

Executive summary

Pursuing disaster risk reduction on fractured foundations

The case of Chad

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Cover photo: Desert vehicle with an anti-tank gun being used by rebels in Chad. © Jeroen Oerlemans/Panos

About this paper

This report is part of the project ‘When disasters and conflict collide: uncovering the truth’, a collaboration between the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The lead researcher is Katie Peters, Senior Research Fellow, ODI (k.peters@odi.org.uk).

Available in this series

Peters, K. (2018) *Accelerating Sendai Framework implementation in Asia: disaster risk reduction in contexts of violence, conflict and fragility*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11153-accelerating-sendai-framework-implementation-asia-disaster-risk-reduction-contexts-violence-conflict)

Peters, K. and Peters, L.E.R. (2018) *Disaster risk reduction and violent conflict in Africa and Arab states: implications for Sendai Framework Priorities*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11208-disaster-risk-reduction-and-violent-conflict-africa-and-arab-states-implications-sendai-framework)

Peters, K., Holloway, K. and Peters, L.E.R. (2019) *Disaster risk reduction in conflict contexts: the state of the evidence*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11340-disaster-risk-reduction-conflict-contexts-state-evidence)

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Peters, K. (2019) *Disaster risk reduction in conflict contexts: an agenda for action*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11408-disaster-risk-reduction-conflict-contexts-agenda-action)

Multimedia content

- Online feature including videos from Colombia, Lebanon, and Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms Mami Mizutori (www.odi.org/disasters-conflict)
- Podcast series: *When disasters and conflict collide* (www.odi.org/opinion/10507-podcast-series-when-disasters-and-conflict-collide)
 - Episode 1: *Conflict: the elephant in the diplomatic meeting room*
 - Episode 2: *The politics of disasters*
 - Episode 3: *A call to action*

All reports and content as well as information on the project can be found online: www.odi.org/projects/2913-when-disasters-and-conflict-collide-uncovering-truth

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Executive summary

Conventional disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts tend to focus on mitigating risk related to short-term, extreme events associated with high-visibility catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods and landslides. However, some of the most neglected and unreported humanitarian crises around the world are caused by long-term conditions such as drought. The effects of slow-onset disasters are particularly devastating when compounded by conflict, fragility and violence, but this aspect of DRR has generally been neglected in mainstream thinking and practice.

Known for its vulnerability to drought and food insecurity, Chad illustrates how conflict can undermine the foundations of development and economic growth. This case study challenges conventional thinking on how to promote DRR in a situation of conflict and poor governance. Instead of pushing forward with recommendations for more financial resources and technical capacity, the research questions whether an alternative, more politically astute approach could be taken to ensure systematic integration of risk into development decisions. Simply put, this framing would employ a ‘networking’ strategy applied through a conflict lens. Starting with what already exists, it would recognise where political traction could provide a viable entry point to advance progress on DRR and disaster risk governance as part of overall efforts to adapt to climate change and promote sustainable development.

DRR in Chad: is it ‘destined to fail’?

Chad presents a complex mix of intersecting risks and vulnerabilities. In addition to climate change, chronic poverty and lack of development, the country has experienced recurrent civil conflict, ethnic tensions and displacement. Over the past 30 years, the country has faced more than 40 natural

hazard-related disasters affecting the lives and livelihoods of more than 5 million people.

Fractured risk governance structures do little to address the chronic vulnerabilities that increase citizens’ susceptibility to disasters. Years of civil war and the co-option of armed groups and rebel leaders into government institutions have led to inadequate governance characterised by clientelism, corruption and high staff turnover. The absence of a social contract and lack of trust between citizens and government adds an additional layer of difficulty in implementing normative approaches to DRR. With inadequate technical and financial resources, poor data and ineffective coordination mechanisms to support disaster risk assessment and management, it is perhaps not surprising that interviewees described DRR in Chad as ‘destined to fail’.

