



**Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards  
of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP  
25 and 28 January 2008  
United Nations**

**Agenda item 3: Disaster risk reduction strategies**

**Background document**



## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Natural disasters have occurred throughout the world since the beginning of time, but their economic and social impacts, especially on the developing world, have never been as severe as during this era. The extent of the disasters and their increased frequency and severity imply that the consequences of climate change are only going to worsen, especially given rapid urbanization. Their effects will severely compromise human security and livelihoods, as well as the possibility of attaining the Millennium Development Goals.
2. There is clearly a need to reduce losses from natural disasters through better understanding and greater awareness of how best to manage disaster risks, and an increase in the level of preparedness of local, regional and international organizations to ensure an effective and efficient response to them. To maximize impact, these prevention mechanisms must fully involve communities as the owners of all stages of the process.
3. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies is one of the topics to be discussed in the Joint Meeting of the UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP Executive Boards on 25 and 28 January 2008 in New York. This background paper has been jointly prepared by UNICEF, WFP, UNDP and UNFPA to inform the Boards and initiate a discussion around specific key issues related to DRR.
4. As the Joint Visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP will visit Haiti in March 2008, the annex of this paper focuses on the specificities of DRR in the complex emergency context of that country.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

5. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005, adopted the “Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”. This document represents a worldwide understanding of, and commitment to implementing, a global agenda on natural DRR, and identifies the collective and individual roles and responsibilities of key parties in its implementation and follow-up. The HFA also emphasizes the importance of promoting DRR efforts at international, regional and local levels. It is the single most important reference point for developing policy on DRR in the history of the United Nations.
6. The HFA identifies five major gaps in efforts to address DRR, and agrees on five Priorities for Action to address those gaps:
  - i) Ensure that DRR is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.
  - ii) Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks – and enhance early warning.
  - iii) Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.

- iv) Reduce the underlying risk factors.
- v) Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

### ***Types of hazards***

- 7. Hazards can be grouped into four main categories: 1) natural, linked to climate (such as storms, cyclones or rains); 2) natural, linked to geophysical activity (such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions); 3) biological, natural or man-made (such as diseases, epidemics, pandemics); and 4) technological hazards (such as pollution and radioactivity). The categories are not separate: they interact among themselves and with human activity, increasing the impact on the populations.

### ***When does a hazard become a disaster and how can the risks be reduced?***

- 8. Natural hazards are not by definition disasters. It is the adverse impact of the natural phenomenon on people's lives, their vulnerability to the hazard and their inability to cope that creates a disaster.
- 9. Disasters can be reduced, and to some extent even prevented, through national-, local- and community-level strategies to withstand the impacts of hazards, for example promotion of seismic resistance in building design or water management projects (water tanks, dams and irrigation systems) to prevent droughts. DRR is a series of measures to address hazards and people's vulnerability to them. An efficient DRR approach starts before the onset of the disaster/hazard and continues throughout response and recovery to build resilience to face future hazards.

### ***The impact of natural disasters***

- 10. There is a recognized increase in the human, social and economic costs associated with natural disasters. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) reports that 97 million people were affected by disasters in 2006 and nearly 38,000 were killed in the course of 767 major events around the world. Technological disasters accounted for only 0.5 percent while the rest were caused by natural hazards and societal vulnerability to them.
- 11. Earthquakes, tsunamis and other sudden-impact hazards are generally covered extensively by the media due to the scale of their impact on human lives. 'Small-scale' meteorological disasters receive less attention from the media, but can cause extensive, cumulative damage and affect large numbers of people. Due to their frequency and the effects they have on livelihoods – and given the difficulty vulnerable groups have in coping with the aftermaths of disasters – small-scale disasters such as local floods, landslides and fires are often as devastating as larger, sudden-impact events.

12. In addition to bringing death, injury and illness, disasters also undermine fragile development processes. Crucial infrastructure, including social services such as health facilities and schools, may be wholly or partly destroyed. Livelihoods may be disrupted for many and wiped out for some. Disasters can generate poverty and make life even more difficult for those who are already poor. The impact on children can last a lifetime, unless adequate protective measures are taken.
13. Disasters have a disproportionate effect on poor countries and poor communities. The poorest countries are those most likely to be affected by disasters and the poorest people suffer the most from their effects.<sup>1</sup> The capacity of poor countries to reduce risk is also much more limited.

