

Risk reduction and resilience

Water is a resource critical to survival and to the functioning of society. But water can also be a hazard. Too much or too little water can cause floods, droughts, erosion, spread diseases and destroy infrastructure. Recurrent water-related disasters pose major impediments to the achievement of human security and sustainable socio-economic development. Disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and support to enhancing resilience are critical and integrated aspects in Sida's water and sanitation support.

The frequency of both natural and man-made disasters appears to be increasing and every year hundreds of millions of peoples are affected globally. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is strongly linked to water management. Water is a key variable in the causes and impacts of many of the disasters particularly affecting developing countries.

This brief provides a general overview of Sida's approach to risk reduction and resilience and highlights a few examples relevant to the theme.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Disaster risk reduction aims to avoid, lessen or transfer the damage caused by natural hazards like earthquakes, floods, droughts and cyclones, through an ethic of prevention. Sida supports risk reduction activities and measures related to prevention as well as preparedness and mitigation.

Recurrent or long-lasting naturally caused crises limit even further communities' capacity to respond and cope with droughts, floods, etc. There is a need to go beyond short-term responses in order to protect and promote people's livelihoods over the longer term.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

Sweden recognises the importance of enhancing environmental and socio-economic resilience to present as well as emerging challenges related to e.g. floods and droughts. Climate change is expected to add to already existing stresses and increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Observations and climate projections provide abundant evidence that freshwater resources are vulnerable to climate change with wide-ranging consequences for human societies and ecosystems.

Developing nations are particularly vulnerable due to a high dependence on natural resources and low resilience to external shocks, such as floods and droughts. Climate change is likely to increase the poor's vulnerability and make pro-poor growth more difficult. Addressing the adverse impacts of climate change is vital to reduce the risks associated with disasters and to enhance resilience.



Women waiting for water delivery in Daadab refugee camp, Kenya. Photo: Gry Hjeltne/Sida

Sida acknowledges that there is an urgent need to address the underlying drivers of risks related to disasters and at the same time address climate adaptation needs.

Examples of Swedish support related to risk reduction and resilience

RISK REDUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY

Emergency relief support is essential to save lives when disasters strike. Sida's support to improved food security among communities in arid and semi-arid lands in Kenya is part of Sweden's ambition of scaling up activities on disaster risk reduction and to increase efforts for food security in order to mitigate future humanitarian crises.

Food insecurity in the Horn of Africa is a major threat to livelihoods and is worsening due to climate variability and change. Consequently, it is important to work both with prevention and preparedness as well as with direct response to the food security crisis in the region. However, Sweden's ambition is not only to react to disasters but more to address the underlying risk drivers of poverty, rapid urbanisation, desertification and environmental degradation in order to create more resilient communities.



People became isolated by severe flooding in coastal regions of Bangladesh due to Cyclone Aila in 2009. Photo: Hanna Wolf.

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to recurrent natural hazards and to climate change. Sweden is supporting the implementation of UNDP's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) in Bangladesh. The programme aims to reduce vulnerability to hazards and extreme events, including impacts of climate change. Disaster Risk Reduction is now being integrated into national development planning.

MANGROVES FOR RISK REDUCTION

Mangroves for the future (MFF) is a partnership-based regional initiative that began its work in those six Asian countries that was worst affected by the 2004 tsunami. Mangrove swamps are found in tropical and subtropical tidal areas and protect coastal areas from erosion, storm

surge, and tsunamis and the root system can dissipate wave energy. Currently the MFF consists of a large group of countries with common challenges and threats in relation to poverty reduction, sustainable development, coastal environmental conservation, climate change and natural disasters. Sweden supports MFF to disseminate knowledge to support conservation, restoration and sustainable use of coastal ecosystems; strengthen institutions and empower civil society; and enhance coastal governance. Mainstreaming climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction at programme and project level are essential components of the programme.

INCREASED RESILIENCE IN HIMALAYA

Sida provides support to ICIMOD's work to increase the resilience of mountain communities, especially targeting women, through improved understanding of vulnerabilities and identifying adaptation potentials and the development of response strategies in the upper Mekong-Salween sub basin. Transboundary issues such as climate change and water require transboundary solutions and ICIMOD is the only regional organisation focusing on mountain areas and with the mandate to work in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region.

WASH IN A PROTRACTED EMERGENCY

After almost four decades of conflict and disrupted development, large parts of the Afghan population face humanitarian needs. The situation is particularly difficult for internally displaced people, or recently returned refugees. One critical area of need is the lack of access to safe water and sanitation, as typically the most common diseases affecting children are related to WASH. Trying to address these problems, Sida supports the non-governmental organisation DACAAR's work in Afghanistan to strengthen community resilience and re-integrate returning refugees, by improving access to WASH to prevent or reduce many of these diseases.

Policy direction – water and sanitation

Sweden promotes efficient, fair and sustainable management of water and sanitation. Sida's interventions are guided by the Swedish Policy for environment and climate issues in Swedish development cooperation, 2010-2014, as well as by results strategies at country, regional and global levels.