

Coherence: *Integrated Thinking and Action*

Coherence is integrated thinking between goals of developmental frameworks. What does that mean? What does it mean at the local level? What does coherent disaster risk management look like? This paper considers those questions and invites you to share your own experiences of integrated thinking and action.

The focus of this project is to look at the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) and local government units (LGUs) in ensuring coherence among the main developmental frameworks. CSOs and LGUs are critical actors as, in many cases, they are the ones closely connected to the realities on the ground, where coherence is most needed.

New frameworks for resilient development

Several global frameworks were established in 2015/2016 – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (CCA) and the New Urban Agendaⁱ. While they have distinct goals and targets, they also have significant overlaps. Taken together they concern ‘climate sensitive risk informed development for communities in all settlements, with a particular attention to the unique contexts of cities’. Development must be sustainable to avoid causing climate change or creating new risk. Climate change mitigation and adaptation have to take account of human development and risk reduction needs to consider vulnerability caused by climate change and by under-, over- or mal-development. All of these challenges play out in the particular context of the city, as well as in other geographic contexts. Finally these frameworks all share a focus on inclusivity – ‘leaving no one behind’ – as an overarching goal. The objectives of the SDGs, SFDRR and CCA frameworks are set out in Table 1 below, from which the overlaps can be seen, particularly in the italicised objectives.



Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015)	Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015)	New Urban Agenda (2016)
<p>The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity –</p> <p>a. end poverty and hunger</p> <p>b. protect the planet from degradation</p> <p>c. ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives</p> <p>d. foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies</p> <p>e. mobilise a global partnership for sustainable development.</p>	<p>Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of <i>integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures</i> that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus <i>strengthen resilience.</i></p>	<p>Strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, <i>in the context of sustainable development</i> and efforts to <i>eradicate poverty</i> -</p> <p>a. holding the increase in the global average temperature</p> <p>b. increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change</p> <p>c. making finance flows consistent... towards low greenhouse gas emissions and <i>climate-resilient development.</i></p>	<p><i>Provide basic services for all citizens</i></p> <p><i>Ensure that all citizens have access to equal opportunities</i></p> <p><i>Promote measures that support cleaner cities Strengthen resilience in cities</i></p> <p><i>Take action to address climate change</i></p> <p>Fully respect the rights of refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons</p> <p>Improve connectivity and support innovative and green initiatives</p> <p><i>Promote safe, accessible and green public spaces</i></p>

Table 1: Objectives of SDG, SFDRR, CCA frameworks and New Urban Agendaⁱⁱ

However, different frameworks, targets, implementation plans, and monitoring tools mean there is a lack of alignment in the work being undertaken to achieve these frameworks.

There is great value in ensuring coherence across the frameworks. Taken individually, none of the frameworks engages with the full spectrum of shocks and risk drivers that might affect a community. Taken together, they better reflect the range of risks that a country might face.

Synergies between policies, programmes and institutions need to be highlighted and supported by the alignment of actions. Coordinating actions taken to deliver against each framework can also help to avoid duplication, maximise gains and manage compromises. As each framework seeks to ‘build resilience’ and manage risk using different timeframes, geographical focuses, scales and sectors, coherence offers a means to address the complexity of the real-world challenges facing national governments.

What is Coherence? Integrated Thinking and Action

‘Policy coherence for development’ has been around for a long time. The establishment of the new global frameworks in 2015-2016 gave an increased impetus to coherence, as the overlapping goals of the frameworks seen in table 1 above clearly demand *integrated thinking* in their implementation. For example, rising temperatures in small island developing states can impede progress against flood protection (growth of mangroves) and damage schools; so the different aspects of development need to be tackled together. A working definition of coherence, for this project, is:

“An approach, processes and actions to integrate implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Paris Agreement and New Urban Agenda; in order to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and the achievement of both common and respective goalsⁱⁱⁱ.”

The readers of this paper are likely to be disaster risk management practitioners, asking what coherent disaster risk management looks like. This paper suggests answers for these and other practitioners. For example the National Society for Earthquake Technology in Nepal, addressing DRM in an earthquake-prone country, has learnt that they have to engage with sustainable development issues to achieve change in building practices and city development, so they naturally move towards coherent disaster risk management (DRM).