### *Vulnerability, poverty and resilience*

14. Vulnerability is the condition determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes that indicates the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards. Disasters often result in increased vulnerability of the poor and disempowered or marginalized through the destruction or loss of assets, thereby placing them in a downward spiral of deepening poverty and increasing risk.
15. Poverty and vulnerability are strongly linked, but do not completely overlap. Not all disasters affect the poorest exclusively, but poor people do tend to be both more exposed to hazards and more susceptible to their effects, to suffer greater relative loss of assets and to have lower capacity to cope and recover. A greater understanding is required of the nature and spread of disparities in order to develop and implement more effective programmes, judged by their ability to further reduce existing vulnerability.
16. The most efficient tool to reduce vulnerability is to build the capacity of people to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from disasters – in other words, to build resilience. Poverty reduction can help reduce disaster risk. But to achieve that goal, the risk must be a driving component of poverty reduction programmes, and not seen as merely another constraint.

### *DRR and children*

17. Children almost always suffer the most from disasters, whether through loss of life, psychosocial trauma, disruption of education or long-term adverse impacts on their resilience and coping mechanisms. In all aspects of risk reduction, the specific needs of children should be integrally addressed, their capacities enhanced and their participation encouraged and facilitated. Education, public awareness, community-based preparedness, as well as disaster-resilient public infrastructure, constitute some of the most important objectives of the HFA to support risk reduction for children. Substantial progress has been made to date in developing risk mitigation measures for and with children that have proven their worth, covering areas of early warning, preparedness, response and

---

<sup>1</sup> See statistics on [www.CRED.be](http://www.CRED.be) (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters).

recovery. It is incumbent upon national and international actors to build on these experiences and ensure that children's needs and vulnerabilities continue to be addressed to the maximum extent possible in anticipation of any future disaster.

### *DRR and gender*

18. Gender relations in the context of the interplay between natural disasters and poverty play an important role in disaster mitigation strategies. The higher poverty rate among women and cultural constraints on women's activities in some societies mean that women are more likely than men to suffer losses of life and property in the face of natural disasters. The role of women in ensuring household food security and their dependence on natural resources to do so increases the impact disasters may have on women. Men often migrate in search of supplemental income at the onset of natural disasters such as drought and slow flooding; this leaves women to fend for themselves and assume even greater responsibility for caring for their families. In post-disaster situations women and girls are often more vulnerable than men and boys. The care-giving roles of both women and girls expand dramatically after a disaster; experience shows that women's access to resources for recovery is often limited.

### *Misguided development programmes can trigger disasters*

19. Certain development programmes can increase exposure or susceptibility to hazard. For example, self-reliance agriculture projects can lead to deforestation and erosion, which increase the probability of flooding. When development programmes are designed and implemented in a rush, or fail to take into account such factors as weak capacity or susceptibility to corruption of government institutions, political unrest, conflict and economic instability, vulnerability can remain or even worsen in disaster-prone areas.

### *Disasters impede poverty reduction*

20. Disasters have profound effects, both direct and indirect, on poverty reduction programmes. They have a direct impact on the economy of the country through physical damage to infrastructure, productive capital and stocks. Indirectly and in the longer term, they also affect productivity, growth and macroeconomic performance. Moreover, there is a tendency for governments and donors to fund disaster relief and rehabilitation by shifting resources away from development programmes. Such reallocation and other direct and indirect impacts of the disasters affect the poor disproportionately.
21. Local disasters can be especially devastating because they often fail to gain national attention and can have an even greater impact than large-scale disasters on poverty levels, basic service provision and food security. Recurring or slow-onset hazards such as droughts and floods not only trigger immediate food crises; they can also have long-term effects due to a combination of events such as poor governance and conflict.

22. One way to measure the impact of disasters is through country reports on progress toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The impact on progress toward MDG 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) is evident in the increased numbers of households falling below the poverty line during the months following a disaster.

### **III. EMERGING CHALLENGES**

23. Without vulnerability reduction, global disaster risk will continue to increase. This is due to a range of factors including rapid population growth, unplanned urbanization, environmental degradation and climate change.

