




A US Army soldier carries a child injured during the earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Preparing for such unpreventable natural disasters is key to reducing casualties



By Sir John Holmes, United Nations under-secretary general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator

Building effective humanitarian responses for the 21st century

Coping with and preparing for the hazards caused by climate change are responsibilities that must be shared by all

The rapid and effective response to the Haiti earthquake in January 2010 was possible only because everyone in the humanitarian community worked together in ways unimaginable a decade ago, or even five years ago when the Asian tsunami hit. We must now deepen and widen those partnerships in the months and years ahead in the face of increasing challenges. The G8 and G20 countries are well placed to help drive this process forward.

Profound global changes are increasing needs and vulnerability and shaping the humanitarian landscape in new ways. Climate change is already increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme natural hazard events, particularly floods, storms and droughts. The global food crisis is not over in many poor developing countries and will worsen over time. There is also continuing rapid population growth in many poor countries with demographic shifts and growing urbanisation causing many more people to live in high-risk areas. Land, water and energy scarcities are increasing, as are disturbances to key ecosystems, the risks of pandemics and, in the shorter term, the impact of the current global economic crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable.

Individually, these so-called mega trends are likely to drive up humanitarian needs by creating more poverty and vulnerability, greater levels of inequality, higher unemployment, increased frequency and intensity of disasters, new kinds of conflicts and major weather-driven migrations. Combined, they threaten to create chronic vulnerability on a scale not readily imaginable now.

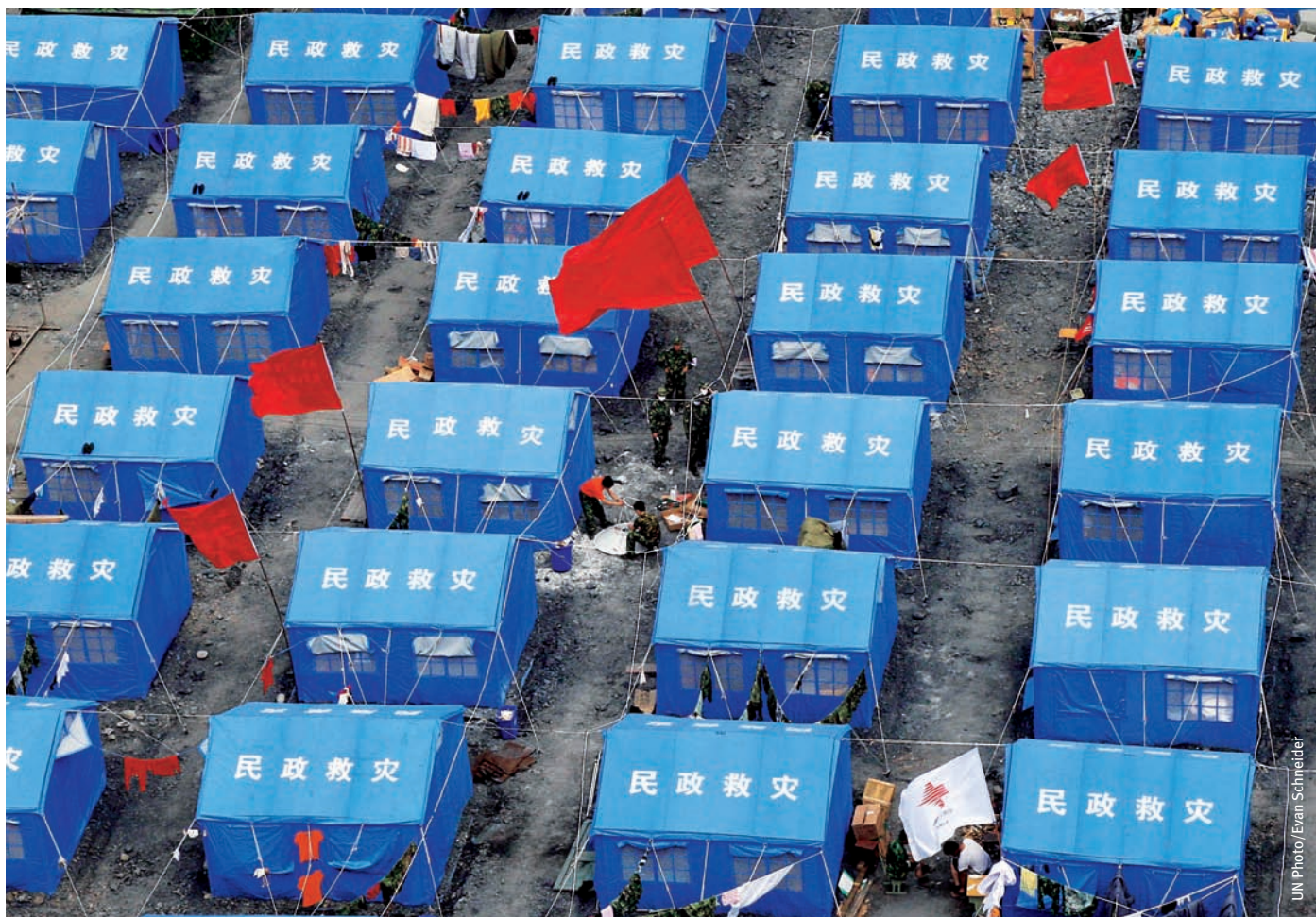
The good news is that this situation is increasingly recognised. Countries, regional organisations, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and many others are using improved systems to make this diversity work for the world. These organisations have started to put in place a humanitarian architecture that can help the world cope: stronger humanitarian coordinators, humanitarian country teams, clusters for coordination and quicker and more equitable collective funding tools. The generosity of donors, be they

