



## Background paper on Roundtable 4:

### Keeping the focus where it should be: Reducing vulnerability and building resilience

Poor households manage a myriad of risks on a daily basis. These risks emanate from a great range of sources, including natural hazards, environmental degradation, social marginalization, conflict, lack of access to information and services, etc... While the poor face higher levels of risk than wealthier households, they have significantly fewer assets to deal with shocks.

Understanding what makes and keeps people vulnerable and what contributes to their resilience is core to poverty reduction. In the end, when we talk about disaster risk reduction or climate change adaptation, we are really talking about development effectiveness. It's about empowering people to understand that they can affect what happens to them and to act upon that knowledge to drive the course of their lives and the development of their communities.

While the poor have developed a range of innovative coping strategies to manage risk, the risk landscape is changing rapidly. Climate change, as well as other factors, is contributing to patterns that intensify, accumulate and compound risk. As different risks become more interdependent, this creates a much more complex and challenging environment for humanitarian and development actors, where institutional barriers for understanding and cooperation become irrelevant and even detrimental to providing effective support to poor communities in reducing risk and recovering from shocks. This highlights the urgent need for inter-disciplinary approaches to address the root causes of vulnerability.

A unified focus on understanding vulnerability and how to build resilience is called for. Just as climate change is amplifying risks, the global visibility of the climate change agenda provides an opportunity for CCA to become an amplifier of key messages and mobilizer of actors around the need to support and empower poor communities to better manage risk. A focus on vulnerability reduction—regardless of whether that vulnerability emanates from environmental, health, social, or economic triggers—provides a critical opportunity for humanitarian, development, and a range of stakeholders to coalesce and leverage efforts in support of this key aspect of human and social development.

This roundtable will focus on how the risk landscape is changing, explore what this means for humanitarian and development agencies, and develop practical, actionable recommendations for supporting on the ground climate and disaster risk reduction.

Roundtable participants are asked to consider the following questions for discussion:

- What will humanitarian and development actors need to consider in terms of capacity development, policy and institutional arrangements to address the increasing complexity of the risk landscape?
- How can different communities work together to support local level action?
- What are some practical ways to bridge the “policy – practice” gap?
- What are some promising examples where humanitarian action is contributing to sustainable development goals and vulnerability reduction?
- What recommendations do we have for policy makers? For climate change negotiators?
- What needs to happen in at the COP-15 for communities to get the support that they need for building resilience?

