

ACTED



During an emergency, quick and effective action is required. However, this action often depends on having plans in place before a disaster strikes. If appropriate reaction is not taken or if the response is delayed, lives, resources, houses and livelihoods will be needlessly lost.

Disaster risk reduction refers to measures taken to prevent, prepare for and reduce the effects of disasters. That is, to predict, prevent or mitigate their impact on vulnerable populations, and respond to and effectively cope with their consequences. [...]

According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), “there is no such thing as a ‘natural’ disaster, only natural hazards.” Though it may seem common sense, this phrase says a lot about the perception of disasters by many populations. Natural hazards exist and are not always avoidable, but disasters can be avoided. ACTED believes Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is an efficient way to go. [...]

ACTED has angled an aspect of its programming on prevention and mitigation. Prevention is first and foremost better information and alert mechanisms, such as early warning systems (EWS). EWS is setting up a monitoring mechanism to identify the occurrence of a crisis, to alert relevant stakeholders as to either prevent the crisis or mitigate its impact. Communities in disaster prone areas can therefore prevent a catastrophe by mapping past occurrences of disasters and identifying the likely occurrence of future disasters and adapting communication patterns, housing or community infrastructure location and the location of livelihoods. This also includes the construction or rehabilitation of disaster resilient facilities such as dams to prevent flooding, draining facilities such as canals, the setup of high points for flood-affected people to evacuate to an area less affected, where they can find shelter, necessary living items, and where they can harbour cattle, etc.

In the Horn of Africa or the Sahel Belt, for instance, ACTED supports local drought early warning systems, operated by the communities (for greater sustainability), with the provision of tools and training, to help fight the tangible effects of climate change in a given region and to contribute to populations’ resilience. The communities are empowered with tools and skills to detect the indicators of drought (receding pasture lands, lower water source levels, animal health, etc.), and are given the means to report such indicators to higher levels of decision making, but also prepare themselves for the effects of drought, e.g. save their harvest for longer periods, produce bulking and post-harvest treatment to create added value, therefore selling their harvest at higher prices, etc.

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(Source : <http://www.acted.org/en/disaster-risk-reduction-anticipating-emergencies-strengthening-resilience>)