What does coherence look like locally? Horizontal coherence

Coherence between frameworks and actors at local level is *horizontal coherence* – linking together actions related to the various frameworks and goals locally. This is important as it is at the local level where frameworks move from *policy* to *action*, transforming lives and livelihoods in local communities. One way to answer this question is by seeing what coherence looks like in different situations and identifying ways of strengthening it further. In the table below, three levels of coherence – *cooperation*, *coordination* and *collaboration* – are identified^{iv}. *Cooperation* is the least demanding level of coherence; *coordination* takes it further, requiring some linking of actions; and *collaboration* means building partnerships and acting together. The table below gives a basic description of each level, highlights possible activities at each, and gives examples.



Level of coherence	Local level actions	Examples
Cooperation Dialogue and information-sharing between different actors	Knowledge-sharing Multi-stakeholder meetings Sharing technical information	<i>Bangladesh:</i> Tools link local DRR and CCA <i>Indonesia:</i> Local development conferences <i>Delhi:</i> Gathering and sharing local risk and resilience data (see below)
Coordination Aligning resources, planning and activities so that they are separate but complementary	Coordinated planning of actions conducted separately by actors Linked and complementary actions Coordinated reporting and monitoring	<i>Philippines:</i> The 'minimum basic services' policy allows pooled funding <i>Global/Local:</i> Local monitoring ie 'Views from the Frontline' and SDI 'Know your City' programmes <i>Kiribati:</i> Coordinated actions between several stakeholders (see below)
Collaboration Drawing together to take joint action through multi-stakeholder partnerships	Building multi-stakeholder partnerships enabling actors to work together with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Shared actions- Shared resources- Shared advocacy and voice	<i>Korea:</i> Saemaul Undong, the 'New Village Movement', emphasised multi-stakeholder collaboration and leadership to strengthen local integrated development <i>Philippines:</i> Multi-stakeholder partnership for sustainable development and risk reduction (see below)

Table 2: Levels of horizontal coherence

These activities and examples show considerable scope for local level coherence applied to the newly established frameworks, involving a wide range of stakeholders including community members, community-based organisations, local NGOs, local government, educational and research institutions and private enterprises. Three case studies illustrating different levels of local level coherence are given below.

Local integrated thinking and action: Case study snapshots

Here are three brief case studies of local level coherence, mentioned in the table above, illustrating the different levels of horizontal coherence.

India – East Delhi. Disasters and development in informal settlements^v

New Delhi is divided into twelve administrative districts of which the East Delhi District is at highest risk. Built on flood plains and a ‘no-go’ area fifty years ago, rapid development of squatter settlements has taken over the vacant land. Corrupt public systems allowed this to continue until the population reached unmanageable proportions. Residential densities are among the highest in the world, with no regard to safety in buildings and infrastructure.

Public services are inadequate and often overstretched, leading to poor levels of public health. All these factors combine with poverty to increase vulnerability to disasters through poor building, infrastructure and services. Local governance is through a complex web of agencies with overlapping jurisdictions and powers. Much of East Delhi is unauthorised since people initially settled without buying land and this becomes an alibi for local government to provide limited services. Communities are unorganised, poor, with large-scale under-employment. These factors in turn drive increasing crime and abuse.

Integrated thinking and action led to the Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS) mobilising a citizen’s Disaster-Watch Forum involving key individuals, including local neighbourhood associations, academics, retired government officials and youth who engaged with local government. Activities included a baseline/risk analysis and vulnerability capacity assessment followed by the development of a road map. Workshops and meetings were held with women’s groups, elected leaders, the elderly and neighbourhood associations.

Youth volunteers provided the ‘hands and legs’ for the Forum’s agenda. They attended specially organised training programmes on preparedness and prevention. Invisible risks – that of bullying, street-side violence, even domestic violence became part of the discussion. Young people became active providers of credible geo-tagged evidence used to address areas of poor public service delivery and safety and security issues for women. A mobile-based application provided photographs with blog reports from various locations in the district. This was used to engage with the local electric company for example, to show them poor wiring on street-side poles that posed a risk for children playing in the vicinity.

