



**Brussels Rural Development Briefings**  
**A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues**

**Briefing session n° 18**

**Humanitarian assistance and rural development: responding to new challenges**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – 8h30 – 13h00**  
**European Commission, Building Borschette, - Rue Froissart, 36, Room 1A**  
<http://brusselsbriefings.net>

**Context**

The number and frequency of disasters is growing with serious consequences in the most vulnerable countries. According to Munich Re<sup>1</sup>, economic losses from disasters in the 1990s totaled over US\$608 billion, greater than losses over the four previous decades combined<sup>2</sup>. There were 414 natural disasters in 2007, compared with an average of 394 for the period 2000-06. Globally, the average number of major weather-related catastrophes such as windstorms, floods or droughts is now three times as high as at the beginning of the 1980s. Losses have risen even more, with average increases of 11% per year since 1980. This is illustrated by total natural catastrophes losses in the period 1980–2008. Overall losses due to weather-related events came to around US\$ 1.6tn in original values, with insured losses amounting to approximately US\$ 465bn. In the period from 2000–2008 alone, overall losses totaled over US\$ 750bn, whilst insured losses came to around US\$ 280bn<sup>3</sup>. According to the highest available estimates<sup>4</sup>, a total of \$18 billion was spent on disaster assistance in 2008, in over 50 natural disasters and conflicts around the world. Most experts agree that the number of disasters will increase as climate change and global warming generate more severe weather-related events. Disasters affect developing countries' economic development as they damage infrastructure and affect productivity and growth. They also slow down progress towards the Millennium Development Goals - eight specific goals to be met by 2015 that aim to combat extreme poverty. 255 million people were affected by natural disasters globally each year, on average, between 1994 and 2003, with a range of 68 million to 618 million. During the same period, these disasters claimed an average of 58,000 lives annually, with a range of 10,000 to 123,000<sup>5</sup>. During the last decade disasters caused damage of an estimated US\$67 billion per year on average, with a maximum of US\$230 billion and a minimum of US\$28 billion. The economic cost associated with natural disasters have increased 14-fold since the 1950s.

**The effects of climate change will increase disasters**

Global warming is resulting in an increase in the frequency and severity of climatic extremes, which increases the frequency of weather-related disasters. Climate change hits the poor hardest and the greatest impacts are likely to be on food security, the productivity of agricultural export crops, health, and water security and quality. It is also likely to increase the displacement of people as a result of flooding or drought. In the coming decades, climate change is expected to exacerbate the risks of disasters, not only from more frequent and intense hazard events, but also through greater vulnerability to the existing hazards. More frequent and intense storms and floods and long-lasting droughts can erode existing community coping capacity to prepare, respond and rebuild after successive hazard events.

Climate change and disasters also contribute to forced displacement as a survival strategy. Environmental migrants and refugees who, for reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that

<sup>1</sup> One of the world's largest re-insurers

<sup>2</sup> Belgium-based Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED)

<sup>3</sup> Munich Re's NatCatSERVICE database

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/uploads/gha-report-2009-2nd.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Thirty years of natural disasters 1974-2003: The numbers*, D. Guha-Sapir, D. Hargitt, P. Hoyois  
 Presses universitaires de Louvain, 2004

adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to have to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their territory or abroad<sup>6</sup>. More people are now forced to leave their homes because of environmental disasters than war. They estimate approximately 25 million people could currently be classified as being environmental refugees<sup>7</sup> and estimated 150 million people whose homes will be lost as a result of climate change by 2050<sup>8</sup>.

### **Disasters increase poverty and food insecurity**

Disasters are increasingly recognized as a fundamental factor constraining development and contributing to poverty. The complex and multiple drivers of vulnerability include: environmental degradation such as deforestation, pasture and farmland degradation, desertification; demographic pressures; conflicts and population displacement which lead to destruction of asset; the conflicts over natural resources and an unequal access; the breakdown of traditional political and economic structures; the loss of livelihoods; limited access to information (including that on weather, climate change, markets, as well as pest and disease outbreaks); economic vulnerability due to lack of diversification, unavailability of insurance or loans, basic infrastructure and social services such as health care; limited education, skills and access to financial services and markets; inadequate government policies, capacities and coordination; social and gender inequalities, which reduce the voice and adaptive capacity of the most vulnerable.