This apparent failure of conventional DRR approaches creates an impetus for policy-makers and practitioners to rethink their tactics. There is a need to reconnect people with institutions, rebuild the social contract and reinforce the role of the state regarding the welfare of the individual.

DRR may only be effective where there is some level of basic governance functioning and political will. Improving understanding of the links between peace, development and DRR could help devise ways to strengthen the social contract and build trust between citizens and government, setting the stage for a more networked approach to DRR.

Could a ‘system of strategies’ be more effective?

Standard approaches to DRR typically refer to state-centric entry points, with national governments establishing the policy, implementation and financing architecture. Assessments tend to start at the top, examining

national disaster management laws and how policies are implemented. While Chad currently lacks effective policy and institutional arrangements for DRR in the conventional sense, it does have a relatively strong institutional and operational framework to address drought and food insecurity, partly because these areas attract external donor support.

More recently, climate change adaptation has featured high on the list of priority challenges included in the government's national development planning process. Climate change funding could provide an as-yet unexplored opportunity to advance DRR since both approaches aim to protect and secure well-being. At present, this opportunity is limited by Chad's lack of institutional commitment and stability, but there is potential to exploit donors' desire to use climate funds as part of a broader effort to foster institution-building, and climate funds would in theory flow to activities of relevance to DRR.

Within the international community, climate security is being used increasingly as a discourse through which to understand intersecting risks. This could represent an alternative policy entry point for DRR as part of a broad range of response options. However, practitioners must also take care not to demonise those vulnerable to climate-related disasters as a security threat. More work is required to understand and define the role that DRR could play in this field. The concept of 'building resilience' continues to enjoy popularity among development, humanitarian and climate agencies. While there is some evidence that efforts to build resilience would also advance DRR outcomes in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, the concept is still ill-defined, and resilience-building actions have yet to significantly improve disaster risk governance at the scale required.

A networked approach, described as a 'system of strategies' by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), would take a broader view of DRR, and aim to strengthen collaboration among different sectors. This idea turns the concept of DRR on its head. Instead of starting with a blueprint for DRR, it suggests treating DRR as an outcome, where multiple actors and interventions contribute to a system in which DRR ambitions are adapted to the institutional

and political economy of the context. Drought risk management, food security and climate change and resilience initiatives contribute to many aspects of sustainable development, including DRR; what is required is a comprehensive analysis of how they can come together to build synergy and improve DRR outcomes.

Recommendations

While it is not disputed that more investment is required to promote DRR in Chad, a 'system of strategies' may offer a more appropriate framework than more conventional approaches. This new narrative would also take the conflict context as the starting point, and consider how fostering disaster resilience could form part of a broader agenda to rebuild the social contract. Where aspects of effective DRR action are being implemented at the local level by non-state actors, effort should be put into understanding how they can move from discrete projects to form an effective entry point for new risk governance mechanisms and institutions as part of a long-term agenda to build capacity from the grassroots up. This approach could be channelled through several routes, as follows.

Support Chad's commitment to the Sendai Framework

This includes providing technical support to the Chad government for reporting against its commitments in a way that is inclusive of current initiatives relevant to DRR. Employing such a 'system of strategies' approach would test new ideas and establish a more positive baseline. Any new investment in data collection and analysis should ensure interoperability and be streamlined with existing national information systems. Capacity-building efforts should focus on ensuring continuity in government efforts and building cross-sector collaboration.