Bottom-up pressure was created on various line departments of the local government. Social media was used to confront government when needed. This has led to improvement in service delivery, improvement in addressing grievances and mutual support activities in public programmes. Through the citizen’s forum strong awareness and interest has been built around *risk reduction* issues, even evolving to influence large *developmental issues*.

Coherence level: The information gathering activities led to increased influence on the behaviour of local government, achieving strengthened *cooperation between government and*

the community. There was also *collaboration* between community members involved in the citizen's forum.

Kiribati – A small island developing state exposed to multiple impacts from climate change^{vi}

Communities on Marekei island face multiple impacts from disaster losses, loss of income and of food security resulting from sea level rise. Those living in coastal areas are losing land. Houses have been damaged and destroyed through erosion. Sea water incursion into underground wells means they have to access fresh water from further inland. Staple foods such as breadfruit and coconut are dying and food security and income generation are greatly affected. Ciguatera (food poisoning from a toxin accumulated in fish) resulting from climate change has become common.

GNDR's *Frontline* programme, conducted by the Foundation of the South Pacific Kiribati (FSPK), stimulated integrated thinking and action between government ministries, CSO, NGOs and community groups in different areas to initiate community empowerment, improve water systems, and develop food security. The programme gathered information on local threats, consequences, actions and barriers and formed the basis of establishing community action plans which prioritised issues for each community based on mapping of their resources and issues. These were used to invite the collaboration of Island Council Officers and other CSOS. Overall, 14 communities have been involved in the programme, implementing adaptation activities in partnership with Island Council Officers working on related activities, including Agricultural Officers, Water Technicians and Village Councils.

The programme attracted technical support from government ministries for community groups, and these groups provided traditional knowledge concerning issues such as coastal areas, underground well water, and agriculture. Achieving this faced the challenge that traditional knowledge, for example about building soft sea walls, is held within families and not naturally shared. Changing attitudes and breaking down barriers takes much time and effort.

Coherence level: This case study illustrates a degree of *coordination* between different actions being undertaken separately by government, civil society, community members, technical experts and others. Though working separately, the activities were aligned through close coordination.

Philippines – Gigantes Island: Tackling poverty, disasters and extreme weather events^{vii}

Gigantes is 26km away from the mainland. It is vulnerable to many risks affecting peoples' welfare and development, including hydro-meteorological hazards such as typhoons, thunderstorms, *halakay* (strong winds), monsoon winds, and drought. The poverty incidence rate of 80% is one of the highest in the region, leading to proliferation of unsafe livelihood activities such as illegal fishing, damaging the marine environment, and motorcycles for hire, causing many road accidents. Poverty is worsened by isolation, resulting in other increased risks including limited access to health and birthing facilities, markets and potable water.

A 'convergence' approach – another term for integrated thinking and action – was established through the *Island Sustainable Development Alliance Inc*, of 12 community-based groups establishing a platform for dialogue and closer relationships between communities to foster resilience and inclusive development. In addition to the lead implementers, UP Visayas Foundation and the Centre for Disaster Prevention, local, national and international civil society

organisations were involved. Funding was secured from several governments and INGOs. Local municipality offices took part, regional government agencies collaborated, and local councils, women, businesses, education bodies, youth, resort owners and tour guides were all involved.



Figure 1: Organisations and institutions involved in the convergence strategy on Gigantes Island^{vii}

Actions included participatory risk and capacity needs assessments, alternative food development training for women, strengthening of local committees and volunteer groups, provision of livelihood assistance to disaster survivors, mangrove reforestation and establishing a water supply system. Alongside these actions the programme also led to advocacy and community education, mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into local development plans and assisting local councils in crafting their annual investment programmes (AIPs). Overall outcomes included natural resource protection and biodiversity conservation, eco-tourism development, community disaster resilience, promotion of healthy communities and sustainable livelihoods.

Coherence level: In this case, *collaboration* was based on the establishment of the alliance, drawing in a wide range of stakeholders to a shared plan of action.