The capacity to cope and reduce disaster risk is much more limited in poor countries and the poorest are worst affected and suffer the most as disasters increase poverty and malnutrition. Disasters intensify the poverty gap in the population and rapidly increase the poverty rate, especially in disaster-prone areas. Poverty and vulnerability to disasters are integrally linked and mutually reinforcing (Wisner et al. 2004). The poor are forced to exploit environmental resources for survival, thereby increasing both the risk and exposure to disasters, in particular those triggered by floods, drought and landslides. Deforestation and agriculture on marginal land, or destruction of forests for firewood collection, are often induced, or at least exacerbated, by poverty. These practices directly affect the natural environment, and may hurt the very resource base that these poor people are depending on. Indeed, the rural communities, which depend on resource-based activities, are the worst sufferers of the disaster impacts (Shaw 2006). In 2005, over 30 million people in Africa required food aid to meet their immediate needs (DFID). Conflicts increase the risk of food supply instability and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations tend to be food insecure, with more than 20% of the population, and in many cases far more, lacking access to adequate food (IFPRI, 2006). The group of countries that are experiencing civil conflicts cannot meet their basic needs and are large importers of food. In addition, the transport of commodities is hazardous and the situation is not secure enough for farmers to make investment decisions. 33 countries currently face a food security crisis, 14 of which have been in this situation for more than a decade<sup>9</sup>. When emergencies continue for such extended periods of time, traditional humanitarian and development paradigms are not suitable for guiding effective responses and efforts should target longer term strategies and build on local institutions.

### **Towards more effective interventions**

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies aim to minimise the effects of natural hazards such as earthquakes and cyclones on communities by reducing their vulnerability to loss of life and livelihoods, within a broad context of sustainable development. This may include protecting and diversifying livelihoods, for example through crop diversification as well as tackling chronic food insecurity. Tackling the causes of hazardous events is also crucial, for example reducing the likelihood of landslides through reforestation or ensuring appropriate cropping and water-use practices in drought-prone areas.

*Building a culture of prevention is not easy. While the costs of prevention have to be paid in the present, its benefits lie in a distant future. Moreover, the benefits are not tangible; they are the disasters that did NOT happen. (Kofi Annan 1999).* Governments may know that they can rely on the international community to respond when a disaster hits, which could be a disincentive for investing in prevention. Disaster risk reduction is long-term and low profile. Disaster response, on the other hand, is highly visible and therefore has received greater political attention than DRR.

---

<sup>6</sup> International Organization for Migration

<sup>7</sup> World Disasters Report 2001- [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies](#)

<sup>8</sup> Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), *No Place Like Home - Climate Refugees. Where next for climate refugees?* 2008, <http://www.ejfoundation.org/page590.html>

<sup>9</sup> *When Emergencies Last for Decades-How to improve food security in protracted crises-* FAO, February 2010

Donors lack the right instruments to achieve better results. Most development interventions currently fall into one of three categories: (i) humanitarian aid, which neglects long-term considerations; (ii) development assistance, which relies on functioning state institutions; and (iii) nation-building activities, which focus more on re-establishing the public sector than addressing the source of the problem. None of these instruments alone can effectively combat persistent food insecurity. Policy makers need to intervene on two fronts: improve access to food through immediate support measures and address the root causes of the crisis through longer-term structural interventions. In this regard better coordination of all stakeholders is of crucial importance and the review of the evolving architecture of the international humanitarian system in the light of the growing diversity of humanitarian actors. Strengthening the participation of local partners and institutions will be one of the key ingredients to break the vicious cycle of continuing and self-perpetuating emergencies. Most importantly, the current aid architecture needs to be revised in order to effectively link long- and short-term interventions<sup>10</sup>. There is growing evidence of the costs of disasters and the economic benefits of DRR<sup>11</sup>.

Disaster risk reduction programmes are in a position to reduce the impact of disasters on the poorest and most vulnerable countries. They include improved infrastructure and services, effective early warning systems that could be used by local communities.