#### *Climate change and environmental degradation*

24. The evidence is clear that climate change is a reality and has already had a significant impact worldwide. Climate change hazards include a rises in sea level and an increase in cyclones, hurricanes, floods and droughts in some regions. Other consequences of great concern include decline of plant and animal populations in some areas, earlier flowering of trees and emergence of new patterns of insect populations.
25. The current change in climate is not the first in our planet's history, but it is the first time humans are directly responsible for that change. Human activity is largely responsible for increased greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, produced by the burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas); methane, produced by cattle, rice production and fossil fuels; and nitrous oxide, produced mainly by the chemical industry. Deforestation, caused by the expansion of agricultural lands and wood industry, contributes significantly to the greenhouse effect by reducing carbon dioxide's natural recycling capacity.
26. At least in the short term, global warming may have positive effects on some regions, mainly in northern Canada and Europe<sup>2</sup>, such as reducing the effects of winter diseases and enhancing high-altitude agriculture. On the other hand, tropical and sub-tropical regions, where most developing countries are located, will suffer from negative impact. These opposite effects could widen the existing gap between developing and developed countries.

#### *Rapid population growth and unplanned urbanization*

27. According to the Population Division within the United Nations,<sup>3</sup> the world's population has increased by 2 billion people in the last 25 years, to 6.6 billion in 2007, a record in the history of humanity. The population is expected to increase by the same amount for the next 30 years, with further expansion to 9.2 billion expected by 2050. The likely increase of several billion more people, mainly in poor countries, will hamper efforts to reduce poverty and achieve

---

<sup>2</sup> IPCC. 2001. Summary for Policymakers. Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability.

<sup>3</sup> Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. 2006. *World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision* and *ibid.* 2005. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/unpp>.

sustainable development, hence increasing disaster risks. There is also a trend of population increase in fragile coastal areas prone to disasters.

28. At the same time, a process of uncontrolled urbanization is accompanied by increased poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition. Over the last 15 or 20 years, the absolute number of urban people who are poor and undernourished has increased at a rate that outpaces that in rural areas. It is estimated that 1 billion people in Africa, Asia and Latin America live in urban slums. In unplanned and often illegal squatter settlements, basic infrastructure and services are grossly inadequate or non-existent. The poorest urban dwellers live on the worst areas such as edges of ravines, on flood-prone embankments and on slopes prone to mudslides or collapse.
29. With urbanization an inevitable trend, an explicit and effective planning of land use in urban areas is necessary to reduce the vulnerability of the urban poor to the impact of natural disasters. The geographical and physical location of millions of additional urban inhabitants, and the quality of the construction of their housing, will be determining factors for future disaster risks.
30. Urban concentration need not aggravate environmental problems, which are due primarily to unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and inadequate urban management. Urban localities actually offer better chances for long-term sustainability: they concentrate half the earth's population on less than 3 percent of its land area. Adopting the right approaches in anticipation of urban growth can prevent many of the environmental problems usually linked to urbanization. The benefits for sustainability that urbanization offers will not, however, be delivered automatically.
31. From a demographic point of view, it is urgent that countries take more effective action in the areas of reproductive health and gender equality, aimed at empowering the poor to have smaller and healthier families. This will produce, among other changes, a decrease in the rate of population growth and a reduction of migratory pressure on urban centres as well as on coastal and other ecologically fragile areas.

#### **IV. IMPORTANCE OF A DRR STRATEGY**

32. The adoption of the HFA means new and increasing demands on United Nations agencies to take more concerted and coherent action to enhance their technical knowledge and overall programming and operational capacities, especially for mitigating, preparing for and responding to natural disasters.
33. Despite the growing awareness of the importance of DRR and increased disaster response capacities, the management and reduction of disaster risk continue to pose a global challenge. Evidence shows that without prevention and mitigation efforts, the impact of disasters on vulnerable communities and their resources is greater, and the recovery process is longer.
34. The need to sustain commitment to the humanitarian imperative in emergencies is essential. However, too often short-term relief interventions act primarily to save lives and do little to promote longer-term resilience to future



crises. Greater priority must be given to preventive as opposed to curative measures, and a stronger link needs to be forged between relief and development efforts.

