

6 Conflict and fragility

Fragile and conflict-affected states experience shocks and stresses related to natural hazards simultaneously with the challenges of conflict and fragility. Much can be done to reduce, manage and prepare for natural disasters in more appropriate – or in some cases more interconnected – ways. The successor to the HFA must do more to support effective DRR in these complex contexts by being explicit about the need to support governance strengthening as a starting point to building disaster resilience.

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Many disasters occur in fragile and conflict-affected states, accounting for a high proportion of disaster-affected populations each year¹²⁹

50%

Between 2005 and 2009, more than 50% of people impacted by natural hazard-related disasters lived in fragile and conflict-affected states.



80%

In some years the figure was more than 80%.

Recorded data shows that between 1999 and 2004

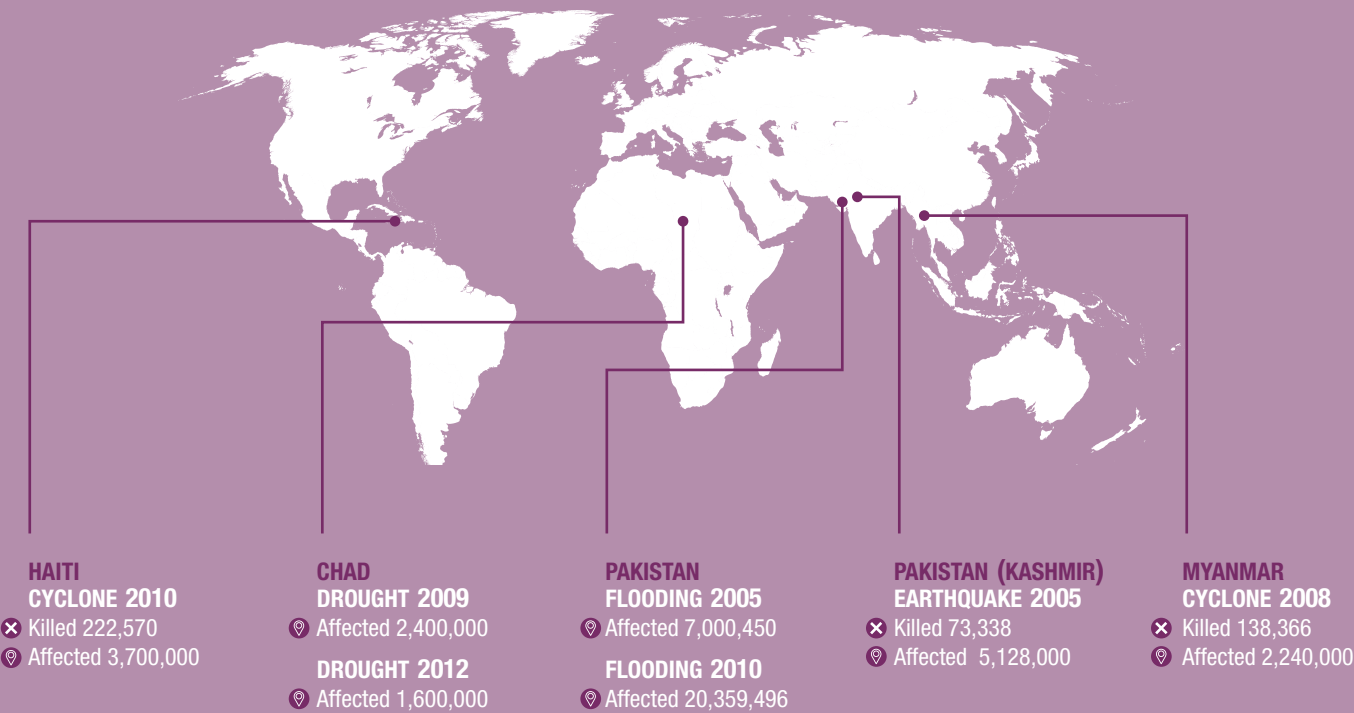
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disasters associated with natural hazards were in contexts affected by complex political emergencies.¹³⁰ But the gaps in evidence are immense – the numbers of people affected and killed by disasters in fragile and conflict-affected contexts are likely to be considerably underestimated because of the difficulty of undertaking accurate research in affected areas.