governments, individuals, companies or foundations, has improved. The most urgent humanitarian needs are usually funded, although a huge amount are not.

But the world needs to reflect further on how to respond to chronic vulnerability and determine how humanitarians can work best in a world where humanitarian response can no longer be easily defined by the triggers of major natural disasters or human-made conflict. A rethink of the traditional model for saving lives with humanitarian assistance is urgently needed because in the face of new threats, the humanitarian toolbox is often insufficient to change the situation. The role of the international organisations is to support governments by filling in gaps of capacity and resources where they are asked to do so and where they can remain relevant – and are needed now more than ever. But, given the scale of the challenges ahead, the world also needs new ways of working in order to stem the immense human suffering, mass migration, pandemics and resource-based conflicts that could otherwise be overwhelming.

A new model should emphasise prevention and risk reduction at least as much as response. This model would shift the focus toward increasing national and regional preparedness and response capacity, to improve rapid and culturally sensitive action at all stages of the crisis cycle. For example, new partnerships are needed among public authorities, civil society and business actors focused on building preparedness and resilience at every level, from the village or town to the district and the country, as well as at the regional level.

What might such partnerships do? In the first place, partners would work together at building resilience against natural hazards such as floods, earthquakes and drought through early warning systems, water management schemes, reforestation, relocation of communities away from disaster-prone places, and so on. But there is also a need for a broader look at what makes communities able to cope with the extra sudden shocks likely to become the pattern of the future. The idea is not to dictate a particular model, but to put the key actors together and generate new ways of working.



An aerial view of a camp of the Internally Displaced Persons, survivors of the China earthquake, 2008

Making this change will require significant political will and determination on the part of all involved. That is where G8 and G20 countries can come in. Donor countries need to fund disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures. Adaptation to climate change has to include investing in systems for disaster reduction, preparedness and management.

But, ultimately, this needs to happen not through some top-down process, but through systematic engagement at all levels, particularly from the bottom up. It needs to become the natural way of working together, given today's new challenges. And while it is perhaps most needed in vulnerable developing countries, and for the most vulnerable populations, the model is equally applicable to developed countries – and indeed already exists in some.

There is already a head start on reducing disaster. The Hyogo Framework for Action gives a global blueprint for 2005-15 to help governments and organisations assess and reduce risks through planning, training and public education. Examples include making investments that preempt potential future costs of disasters and making sure that schools, hospitals and other key public infrastructure meet certain safety standards. Some 168 governments signed Hyogo in 2005, but many have failed to follow through on the practical measures it proposes.

When it comes to responding to the needs arising from chronic vulnerability rather than those caused by a one-off event – a major natural disaster or human-made conflict – the world also needs to reshape radically its understanding of humanitarian versus development action. Who takes responsibility when there are new and additional humanitarian caseloads in supposedly developmental contexts? What capacities are needed? Where will the money come from? These questions cannot be dodged.

“A rethink of the traditional model for saving lives with humanitarian assistance is urgently needed”

Strategies, both developmental and humanitarian, need to favour resilience to the multiple threats that loom, with national and local authorities and partners on the ground in the lead wherever possible.

Today's problems respect no boundaries and do not fit the model of the crises that have faced the world in the past. We must shape our future practices accordingly. It is no longer enough to see the UN humanitarian agencies, and the humanitarian community at large, just as a sort of international fire brigade, turning up wherever the flames get too high. While the fire brigade will certainly still be needed, and perhaps more than ever in future years – because of extra disasters caused by climate change and because major disasters like the Haiti earthquake can never be stopped – the focus needs to shift fundamentally toward building local, national and regional capacity to deal with these problems and toward prevention, preparedness and disaster risk reduction before disaster and crises strike. ♦



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Children at a school lunch programme in Maharashtra, India. Given the large numbers of children living in poverty and deprivation in India, the State's role as a custodian of child rights needs to be built up

For India's children

Meet Asma Sheikh. Asma studies in a State-run, elementary school in Turbhe, a slum on the outskirts of Mumbai, the world's most densely populated city. She lives in a household of 8 people.

