

Management response

to the Partners for Resilience (PfR) 'Ethiopia Integrated Risk Management Program: Final Evaluation'

Programme and context

The work of Partners for Resilience (PfR) centres on making people, communities, civil society organisations and systems better prepared to withstand hazards - and enabling them to bounce back more quickly and emerge stronger from shocks and stresses. PfR promotes four building blocks, helping communities to:

- *anticipate* the risks they face,
- *respond* when disaster strikes while maintaining basic structures and functions,
- *adapt* to changing risks and livelihood options, and,
- *address* root causes as active partners with government in implementing disaster risk reduction.

The PfR alliance consists of five Dutch based organisations: Cordaid, Care Nederland, Wetlands International, The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and the Netherlands Red Cross and about 50 partner civil society organisations (CSO's) worldwide - active at grassroots, national, regional and global level. PfR is supported by, and connected to many other stakeholders, who jointly contribute in creating safer environments for all: individuals, governments, private sector, institutions, civil society organisations, and community-based organisations (CBO's). PfR believes a community approach will be strengthened if the institutional environment can be made more conducive to climate and ecosystem DRR, and we engage with civil society and government stakeholders to apply a combined approach. PfR is active in ten countries, four regions and at global level.

In Ethiopia, the first phase of PfR was implemented from 2011 to 2016 in five woredas (districts), by the Ethiopian branches of Cordaid and CARE, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), as well as five local implementing partners. The Climate Centre and Wetlands International provided technical advice and support. Activities on the ground revolved on soil and water conservation, irrigation and water schemes, setting up and strengthening community structures, cooperatives, saving groups, and sharing essential practical and theoretical knowledge.

In 2018, two years after the implementation period, an independent evaluation of the first phase of the PfR programme (2011-2016) in Ethiopia was commissioned.

Purpose of the evaluation

The objective of the evaluation was to assess

- the relevance of PfR1 as it was implemented in Ethiopia,
- the efficiency and effectiveness of programme implementation,
- its impacts on community resilience, and
- the sustainability of these effects.

The evaluation (also) meant to serve a learning goal: to understand the programme as it was implemented vis-à-vis how it was planned on paper, to assess what worked well and where there was room for improvement, and to inform future programming. The latter part is particularly relevant given that the evaluation was implemented at a time when the second phase of PfR, focused on policy dialogue and advocacy, was already under way.

Observations regarding the report

- *The findings of the evaluation suggest that PfR has had a substantial positive impact on the resilience of programme communities. On average, many communities experienced increases in incomes, diversified livelihoods, improved access to credit, and increased food security.*
- *However, in absolute terms, some indicators have remained at relatively low levels, unsurprisingly so given that (i) PfR identified and worked in the most vulnerable communities with poorer-than-Ethiopian-average baseline conditions, and (ii) the programme areas were affected by repeated, severe drought*

episodes during and after the phase-out of PfR. In this light, the sustained achievements highlighted by the evaluation are remarkable.

- It is worth highlighting that, for reasons of funding and ownership, we took the conscious decision to implement this evaluation using a consortium of local consultants - the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) and Bahir Dar University. While this has meant that quality assurance was more taxing, it has created good ownership of the evaluation among the PfR country team and strengthened evaluation capacity in Ethiopia, something the consultants and country team members highly appreciated.

Main evaluation findings, management response and follow-up

PfR wishes to respond to the research team's key findings and recommendations and to outline how these will be followed-up on. The findings and recommendations are directly taken from the original report:

1. **Finding: Relevance:** The interventions selected and implemented, the methods used, and the processes followed were relevant to the needs of target communities, government development priorities and policies. The programme components were relevant to the risk-reduction needs of target communities, and the approach used (IRM) was appropriate. However, the programme design did not include a clear theory of change or a complete log frame with targets and indicators; what was in the programme documents did not clearly present flows of outcomes, outputs and activities, and this resulted in gaps in reporting and in the measurement of results. Global leadership and management were relatively top down and bureaucratic; involvement of the country programme team during the design phase was minimal.
Recommendation: Considerable time and expertise have to be invested in programme design, involving local consortium members and implementing partners.

Reaction and follow-up: Due to the novelty of the alliance and its IRM approach, the collaboration at country level (neither in Ethiopia nor in the other 'PfR countries') was not yet strongly established in 2011 and 2012, which hampered joint country level programme design and planning. PfR has made steps towards further local ownership and contextualisation and will continue to do so. During the PfR2 phase (2016-2020) substantial time (9 months) has been allocated for the (local level) inception phase, ensuring local ownership and a shared responsibility among civil society organisations and communities. During this second phase a Theory of Change was developed and is regularly updated. In future, more emphasis will be placed on a more direct inclusion of the local communities and local authorities.

2. **Finding: Effectiveness:** The findings indicate that the programme reached 114,429 people in 37 communities, well above the target figure of 90,000. The programme met almost all its major targets for building community resilience, with the exception of irrigation, the provision of live animals, rangeland management, and the construction of 'sand dams' (rubble and cement walls on a seasonal sandy river). Planned irrigation activities were not implemented in Nyangatom, Ebinat, and Dewe woredas due, respectively, to longstanding conflicts with neighbouring woredas, design and construction problems leading to dam collapse and siltation, and low water capacity.
Recommendation: No recommendation provided.

Reaction and follow-up: having reached more people than anticipated is a great result. Unfortunately not all irrigation activities have been implemented and it requires to analyse risks carefully before implementation. The country team believes that programme has sufficiently considered upcoming and recurrent droughts in the programming as most of the activities were related to climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. However, this is a reminder that the translation from programming into practice can be challenging due to external factors such as conflict. Therefore conflict sensitivity should be incorporated as well, and whether or which efforts should be taken to mitigate these risks, or (in case these efforts yield no result) to abandon implementation in this area.