### **The key role of Information Systems**

Information is critical to any kind of emergency response. In the absence of good information it is impossible to know that an emergency is taking place, much less to bring a response. Recent research has improved our understanding of the requirements of information, and several major initiatives are seeking to improve the quality of information. Better environmental information and/or environmental management could effectively support disaster risk reduction, post-disaster response and environmental and humanitarian recovery efforts. Information is critical to any kind of emergency response. Mapping exercises enable the identification of hunger or poverty hubs and satellite images or digital maps enriches the informational content of the maps and provides valuable input. Rapid advances in information and communications technologies, especially Geographical Information Systems (GIS), are revolutionising the potential capacity to analyse hazards, risks and vulnerability, and plan for disasters. Food security information systems are critical and include baseline vulnerability analysis, early warning which is the information needed for prediction, early detection and mitigation of the impacts of shocks so that they do not result in a humanitarian crisis, or to deploy needs assessment resources and emergency needs assessment to quantify immediate needs for emergency assistance, to enable an appropriate response.

### **Objectives of the Briefing**

In order to improve information sharing and promote networking, CTA, the EC-DG Development and EuropeAid, the ACP Secretariat, Concord and IPS organise bimonthly briefings on key issues and challenges for rural development in the context of EU/ACP cooperation. The briefing on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010 will discuss Humanitarian Assistance and Rural Development and will aim at: (i) raising awareness on existing and emerging key challenges; (ii) promoting exchange of information and expertise; (iii) feeding in the debate various perspectives on the policy options.

### **Target group**

More than 100 ACP-EU policy makers, representatives of EU Member States, civil society groups, research networks and development practitioners, international organisations based in Brussels.

### **Available material**

Input and comments before, during and after the meetings will be included in the Briefings blog: <http://brusselsbriefings.net/>. A short report and a Reader in printed and electronic format are produced shortly after the meeting. Articles by European and ACP media share widely the results of the discussions.

---

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-836LLR/\\$file/FAO\\_feb2010.pdf?openelement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-836LLR/$file/FAO_feb2010.pdf?openelement)

<sup>11</sup> *The Costs and Benefits of Disaster Risk Reduction*, Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2007



**Brussels Rural Development Briefings**  
**A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues**

**Briefing session n° 18**

**Humanitarian assistance and rural development: responding to new challenges**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – 8h30 – 13h00**  
**European Commission, Building Borschette, - Rue Froissart, 36, Room 1A**  
<http://brusselsbriefings.net>

8h00-8h30 Registration

8h30-8h45 Welcome remarks by the organisers

**8h45-10h30 Panel 1 – Humanitarian assistance and rural development: trends and challenges**

The number and frequency of natural disasters is growing. Population growth, climate change and natural resource scarcity will increase humanitarian needs and food aid, especially in the most vulnerable countries. This panel will review current trends, main players and challenges in emergency responses.

Panelists:

- Global Humanitarian Assistance: architecture, main players and trends  
*Jan Kellett, Programme Leader, Global Humanitarian Assistance, United Kingdom*
- Coordination in post-disaster response: progress made and challenges ahead  
*Doekle Wielinga, Team Leader Sustainable Recovery, Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, World Bank*
- Linking emergency response, recovery and development, Red Cross perspective  
*Kiflemariam Amdemariam, Senior Officer, Food Security Community Preparedness & Risk Reduction Department, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*
- Addressing long term issues in humanitarian crisis contexts: Improving Food Security Analysis and Response  
*Luca Alinovi, Expert, Economic Division, FAO*

10h30-10h45 Coffee break

**10h45-13h00 Panel 2 – Lessons learnt and policy options**

In the context of the new EC communication on Humanitarian Food Assistance, this panel will discuss the lessons learnt from recent natural disasters and the needs to ensure a long-term recovery with strong institutions able to cope with disaster preparedness and effectiveness of response. It will look at the need for coordination by donors and actors..

Panelists:

- From Humanitarian Food Assistance to long term food security  
*Nicholas Weatherill, DG ECHO, Marc Debois, DG Development, Jacques Prade, DG EuropAid, European Commission*
- Rehabilitation in agriculture and rural areas: what can we learn from recent experiences?  
*Laurent Thomas, Director, Emergency Operation and Rehabilitation Division, FAO*
- Enabling smallholder and low-income farmers to supply food and reducing risks  
*Laura Melo, Communication Officer for WFP Purchase for Progress, World Food Programme*
- New challenges for humanitarian civil society organizations  
*Kathrin Schick, Director, Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE)*

Conclusions

13h00-14h00 Networking Buffet Lunch