Her father drives an auto-rickshaw and her mother is a domestic worker. Asma would like to be a doctor when she grows up, in preparation of which she keeps a daily diary. Here are a few of her diary entries:

Monday: "Teacher didn't come to school again today so we had no classes. I'm really scared I am not going to pass the exams."

Tuesday: "Today we had no electricity again. I couldn't finish my homework and got to school late."

Wednesday: "Our teacher taught us Chapter 7 in Marathi. I didn't understand any of it."

Thursday: "Today, because we had guests, Mum cooked vegetables. I wish we had guests everyday!"

Friday: "Mum's been ill for 4 days. So we had no money to buy the notebook my brother needed today."

In the last decade, India has seen an unprecedented growth in its economy. The GDP crossed \$1 trillion (\$4 trillion at PPP) in 2007 and touched a 9.20 percent growth rate. In the same year,

India's 11th Five Year Plan noted, "Child poverty is widespread in India". 44 percent of children (aged below 15 years) were living in households below the poverty line in 1993-94. In 1999-2000, this percentage had been 33. In a 2009 report, the Government noted again: "Hunger, particularly undernourishment among children, persists as a major food insecurity issue."

Evidently, the situation of India's children is getting worse. In the case of girls, even the right to survival is under threat. In 2001, only 927 girls were born for every 1000 boys. More girls than boys die without celebrating their first birthday, even in a State such as Kerala, long India's development showcase. Half of India's children are malnourished (in contrast, only one-third of Africa's children are malnourished).

This is an avoidable reality. If we as adults could ensure that the current Constitutional provisions are implemented, the State could fulfill its role of providing a suitable economic and social environment, so that families can ensure the well-being of children.

But this role seems to be de-prioritised. Instead, there is an increased emphasis on market-oriented solutions. So families are spending an increasingly large proportion of their disposable income on (often substandard) education and medical care.

Child Rights and You - CRY's analysis clearly shows that a range of policies are impacting children negatively. For instance, land consolidation for mega infrastructure projects; dilution of worker benefits; misuse of anti-terrorism laws, all of which have an impact on children's lives today and their opportunities for a better tomorrow.

While evidence suggests that only comprehensive interventions addressing the root causes have a sustainable impact, solutions from the State, voluntary and private sectors continue to adopt narrow, relief-based approaches.

India is projected to be among the top 4 economies globally in the coming decades. But the need for increased public investments, especially in education and other social sectors, is not emphasised enough. So there is intense lobbying for a more liberalised economy to emulate models from the developed West. However, we find little zeal to emulate best practices in public education, healthcare or welfare that underpin most Western economies.

Room for optimism

In the same period as the sharp rise in child poverty, we have seen an emerging focus on social justice in State policy, driven by the electoral arithmetic, as shown by steps such as the employment guarantee schemes and a National Commission for Protection of Rights of Children. Scheme-based, palliative measures are not working, as many people realise. Judicial and media activism is growing. This creates some room for optimism.

Needless to say, these scant positives are undercut by a lack of awareness of existing policies among those who urgently need it most and a lack of enforcement of existing laws. Accountability in governance systems and structures is a huge issue.

Which is where the opportunities arise, in the form of rising levels of concern among the middle-class and the nascent CSR consciousness in the form of philanthropic activities.

Towards a solution

Many Indians are today much better off than their parents ever dreamed possible. Inclusive growth and distributive justice is being talked about. And affirmative action is making some difference.

We at CRY have developed our strategic approach on these somewhat slim reasons for hope. This approach works on causes, not symptoms: What keeps children hungry, at risk of exploitation

and out of school? What keeps families at unfairly low incomes and entire communities poor and excluded? The large-scale policy failures are one part of the problem. The other part is located within the family and the community, factors such as deeply ingrained caste discrimination and gender biases. Every deprivation that a family experiences is felt twice as hard by the child, because his present, as well as his future, is being compromised.

At CRY, we root out the reasons that keep children uneducated and vulnerable. We help empower women and children. We fight for equal inclusion of everyone, including the poorest, in a village's decision-making. We build resilient communities who can demand entitlements for their children and themselves and work together to secure them. At the same time, we campaign so that the administration delivers on all its promises – especially of schools and health centres.

Using this approach, we now work with over 700,000 children and their families in 7,745 villages and urban slums, spread across 20 states in India. Our achievements are due to the support of over 250 volunteers and 200,000 individual donors worldwide.

Does it work?

In the last 30 years of CRY's existence, USD 34.6 million has been channelled to over 300 grassroots NGOs, community-based organisations, advocacy groups and alliances. In effect, we have become the incubator of some of India's most successful, sustainable rights organisations. Over 1.5 million children's lives have been directly transformed; 6,500 rural, tribal and slum communities in 20 states have been mobilised for child rights. Together with our partners, we spearheaded the constitutional amendment that made education a fundamental right. Our policy advocacy work is instrumental in raising budgetary allocations to education and health. In summary, CRY is an example of an indigenous philanthropy that is credible, independent, secular, non-violent, and represents the voice of India's children.