Investments in DRR are very low in conflict and post-conflict countries



Some of the largest disasters on record have occurred in challenging contexts¹³²



Future projections show that climate-related disaster vulnerability will be felt most in fragile and conflict-affected states¹³³

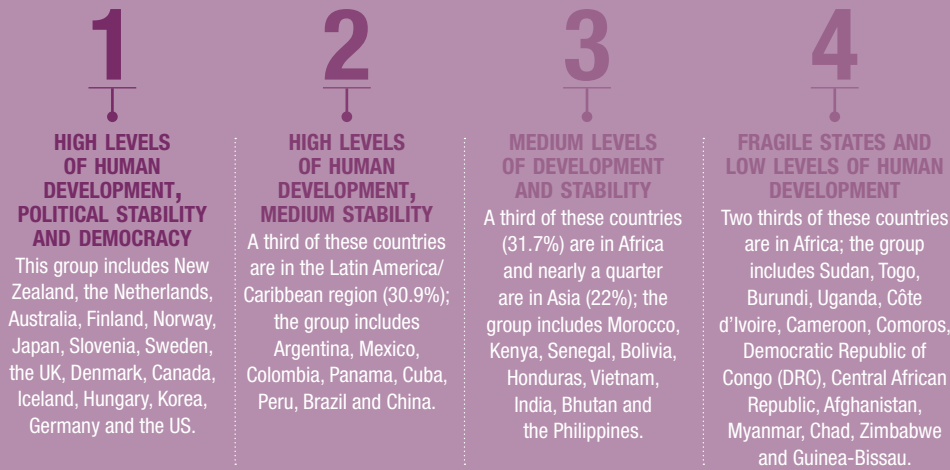
The latest IPCC report tells us that:

The future will almost certainly see an increase in climate-related disasters.

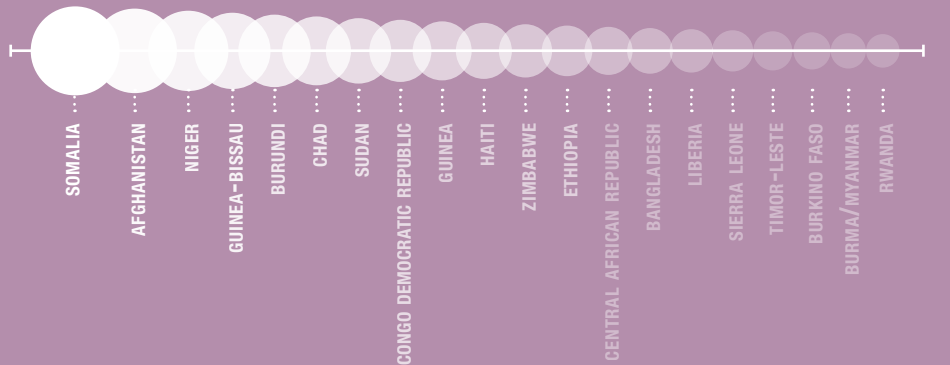
Countries experiencing conflict or governance difficulties are least likely to be able to support communities to manage vulnerability to climate impacts or adapt to climate change.¹³⁴

Poorly designed risk reduction, adaptation and mitigation strategies can increase the risk of conflict.¹³⁵

Effectively dealing with disaster risk requires stable political conditions, inclusive risk governance and risk-informed development. An index of the necessary elements of disaster risk management groups countries into four categories¹³⁶



The 20 countries ranked most at risk due to high levels of fragility, disaster, poverty and climate change vulnerability, combined¹³⁷



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

HFA2 should explicitly recognise the need for and value of building DRM institutions as a means to strengthen disaster risk governance.

- For contexts where formal government structures are in place, disaster management should be seen as a means of strengthening policy formulation processes, national fiscal and budgetary arrangements and institution building.
- For vulnerable populations living in areas where the state and/or governance structures are lacking, or where those in power are a party to conflict, international support should be provided to enhance DRM through local action, through governance arrangements at the sub-national level and through informal institutions.
- Investments in disaster risk reduction and management should not only be sensitive towards contexts of conflict, but should actively encourage, support and be integrated into the management and reduction of conflict risk.

- Building disaster resilience should be a vital part of long-term stability and national security, and adequate investment in disaster resilience needs to be part of those strategies.