35. DRR should be addressed through three main strategies: 1) building capacity in disaster preparedness; 2) promoting mitigation activities to reduce the impact of hazards; and 3) ensuring that development projects are protected from disaster impact. DRR attempts to anticipate the impact of hazards by making livelihoods more resilient to disasters before an event strikes.
36. In chronic crises, efforts to address disaster risk are often complicated by long-term or complex emergency situations (see annex 1 on Haiti).

## **V. DRR CONTRIBUTIONS OF UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF AND WFP AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS**

37. Following the 10 April 2007 Policy Committee meeting, the United Nations Secretary-General directed that DRR and the HFA should be further mainstreamed into the United Nations system's policies and practices. He instructed the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to systematically increase support to member states to implement the HFA through national development plans, poverty reduction strategies and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. He requested that the UNDG set specific targets for DRR in selected high-risk countries and collaborate with humanitarian agencies through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in pursuit of these goals.
38. Through its Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP supports disaster-prone countries in the development of legislative frameworks, operational systems and coordination mechanisms to ensure the integration of risk reduction into human development. UNDP is also engaged at the local, national, regional and global levels in building capacities for assessing natural disaster risks and for developing appropriate plans and programmes. Through its direct technical support to ministerial partners, UNDP contributes to integrating the planning and management of risk reduction into recovery phases following major disasters.
39. UNFPA's three-year institutional strategy<sup>4</sup> includes various measures to strengthen technical and institutional capacities to incorporate population, reproductive health and gender concerns into overall emergency preparedness, response, transition and recovery. UNFPA has increasingly supported national capacity-building in emergency preparedness as an integral part of regular country programme activities. Protocols have been developed and training organized on how to provide reproductive health information and services during humanitarian crises. UNFPA is actively engaged in contingency planning, including the pre-positioning of reproductive health supplies, and preparedness, through its ongoing efforts to collect and monitor basic population data.

---

<sup>4</sup> Endorsed by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board in September 2006

40. UNICEF is committed to sustaining and enhancing its support of national risk reduction efforts specifically, those most directly related to threats to children, both in non-crisis and emergency situations. Seeing risk reduction as an integral part of all sector activities, UNICEF is focusing on practical ways in which programmatic support can be further enhanced, including operationalization of this commitment through a review of strategies, developing staffing capacities to enhance inter-agency collaboration on risk reduction, refining programmatic implications in sectors of UNICEF principal concern – in particular in the fields of education and water and sanitation. For example, risk reduction through education is an integrated part of a four-year initiative begun in 2007 with the broader concern of education in emergencies. UNICEF is also collaborating with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) on promoting global use of a children’s learning tool about safety and risk.
41. WFP is currently preparing its new DRR strategy; a policy paper will be presented to the Executive Board for approval in June 2008. The new strategy aims at strengthening WFP’s compliance with the HFA and mainstreaming DRR at all levels within the Organization. The next step will be the dissemination of a technical guidance tool to all WFP country offices and the roll-out of a DRR training course at regional level. As part of this process, WFP will soon integrate risk assessment and vulnerability analysis and mapping into its early warning and preparedness systems; improved natural disaster risk mapping will support early targeting systems for populations at risk.
42. United Nations agencies are collaborating closely in efforts to mainstream DRR at all levels in a consistent and complementary way. UNICEF, WFP, UNDP and UNFPA share information about DRR strategies and programmes on an ongoing basis, and work closely through three main platforms: 1) the ISDR Joint Work Programme 2008–2009; 2) the IASC, through its Sub-Working Group on Early Warning and Contingency Planning, co-chaired by UNICEF and WFP, and its informal working group on DRR; and 3) the UNDG.
43. UNICEF and WFP have recently strengthened emergency support functions at all levels and mainstreamed emergency preparedness throughout the organizations. Contingency and operational planning are now widely used as strategic planning tools.
44. In addition, WFP has improved its capacities to prepare for and respond in emergencies through the upgrading of its assessments via the Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity (SENAC) project and creation of United Nations Humanitarian Response Depots, managed by WFP.

## VI. STRATEGIC ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

45. Following recent events, the importance of system-wide cooperation in disaster reduction is now acknowledged by the international community.<sup>5</sup> Efforts to reduce disaster risks must be systematically integrated into policies, plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction, and supported through bilateral, regional and international cooperation and partnerships. 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.