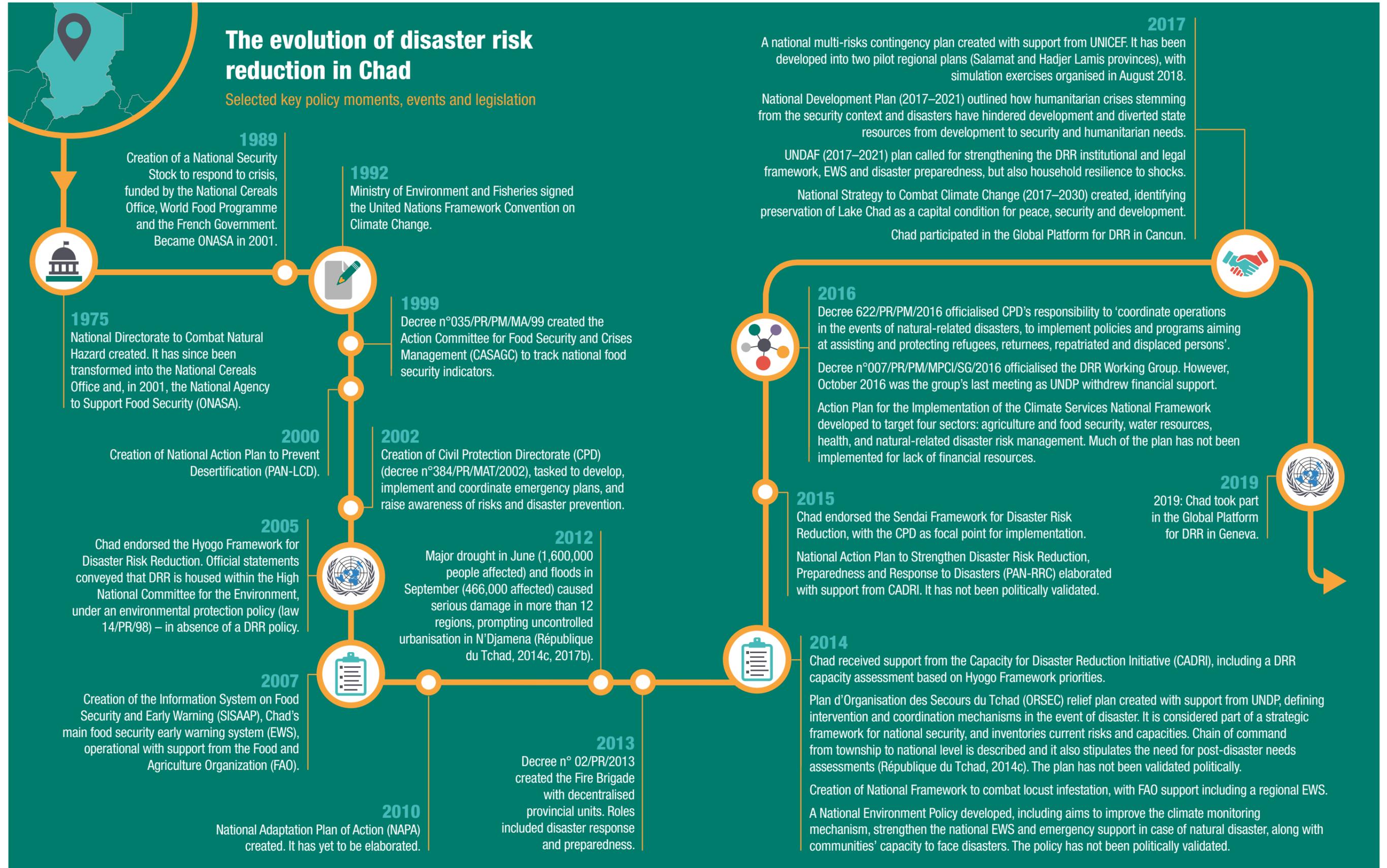
Move from crisis response to more proactive risk management

Build on the UN disaster prevention agenda to strengthen capacity for risk management and adopt more flexible approaches, such as crisis modifiers, shock-responsive programming and forecast-based finance.

View alternative framings of risk management as an opportunity

This includes finding new ways to promote the mainstreaming of DRR through traditional sectors such as health, education, water and

agriculture, as well as adopting risk-informed approaches to sustainable development. At the same time, harnessing opportunities offered by international climate funds could yield additional resources.





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