Linking local coherence to other levels: *Vertical coherence*

The levels of local coherence in the examples and case studies show there is considerable scope for strengthening local, horizontal coherence by moving from *cooperation* to *coordination* and finally to *collaboration*. However, it is also important to link local action to the global frameworks, which means linking action and policy locally with national, regional and global policy and action. Objectives and policies can flow vertically from international frameworks to the local level to influence action. Other resources including financial may also flow in this direction. Local knowledge and local monitoring can flow from the local to national and international scales. This is *vertical coherence*. Evidence suggests that there are considerable barriers between local and other scales of coherence. The table below summarises these and identifies possible local roles in strengthening vertical coherence.

Barriers to vertical coherence	Local roles in strengthening vertical coherence
Lack of resources: Though resources are vital for action and frameworks such as the Paris Agreement include promises of resources, in practice 'loss and damage' financing is one of the most problematic areas of the global frameworks	Advocacy and campaigning for better provision of resources, including through the knowledge sharing activities below
Lack of understanding of local contexts: For example an observer at the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development reported 'There needs to be space for civil society both to put the spotlight on the disaggregation of government data, and to illuminate the realities and knowledge of those people who, in the official data, <i>remain invisible</i> ^{viii}	Local knowledge creation, local advocacy and national/global advocacy to bring local experience to the attention of local and global actors, for example through civil society coordination of reports and presentations at global platforms
Lack of commitment to local monitoring: Though national monitoring is being developed for the various frameworks there is limited commitment to local monitoring. For example the Sendai Monitor is an online national tool and the only data-gathering conducted below national level is gathering of local disaster data through the 'Desinventar' tool. Therefore it is left to initiatives such as GNDR's ' <i>Views from the Frontline</i> ' and SDI's 'Know your City' to gather local level data.	Strengthening complementary local level monitoring by civil society actors and networks



<p>Lack of understanding of the relevance of high level frameworks at the local level: For example the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments reported that ‘ . . . many Local and Regional Governments and Local and Regional Government Associations are still not acquainted with the SDGs or consider them to be yet another external internationally imposed ‘burden’^{ix}.</p>	<p>Strengthening access to information from the global and national level to inform regional and local actors</p>
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All these activities depend on strengthening *horizontal* coherence to build the ability of local collaboration to participate in knowledge creation, knowledge sharing and advocacy. For civil society, for example, to pursue advocacy and campaigning for resources, better monitoring and better information requires strong collaboration to achieve concerted action. It is likely, therefore, that contributions from the local level to strengthening vertical coherence depend on building strong horizontal coherence – multi-stakeholder collaborations.

Summary and Questions

Coherence at the local level is seen as having considerable potential to grow through progressing from cooperation to coordination and collaboration, as illustrated in the examples and case studies above.

It has been seen that there are a number of barriers to linking coherence *between* levels of governance – *vertical* coherence. Strong horizontal coherence may be an important starting point in strengthening *vertical coherence*, through knowledge creation and advocacy for example. As the implementation of the newly established frameworks gathers pace, the contributions of civil society to breaking down the barriers to vertical coherence will be important.

Do you have a case study of your work which illustrates how you have increased coherence – integrated thinking and action – in your local work, strengthening *horizontal coherence* through cooperation, coordination or collaboration? Or do you have an example of ways in which you’ve contributed to strengthening *vertical coherence* – breaking down barriers between coherence locally, nationally or even globally? It would be particularly helpful to find examples of horizontal and vertical coherence focused specifically on the newly established frameworks, as due to implementation only starting now to gather pace these do not currently exist.

This paper is the starting point for inviting a wider range of case studies reflecting different aspects of coherence in different contexts. From these our understanding of coherence at the local level can be developed further, strengthening integrated thinking and action both horizontally, in local level partnerships and collaborations, and vertically, to engage with national governments and international agencies.



References

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New Urban Agenda: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

ii As above

iii Adapted from 'Coherent pursuit of the Sustainable Development Agenda, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Paris Agreement on Climate Change at national, sub-national, and local levels: A discussion paper for development partners in the Asia-Pacific region' (2018) Gregory Pearn,

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viii <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/monitoring-sustainable-development-goals-community-level>

ix Local And Regional Governments' Report To The 2018 HLPF 'Towards The Localization Of The

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