- 1) *The programming continuum of DRR: when development and emergency response cannot be dealt with separately*
  - Improve cross-sectoral communication and understanding of risk-reduction issues and responsibilities.
  - Integrate DRR into both humanitarian and development policies and programming.
  - Improve systems for collection and analysis of information on disasters and their immediate and longer-term impacts.
- 2) *DRR and development: a tool to achieve the MDGs*
  - Build an active focus on disaster issues into poverty-reduction programmes.
  - Build resilience through increased investments in social services, combating disease and environmental sustainability; provide conditions for social learning that enable coping and adaptation.
  - Enhance the coping capacity of populations, in particular the most vulnerable (social capital, livelihoods), and states (economy)
  - Enhance ownership through participation, fulfilment of basic rights and principles of equity.
- 3) *DRR funding: a new approach/model*
  - Establish appropriate institutional arrangements for promoting a development approach that is risk-aware.
  - Use pilot mitigation projects to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of early targeting and interventions.
  - Give high priority to preventive as opposed to curative measures; forge stronger links between relief and development efforts.
- 4) *Integration of climate change and DRR*
  - The main conclusion of the Stockholm Plan of Action (Stockholm, 24 October 2007) was: "Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation cannot be dealt with in isolation". This established a clear directive to integrate climate change into the Hyogo Framework for Action.
- 5) *The new DRR challenge: vulnerability in urban areas*
  - Brainstorm on mitigation programming in urban environments.
  - Increase capacity to respond to urban crises.

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, the South Asia tsunami in December 2004; Hurricane Katrina in the United States in September 2005; the Pakistan earthquake in October 2005.

## ANNEX

### The Case of Haiti: Some Questions for Discussion

1. Haiti is situated on the western part of Hispaniola, the second-largest island in the Greater Antilles and the third-largest country in the Caribbean after Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Haiti's terrain consists of rugged mountains with small coastal plains and river valleys. The country's largest crop-producing area is one of Haiti's most fertile river valleys, the Plaine de l'Artibonite. The east and central part of the island is a large, elevated plateau. Haiti shares a 360 km (224 mile) border with the Dominican Republic. Haiti also has several small and moderately populated islands.

#### I. BACKGROUND

2. Haiti is one of the Caribbean countries at highest risk of natural disasters. Environmental degradation, endemic poverty and weakened survival mechanisms because of the political, socio-economic and climatic shocks suffered over the past few decades make the country particularly vulnerable. In 2004, Mapou, a simple tropical depression in May, and Jeanne, a tropical storm in September, caused thousands of victims and greatly affected households' capacity to cope.
3. Haiti is undergoing a period of political transition. The democratization process, begun in 1986, remains fragile. Recurring crises resulted in the overthrow of the Government in 2004 and the deployment of the second United Nations peacekeeping force in a decade. Between 2004 and 2006, the country was led by an interim Government with the support of the international community and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Continuing insecurity and violence in poor urban areas increases populations' vulnerability, compounded by the consequences of natural disasters. Organized crime and high unemployment often spark civil strife in run-down districts. While efforts undertaken by Haiti's national police and MINUSTAH have improved security conditions in those areas, they need special attention in order to consolidate the benefits of the return to peace.
4. In addition, the growing number of expulsions of Haitians living illegally in neighbouring Dominican Republic has become an increasingly serious humanitarian and human rights issue. A total of 20,700 people were repatriated to Haiti in 2005. This escalating repatriation has already negatively affected the political, social and economic relationship between the two countries.
  - What institutional and policy changes/measures would be necessary to address the root causes of disasters?