The successor framework should include action and indicators on:

- Complexity of risk: Including the relationship between natural hazards, climate change, conflict and fragility in risk and vulnerability assessments;
- Dual benefits: Seeking opportunities for co-benefits for peace building and state building as well as risk-informed development progress; at a bare minimum, climate- and conflict-sensitive approaches to DRM should be adopted;
- Inclusive governance: Adopting inclusive decision-making processes, with appropriate mechanisms in participation, accountability and transparency.

How the link between disasters and conflict is featured in the HFA

Para 4: ‘Sustainable development, poverty reduction, good governance and disaster risk reduction are mutually supportive objectives, and in order to meet the challenges ahead, accelerated efforts must be made to build the necessary capacities at the community and national levels to manage and reduce risk. Such an approach is to be recognized as an important element for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.’

Para 13 (c): ‘An integrated, multi-hazard approach to disaster risk reduction should be factored into policies, planning and programming related to sustainable development, relief, rehabilitation, and recovery activities in post-disaster and post-conflict situations in disaster-prone countries.’

Para 13 (h): ‘[...] Appropriate support in order to enhance governance for disaster risk reduction, for awareness-raising initiatives and for capacity-development measures at all levels, in order to improve the disaster resilience of developing countries.’

Note

- Support to good governance is noted in the HFA – including its contribution to achieving the MDGs – but the lack of concerted attention to dealing with conflict and fragility has been a major criticism.
- The definition of the ‘integrated multi-hazard approach’ thus does not include violence, conflict or fragility.
- The HFA appears to promote the pursuit of DRR only in post-conflict situations.

How the link between disasters and conflict is included in statements and consultations on the successor to the HFA

Chair’s Summary

The Summary notes that targeting the root cause of risk (Priority 4) has shown the least action, but that:

‘Throughout the session, participants raised the need to take concrete measures to tackle risk drivers including poverty, hunger, disease, conflict, violence and inadequate health services, education, infrastructure, poor water and sanitation, housing, unemployment, land degradation, displacement, forced migration and discrimination’ (p. 1).

Mid-Term Review

Oxfam’s approach to DRR includes: ‘Ensuring that political and social conflict is included in risk analysis as a potential factor of vulnerability’ (p. 41).

DRR in Africa

The 3rd African Ministerial Meeting for DRR includes in the declaration express statement that the African Ministers and Heads of Delegation (page 4, IX):

‘Express deep concern at the magnitude and intensity of disasters, aggravated by terrorism and armed conflicts, and their increasing impact in recent years in Africa, which have resulted in massive loss of life and long-term negative social, economic, environmental and humanitarian consequences for vulnerable societies which hamper the achievement of sustainable development’.

The summary statement of the 5th Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction includes the following:

‘Violent conflict is closely associated with disaster risk and related efforts to prevent conflict need to be considered as part of overall efforts to build resilience to disasters’.

‘Disasters are not constrained by administrative boundaries and require trans-boundary policies and programmes. Population movements induced by disasters (fast- and slow-onset) and long-term violent conflicts call for cross-border cooperation. The development and enhancement of sub-regional climate information and multi-hazard early warning systems can inform, and thereby improve, prevention, preparedness and early action and response’.

‘Integrated and coordinated approaches to disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and related aspects of conflict prevention can reduce the fragmentation of resources and improve the impact of investments’.

RECOMMENDED READING

For an exploration of how to improve the links between disaster resilience and conflict prevention see:

Harris, K., Keen, D. and Mitchell, T. (2013) *When disasters and conflicts collide. Improving links between disaster resilience and conflict prevention*. London: ODI.

See how disasters can be an opportunity for peace, through three case studies:

Fan, L. (2013) *Disaster as opportunity? Building back better in Aceh, Myanmar and Haiti*. London: ODI.

To understand how much is spent on DRR in conflict-affected countries:

Kellett, J. and Sparks, D. (2012) *Disaster risk reduction: Spending where it should count*. Global Humanitarian Assistance, Development Initiatives, UK.

Explore tools and approaches for disaster risk management through examples:

Mitchell, A. with Smith, E. (2011) *Disaster Risk Management for Insecure Contexts*. Paris: Action Contre la Faim.

Learn how disaster risk governance can help inform our understanding of how to reduce disaster risks:

Wilkinson, E., Comba, E. and Peters, K. (forthcoming) *Disaster Risk Governance: unlocking progress and reducing risk*. United Nations Development Programme and ODI, London, UK. Prepared for the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015.