3. **Finding: Effectiveness:** Continuous engagement of stakeholders by alliance members and implementing partners helped achieve buy-in of IRM by local government, which was closely involved in using IRM in planning and implementation of its own. However, despite efforts by alliance members to facilitate activities and dialogue with central government focusing on IRM, the programme's influence on policy at the national

level has not materialized as planned. In fact, the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Law prohibits NGOs from major advocacy on policy at the national level.

Recommendation: Paying proportionately more attention to the other two programme pillars (community resilience, CSO capacity building) would have been ideal.

Reaction and follow-up: this is a very relevant recommendation and has been fully embraced during the second phase of PfR (2016-2020) in Ethiopia. The programme has shifted from community implementation towards capacity strengthening of local CSOs in order to reach more people. However it remains challenging to work in an environment where space for dialogues with authorities for integrated risk management is limited.

4. **Finding: Effectiveness:** 24% of respondents also stated that they were food secure, exactly double the number in the programme's own baseline survey, despite chronic drought. However, limited resources and low levels of capacity in the community limited the ability of the majority (76%) to withstand the drought that began right after the programme phase-out. This increase is against the national food security trend during that period. Among the food-secure respondents, however, 87% rated the contribution of the programme as "moderate and above".

Recommendation: Much needs to be done regarding the capacity of individuals, households and communities to remain resilient in the face of a series of natural and human-induced hazards.

Reaction and follow-up: the approach appears successful, however the scale of the result could be improved by expanding and intensifying the efforts. Also it is recognised that handing-over responsibility for continuation of efforts to strengthen food security, needs to be carefully planned and organised. This includes also the continuous capacity strengthening of the local government on IRM technical issues and project management, to provide for an effective and sustainable handover (see also under 'sustainability').

5. **Finding: Efficiency:** The programme used 84% of its planned budget, a good performance by the standards of comparable programmes. It was also cost effective compared to other local development actors' programmes since almost all PfR implementing partners used labour provided by communities with only minimal need for training. The programme was well managed and coordinated at all levels. Alliance members facilitated different activities such as planning, monitoring, sharing of experience, documentation of best practice, and staff training. However, it was felt that the technical support by the Climate Centre and Wetlands International, who were not based in Ethiopia and operated remotely, could have been more effective had they been allocated more budget and been able to provide face-to-face support to partners in country. The resources and time involved in experts and expatriates from different implementing partners trying to provide technical support for IRM work in the field in four regions were too great, especially for these two agencies.

Recommendation: For timely and adequate technical support there must be an in-country presence and sufficient budget for all consortium members. The consortium approach should involve having a wider range of skills available at any one project site, rather than dividing sites up by agency and having some only provide support remotely or from abroad.

Reaction and follow up: the decision to have no permanent in-country presence was a conscious one, based on available resources and management principles. To make this support successful in future programmes, engagement should be more intensive – stronger contextualised plans for capacity strengthening and technical support, clearer budgets and better time allocation should accommodate this to ensure effective implementation.

6. **Finding: Efficiency:** While most activities planned for the full five-year programme period were eventually implemented, the delay in start-up in all intervention sites consumed considerable time for implementation, and there were delays in signing agreements and releasing funds, limiting community impact. This resulted in a reduction in the implementation period to at most three years. In newly expanded programme sites such as Dire Dawa, there was not enough time (two years) for programme interventions to mature compared to other locations (five years). Overall, some estimate that up to two years was used merely to understand the IRM approach for the purposes of planning and selecting partners. At the time of the evaluation, some key informants and partners staff still expressed concern that they do not have clarity on the concept of IRM.

Recommendation: Implementing partners need to have a clear understanding of the nature of the programme (the IRM approach) and the design must be adapted to the country context. IRM requires more time (about

two years for early starters and about three for extension sites such as Dire Dawa) to internalize, undertake assessments of specific areas, and implement and monitor plans.

Reaction and follow up: policy alignment, behavioural change, training and capacity strengthening requires a long-term strategy as the above finding illustrates. It is therefore positive that the engagement with communities continued through dialogues during the second phase of PfR in these same locations, building on and reinforcing the IRM approach. The continued engagement of the local partners post-PfR 2011-2015 however contributes to a more effective application of IRM within the respective organisations in current and future programmes.

7. **Finding: Sustainability:** In some woredas, programme interventions were handed over to the government by the end of the programme period, but it was found out that about two-thirds of the interventions did not continue, a result confirmed by the household survey in which only just under 35 per cent said interventions continued after phase out. PfR1 ended before some interventions were mature enough to be sustained, and were handed over to government and communities as they stood. Due to time constraints, the programme was implemented in no more than three years, and now communities still require support from various organizations to sustain programme activities and assets. But had PfR2 continued in the way communities expected, better achievements and sustainability might have been obtained.

Recommendation: More careful planning for programme phase-out and sustainability is required.

Reaction and follow-up: it is regretful that, after intensive training on IRM, organisations were not able to continue their community engagement. While the aims of the second phase of PfR (with a focus on dialogues) is fully supported, it remains important that community engagement can continue in parallel, up until the moment that activities are mature enough to be handed-over to other stakeholders. Inclusion of capacity strengthening of (local) government on IRM, technical support and process management is also essential for the sustainable handover of activities. Stating the conditions and managing expectations for this handover requires (more) emphasis in future programmes. PfR will also advocate towards donors that changing subsidy policies need to be sufficient considerate, ensuring sustainability of previous policies, and require a longer period to transform from one to another policy/ subsidy.