## II. NATURAL DISASTERS IN HAITI

5. Haiti lies in the middle of the hurricane belt and is subject to severe storms from June to December, when occasional flooding occurs. The bay of Port-au-Prince and the capital are usually protected by the surrounding mountains and cyclones generally affect the north and south of the country. Drought has affected the northwest since 1998.
6. In 1925, Haiti was a lush tropical paradise, with 60 percent of its original forest intact. Since then, the population has cut down all but 2 percent of its forest cover, in the process destroying fertile farmland soils, while contributing to desertification. Erosion has been severe in the mountainous areas. Most tree-cutting in Haiti is done to produce charcoal, the country's main source of fuel. The plight of Haiti's forests has attracted international attention and led to numerous reforestation efforts, but these have met with little success.
7. In addition to soil erosion, deforestation has also worsened the effects of periodic flooding, as when tropical storm Jeanne hit the island on 17 September 2004. Haiti's extreme poverty, poor early warning systems, deforestation and bad governance all played their part in the unnecessarily high death toll. Neighbouring Dominican Republic received even more rain than Haiti, but its trees and better early warning and preparedness systems helped confine the death toll to 16 people.
8. Hispaniola, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands sit on top of small crustal blocks sandwiched between the North American and Caribbean plates. The island of Hispaniola faces a double risk: an earthquake from the Septentrional fault on the island itself as the plates move past each other, and an earthquake deep in the earth in the subduction zone on which the island sits. Both could cause severe damage and loss of life, although researchers say an earthquake in the subduction zone could be more devastating and has the potential to cause a tsunami. With 20 million people living in the region and a major earthquake occurring every 50 years on average, scientists say it is not a question of *if* an earthquake will happen but *when*.
  - Why does Haiti suffer a seemingly disproportionate number of natural disasters?
9. In large part, these are not natural disasters; they are caused by humans. With fuel too expensive for most of its citizens, charcoal from burnt trees has provided 85 percent or more of the energy in Haiti for decades.
  - What is the causal chain between disaster risk and underdevelopment – and which causes which?
  - Why have reforestation programmes failed, and what would be a better approach? Protected areas must be linked with income generating programme and gas supply national programme should be implemented.

### III. DEVELOPMENT IN HAITI

10. Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere. It ranks 146th out of 177 countries on UNDP's Human Development Index (UNDP, 2007). Seventy-six percent of Haitians live on less than US\$2 per day, while 55 percent live on less than US\$1 per day. Daily food insecurity affects 40 percent of Haitian households. This situation is clearly reflected in chronic malnutrition rates among children under 5 (the national average is 24 percent), and the high prevalence of multiple micronutrient deficiencies among children of all ages and women of childbearing age. Extreme poverty, combined with political, social and economic instability and recurrent natural disasters have exacerbated vulnerability to food insecurity for large sectors of the population in Haiti. Young children and pregnant and lactating women are at particular risk.
11. Women in Haiti are marginalized in relation to their male counterparts but at the same time exercise a considerable degree of autonomy and independence in the management of their households' resources. They are not only the primary workers in Haiti's assembly sector; they also serve in important managerial roles in other parts of the formal economy and are actors in the informal sector, which accounts for over 80 percent of the people engaged in some kind of economic activity. Women are particularly dominant in domestic marketing and the transformation of household agricultural produce. The sharp increase in violence against women endangers women's ability to contribute to these vital subsectors.
12. Haitian women suffer disproportionately from increased crime, with more than 70 percent of the female population reportedly experiencing some form of violence, 37 percent of which is sexual in nature.
  - What can be done to reduce natural disasters made worse by human action?
13. Education and poverty eradication are critical. In addition, reforestation efforts and promotion of alternative fuels are needed.
  - What are the most effective intervention points to break the causal cycle and create a less risky situation that would promote development?

### IV. DISASTER RISK REDUCTION CONTRIBUTIONS OF UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF AND WFP AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

#### *Agencies contribution and joint programming*

14. Through its country programme and inter-agency trust fund projects, UNFPA provides support to maternal health services in four departments of Haiti, and to the integration of HIV/AIDS prevention, reproductive health and attention to sexual violence. In addition, UNFPA supports a national coalition of government, non-governmental and multi-lateral organizations in addressing violence against women through prevention, comprehensive care services and data collection activities.