In other words, we recreate lives and dreams for children such as Asma, whose potential should not be curbed, no matter how adverse their circumstances are or have been.

What more needs to be done?

However, this is not enough. We need to see children as citizens with equal rights, not as adults in the making or objects of sympathy. We, as parents, consumers, professionals and journalists need to commit to build a future that benefits *all* children, especially those who are the most deprived.

Children are India's largest and least audible interest group. We need to invest in creating a country and a world where children's voices are heard, such that each child can lead a healthy, happy life.

For more information, visit www.cry.org. CRY works with its partners CRY America (www.america.cry.org) in the US and CRY UK (www.uk.cry.org) in UK.

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www.cry.org

Haiti's reconstruction, natural disasters and the climate change challenge

With climate change on the increase, natural disasters will continue to threaten the world. Those living in poorer countries are at most risk, but significant steps can be taken to reduce casualties

By Gordon A. McBean, Science Committee, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk, Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction, University of Western Ontario

On 12 January 2010, a devastating earthquake hit Haiti, causing more than 220,000 deaths, 300,000 injured and 1.3 million displaced. Close to 100,000 homes were destroyed and twice as many damaged. In all disasters, women and children are proportionally more affected, and maternal health is at risk. International commitments at the International Donors' Conference Towards a New Future for Haiti totalled more than \$9 billion with more than \$5 billion pledged for 2010 and 2011. How best to reconstruct Haiti?

Unfortunately the future holds more hazards for Haiti – another earthquake and before then likely more hurricanes. In 2008, hurricanes Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike left a million people affected and tens of thousands of homes and 70 per cent of Haiti's crops destroyed. The destruction by flooding was assisted by previous deforestation of Haitian hill slopes. A long list of major hurricanes over the past decades has left major death tolls and economic and ecosystem devastation.

For the rest of this century at least, climate science predicts increasing risks of heavy precipitation, intense tropical cyclones (including hurricanes) and rising sea levels, leading to extreme high seas. When 133,000 people died after tropical cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar, most drowned in oceanic storm surges. As Margareta Wahlström, the United Nations assistant secretary general for disaster risk reduction, stated in 2009, "over the last two decades (1988-2007), 76 per cent of all disaster events were hydrological, meteorological or climatological in nature; these accounted for 45 per cent of the deaths and 79 per cent of the economic losses caused by natural hazards." All these risks are increasing as the climate warms. She then laid a challenge to the global community: "The real tragedy is that many of these deaths can be avoided." These deaths should be foremost in the dangers that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change aims to prevent. Food production and economic development also cannot proceed in a sustainable manner unless actions are taken.

Both the declaration issued by the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate at L'Aquila, Italy, in 2009 and the 2009 Copenhagen Accord declared "climate

change is one of the greatest challenges of our time". Both stated that emission reductions as well as adaptations to the adverse effects of climate change and disaster risk reductions are essential.

Hazards will continue to occur but they do not need to result in disasters. Hazards are usually natural but it is the human vulnerability that turns them into disasters. Longer-term recovery from the Haitian earthquake and other disasters requires rebuilding efforts focused not only on providing shelter and services, but also on reducing the vulnerability and strengthening the resilience of the people to inevitable hazards in the future.

In the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which also killed more than 200,000 people, countries gathered in Kobe, Japan, in January 2005 for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. The resulting Hyogo Declaration and Hyogo Framework for Action concluded that "we can and must further build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters through people-centered early warning systems, risks assessments, education and other proactive, integrated, multi-hazard, and multi-sectoral approaches and activities in the context of the disaster reduction cycle ... appropriate response to these can and should lead to actions to reduce risks and vulnerabilities in the future".

Actions to reduce disaster risk and adapt to climate change have demonstrated their effectiveness. On 27 February 2010, a magnitude 8.8 earthquake struck Chile. Although 500 times more powerful than the Haitian quake, its impacts on humans were much less – about 800 deaths – but about twice as many buildings were destroyed. Whereas Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, Chile is the wealthiest Latin American country and also has a history of earthquakes. In 1960, Chile suffered the worst earthquake in recorded history, a 9.5 magnitude quake that killed thousands. Actions taken since then have led to better building standards and a sense of earthquake consciousness.

Bangladesh and Myanmar are both densely populated countries with low-lying deltas vulnerable to cyclones and typhoons. In 1970, Bola struck Bangladesh causing 300,000 deaths; in 1991, Gorki killed 139,000 people. Bangladesh has now instituted a 48-hour early warning system and educational and construction programmes

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