

Disaster risk reduction and mobility

Patrice Quesada

We are faced with a complex relationship between mobility, risk and disasters. By fleeing, people can save their lives and sometimes some of their assets but they may also expose themselves to new risks, for instance when they end up in overcrowded temporary shelters. At the same time, lacking the capacity to move under extreme circumstances is itself a major cause of vulnerability. It is also apparent that mobility can be used as a preventive strategy; labour migration, for instance, can help diversify a household's income, thus strengthening resilience in the face of a disaster.

However, little attention has been given so far to the complex role of human mobility in opening up new livelihood opportunities, as well as in driving vulnerability and risk. In this context, how can

we make sure that we are not only investing in reactive humanitarian response but also working to decrease and even prevent forced migration through disaster risk reduction measures?

An essential step for advancing risk reduction measures at the local level is to define mobility-based indicators of vulnerability and resilience that can contribute to measuring and reducing human and economic losses resulting from disasters. In the process of identifying risk- and mobility-related indicators a number of issues have emerged that will require special attention from the disaster risk reduction community in the coming decades. These include:

February 2014

- managing urbanisation processes, and in particular rural-to-urban population movements, to avoid the creation of new risks
- facilitating and managing rural-to-rural migration to strengthen livelihoods and allow for the sustainable management of fragile ecosystems (e.g. pastoralist communities)
- identifying best practices for improving planned relocation efforts in order to reduce exposure to natural hazards and environmental change (e.g. for communities in Small Islands Developing States)
- improving assistance and protection of vulnerable populations (e.g. migrants in crises and trapped populations).

The Hyogo Framework for Action is the main international risk reduction framework.¹ The negotiations for its successor in 2015 provide good momentum to develop tools to take into account the socio-economic costs and benefits of mobility from a risk reduction perspective and to ensure the recognition of mobility as an essential component of the Disaster Risk Reduction discourse.

Patrice Quesada pquesada@iom.int is Transition and Recovery Officer at the International Organization for Migration. www.iom.int

This article has been prepared by the International Organization for Migration in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. For more information on IOM's DRR work, see www.iom.int/cms/drr-compendium

1. www.un-documents.net/hfa.htm