidance tools, in order to help shape the next iteration of the Minimum Standards.

Kindly send comments, submissions and requests for further information to the Climate Centre at climatecentre@climatecentre.org.

---

[1] IPCC Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation. IPCC SREX findings have been formally endorsed by all UN member governments. Available online at 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, www.partnersforresilience.nl/) to reduce the impact of hazards on vulnerable communities around the world and generate lessons on best practices for strengthening community resilience. The programme involves 9 countries, 3 continents, 70 NGO partners, and over EUR 40 million, making it the largest programme of its kind.

Table 1: Minimum Standards for community level implementation of climate-smart DRR

	Minimum Standard	Actions[4]
1.1	**Community is aware of changes in weather patterns**, and recognizes that some weather-related risks in the future are likely to be different from the past	Community assigns a 'core group' to assist in the following steps Community seeks the latest climate change information for their country from a knowledgeable person or institution (such as observed trends as well as projections how average and extreme temperatures, rainfall and sea levels are projected to change) Community reflects on how changing risk patterns may affect decision-making processes and planning for their community
1.2	**Community receives and understands locally available *weather* information**, and **households know appropriate actions to take** when inclement weather is approaching	The 'core group' proactively checks weather forecasts and hydrological information, through media/internet or mobile phone When the forecast signals dangerous weather, the entire community is warned and a phased plan of action is activated with the community
1.3	In places where credible seasonal forecasts are available[5] the **community has a reliable relationship with an organisation that can help access and make use of the forecast**	The community maintains contact with an organisation (CSO or other relevant partner) able to assist in accessing and interpreting seasonal forecasts and defining an appropriate contingency plan When a seasonal forecast with a relevant signal is released (e.g. more or less rain than normal expected in the coming three months), the community activates its local contingency plan

[4] Consult www.climatecentre.org/minimumstandards for a collection of tools applicable to the different Minimum Standards
[5] Availability of skilled *seasonal* forecasts depends on *how and where in the world* El Niño and La Niña events influence regional weather patterns – see here for typical consequences of El Niño and La Niña

1.4	**Community carries out 'vulnerability and risk assessments'** that note observed changes in weather, seasonality and hazard patterns **and uses the information to develop local action plans**	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 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)
1.5	**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	Community seeks (with CSO assistance, where needed) scientific information from relevant sources and knowledge centres to compare with local observations Community evaluates on an annual basis the use of weather forecasts, seasonal forecasts (where applicable[5]) and traditional or indigenous knowledge to improve observation of climate change and its impacts. 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 After action is taken, community evaluates effectiveness of action and makes adjustments in the overall risk reduction plan
1.6	**Community advocates for its adaptation needs** towards appropriate climate-related authorities and stakeholders	On the needs and capacities identified in section 1.4 and 1.5. communities develop and implement a plan on how to reach to external actors for support to long-term adaptation (e.g. agricultural extension services, meteorological services, water management and health authorities, policy makers, etc.)

Table 2: Minimum Standards for civil society organizations' (CSO) support to local implementation of climate-smart DRR

	Minimum Standard	Actions
2.1	Within the CSO, **knowledge on changing climate risks is used to adjust work plans** and strategies	CSO assigns focal person(s) to gradually build capacity (incl. internal trainings) to access, use and act on weather and climate information relevant for the CSO's work CSO conducts 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 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 the support to vulnerable communities CSO holds annual review meetings to evaluate how climate risk factors are integrated into its policies, operations and tools etc.
2.2	**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	CSO ensures that a core group of staff and/or volunteers are well-versed in the basic science of climate variability (e.g. El Niño and La Niña, where relevant) and climate change and knows relevant information sources of national/regional forecasts and projections, and know where to get additional information/help The core group trains and informs colleagues and partners about impacts of climate change and practical approaches to climate-smart DRR

2.3	**CSO can guide communities on how to consider seasonal forecast and climate risk information in their community action plans** and on how to define 'Early Actions' to be triggered by 'Early Warning' signals	Where skilled seasonal forecasts are available, CSO ensures that national staff/volunteers well trained in understanding and using seasonal forecasts and know when and how to interpret and explain the forecasts, as well as the likely implications to local communities and stakeholders, including advice on activating contingency plans CSO establishes an active communication channel with producers of forecasts (e.g. meteorological agencies, universities etc.) and users of forecasts (e.g. communities) and works to ensure information is made available in a locally appropriate format and appropriate triggers for early actions to take at different timescales, are defined in response to warning signals CSO establishes collaboration with knowledge centres and organisations with expertise in locally appropriate long-term adaptation options (agriculture diversification, health interventions etc.) to help ensure the CSO provides appropriate adaptation support to vulnerable communities
2.4	**CSO is able to document community-level climate-smart interventions** to influence policy and practice, where appropriate	CSO produces evidence-based case studies documenting good or promising practises in climate-smart DRR, and has a strategy for disseminating the case studies at key national, regional and/or global fora
2.5	**CSO makes use of dialogue opportunities** (e.g. meetings, national days for actions, conferences) to raise awareness of local adaptation needs, to shape local and national policies, and to ensure resource allocation reaches the most vulnerable people	CSO uses 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 Emphasize that activities supported by CSO aim to meet Minimum Standards for local climate-smart DRR, ensuring DRR efforts go beyond business as usual