15. In the context of disaster risk reduction (DRR), UNFPA has contributed to joint efforts along three main areas of support: 1) provision and/or organization of reproductive health and emergency obstetric care, including distribution of safe delivery kits to field hospitals and rape kits for women in shelters and assembly points; 2) promotion and protection of women's rights and dignity in areas vulnerable to or affected by disasters, including monitoring and prevention of sexual violence, including follow-up of reported cases; and 3) special attention to the rights of marginalized groups, including people living with HIV/AIDS, street youth and persons with disabilities, using community networks as direct vehicles for the distribution of emergency commodities and vital supplies.
16. WFP's intervention in Haiti is through two new projects:
  - i) a protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) addressing issues including mother-and-child health, school feeding and emergency response; and
  - ii) a development project addressing disaster risk reduction through food-for-work activities.
17. The main objectives of the PRRO are to:
  - protect livelihoods in crisis situations and enhance resilience to shocks;
  - support the improved nutrition and health status of children, pregnant women, lactating mothers, tuberculosis patients and people with HIV;
  - support access to basic education for school-age children and adults; and
  - strengthen the capacities of the Government and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to establish and manage food assistance and hunger reduction programmes.
18. The main objectives of the development project are to:
  - improve food security of vulnerable households;
  - reduce the impact of natural disasters;
  - develop small infrastructures;
  - rehabilitate roads; and
  - implement reforestation and soil preservation programmes.
19. UNICEF's role in disaster risk preparedness and reduction has been crucial for addressing the needs of children and women considered the most vulnerable to natural disasters and emergencies in Haiti. In the framework of the newly established cluster approach in emergencies, UNICEF is the cluster leader for three main areas: education; nutrition, water and sanitation; and protection. Given the need for coordination and prevention, UNICEF provided technical support to its programme implementing partners in order to strengthen their capacities in terms of emergency prevention and response. Training has been organized in collaboration with the national Department for Civil Protection (DPC) to reinforce coordination and prevention efforts in terms of psychosocial

support in emergencies and disaster preparedness. Sixty governmental and non-governmental organizations working at the field level have been informed about the mechanism of the cluster approach and their role as UNICEF partners in case the need for emergency response arises. During training basic skills on protection in emergencies were taught in line with international standards and focusing on the needs of children (prevention of and response to family separation and a back-to-school programme) and women (prevention of sexual violence, maternal health reference system and HIV/AIDS prevention).

20. In close collaboration with the United Nations country team (UNCT) and under the coordination of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNICEF deployed technical and material resources to guarantee access to basic needs and services for vulnerable families affected during the tropical storm season and advocated for the reinforcement of programmes targeting geographical zones most affected by yearly floods. Finally, UNICEF continues advocating for governmental and civil society engagement in order to address the basic social economic causes of the impacts of natural disaster on children, adolescents and women in Haiti.
  - What are the respective rules of agencies in the UNCT in addressing Haiti's disaster-related problems?
  - Where are the areas (thematic and geographic) of added value and potential synergies?
  - Identify the potential DRR pilot projects to be implemented in 2008 in the framework of UNDAF.

#### *Coordination and monitoring*

21. OCHA's role is key in the management of information and in the implementation of cluster/sector coordination under the responsibility of the Humanitarian or Resident Coordinator. The Humanitarian Coordination Forum is attended regularly by 50 institutions, including MINUSTAH, NGOs, donors, United Nations agencies and national authorities, as a useful forum for sharing information; planning programmes; reviewing food security, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, shelter and logistics issues; and address protection and gender issues.
22. Under OCHA and UNDP coordination, Haiti made some progress in establishing standards in data collection and data sharing in order to develop the quality and quantity of relevant humanitarian information available.
  - What are the strengths and weaknesses of Haiti's current programme to reduce disaster risks?



### *Capacity-building*

23. The national disaster risk management (DRM) system of Haiti is based on a multi-sectoral, decentralized structure in which the DPC has a regulation and coordination role. At central level, decisions and strategies are validated by the ministers; execution is coordinated by the Permanent DRM Secretariat, which brings together a technical focal point from every ministry involved. At the central level there are also two joint coordination platforms: one for civil society and one for the international community. Disaster risk management activities are executed mostly by a network of decentralized committees that cover the country: departmental committees (10 of 10 are in place) managed by the delegates; municipal committees (100 of 150 are in place) managed by the mayors; and local committees (100 of 575 are in place) managed by local councils. These committees represent more than 4,000 people trained according to the DPC training modules who are ready to carry out DRM activities.

## ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CRED	Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
DPC	Department for Civil Protection (Haiti)
DRM	disaster risk management
DRR	disaster risk reduction
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SENAC	Strengthening Emergency Needs Assessment Capacity
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group