Disaster Risk Reduction and Nutrition

**Disaster risk** is the potential loss expressed in lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and services, which could occur in a particular community or a society due to the impact of a natural hazard.

**Disaster risk reduction (DRR)** is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing that risk. Specifically, the purpose of disaster risk reduction is to minimise vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society in order to avoid (prevent) or to limit (mitigate and prepare for) the adverse impacts of natural hazards, and facilitate sustainable development.

**UNICEF’s DRR goals:**
1. DRR for children and women is a national and local priority
2. Different risks faced by girls, boys, adolescents and women are identified and addressed
3. Safer and more resilient conditions for girls, boys and women
4. Strengthened humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery through capacity development

**Introduction to DRR and Nutrition**
- Both sudden on-set disasters and chronic long-term disasters have potential impacts on food security, disease and the nutritional status of vulnerable populations.
- Whilst in a disaster everybody can be at risk of malnutrition, infants, young children, and pregnant and lactating women are particularly vulnerable.
- Climate change will increase the risk of hunger and under nutrition over the next few decades.
- UNICEF has a key role to play in ensuring that its nutrition work aims to reduce disaster risk.
- Efforts to promote and protect the nutritional status of children and mothers in emergency prone countries are critical to ensure better resilience and faster recovery.

**Child-centred DRR requires focusing on the specific risks faced by children, as well as involving children in efforts and initiatives to reduce disaster risk.**
Disasters negatively impact children’s and women’s rights, disproportionately affect poor countries and poor communities, erode development gains and set back progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With its local and national presence before, during and after disasters, and working across all key programme sectors, UNICEF is ideally placed to address disaster risk and to undertake risk reduction measures.

**Type of activity | Examples of key DRR and Nutrition actions**
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**Prevention/Mitigation**
- Incorporate disaster risk assessments into existing nutrition assessments and monitoring, and ensure nutrition sector provides input into national and community level disaster risk assessments.
- Reduce vulnerability through promoting improved care practices (such as exclusive breast-feeding and appropriate complementary feeding) and protect nutritional status in hazard prone areas.
- Strengthen community health systems for early diagnosis, referrals and follow-up of cases with acute malnutrition.

**Preparedness**
- Link nutrition actors and services to disaster early warning systems at national, sub-national and community level.
- Preposition stocks (regional and national hubs) for identified ‘at risk’ populations.
- Scale up communication for change behaviours in vulnerable communities.

**Response/Early Recovery**
- Use the opportunity of the emergency to build the sustainable capacity of government and other nutrition partners.
- Establish and strengthen ongoing nutrition assessment/surveillance mechanism.
- Focus on alternative sources of food and how different food sources can be combined to maximise nutrition outcomes for communities.

For further information, please refer to the DRR and Nutrition Technical Note or contact Dolores Rio (drio@unicef.org) and Antony Spalton (aspalton@unicef.org)