**CI Humanitarian brief**
**TACKLING EMERGENCIES IN AN ERA OF CLIMATE DISRUPTION: reducing risk and building resilience for the poor and vulnerable**

**Summary**
This brief puts forward key messages and actions on the links between climate change, emergencies and humanitarian actions in the context of the World Humanitarian summit process:

- CARE seeks a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome. Climate change increasingly undermines this objectives and more and more erodes development progress resulting in a great injustice
- There is an overwhelming scientific consensus that climate change increasingly brings adverse impacts to the livelihoods in particular of poor and vulnerable people who have contributed least to the problem, including the ecosystems they depend on;
- the footprint of climate change in triggering prolonged humanitarian crises is also expected to grow;
- The higher the level of global warming the more severe will be the impacts, why cutting fossil fuel emissions and preparing for and dealing with climate change impacts are central also to humanitarian missions
- Key recommendations include:
  - Adopt a comprehensive climate risk management approach across the emergency-development spectrum,
  - Address the needs and capacities of the most vulnerable in climate and disaster action,
  - Implement a gender equitable approach that addresses structural inequalities,
  - Scale-up financial resources for humanitarian action, DRR and climate adaptation while avoiding double-counting towards commitments,
  - Add the humanitarian voice to the calls for a rapidly decarbonized world, and adapt its operations accordingly.

**Overview**
*Climate Change increases disasters and its impacts*
In the past decade, disasters have continued to exact a heavy toll across the world with over 700 thousand lives lost, 1.7 billion people affected, and economic losses of USD 1.4 trillion. It is estimated that while 70 per cent of deaths are caused by earthquakes, climate-related disasters now account for over 80 per cent of all disaster events and contribute enormously to economic losses and short and long-term population displacement triggered by disaster events. UNISDR

also assessed that in the past 10 years 87% of disasters have been climate-related.[i] The most recent Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction concluded that "through changing temperatures, precipitation and sea levels, amongst other factors, global climate change is already modifying hazard levels and exacerbating disaster risks."[ii]

The global average temperature has already warmed by more than 0.8 degrees Celsius, with already visible impacts across the globe. In many regions, in particular developing countries, this has already triggered a higher warming level. The increasing trend in extreme weather events is consistent with what climate scientists have been predicting for many years. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report stresses that risks associated with extreme weather are increasing with rising temperatures. Heat waves are already and will become more common, as storm winds more violent, droughts intensify and rain fall will intensely triggering dangerous floods and landslides[iii]. Furthermore, other climatic changes such as slow-onset events (e.g. glacial melting, ocean acidification, sea-level rise) add additional stress to vulnerable communities, and degrading the ecosystems they depend on. Managing ecosystems to conserve and improve their health is crucial for sustaining the various ecosystem services important to human well-being. Healthy ecosystems
also act as buffers, increasing the resilience of natural and human systems to climate change impacts and disasters.iv

*Climate risks increase significantly at levels of warming above 1.5 degrees*
Keeping warming to 1.5 degrees could significantly limit the risks, while already between 1.5 and 2 degrees increase risks would become much bigger.[v] Under the current trajectory of global emissions, with potential global temperature increase of 4 or more degrees Celsius, large areas of the planet will likely become inhospitable or uninhabitable, due to sea level rise, desertification, and glacial retreat which in turn will increase the risk of human mobility[vi] and threats for human security.[vii]
Thus, continued emission of greenhouse gases increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems.[viii]

*More frequent disasters transform societies to a state of permanent crisis*
As climate change interacts with the social, economic and political landscape, countries will risk instability and at worse, violent conflict. Resource scarcity such as water shortage and food insecurity, exacerbated by climate change, and when combined with other factors including marginalization and economic and social grievances will increase conflict[ix]. Loss and damage from widespread climate impacts will increase leading to more human migration and increasingly severe and frequent humanitarian disasters.
The increasing frequency of disasters is transforming some highly vulnerable countries and communities that once experienced cyclical or isolated climatic shocks, to a state of permanent and protracted crisis where emergency is now the new norm. Greater numbers of people in low-income countries plus highly poor and marginal communities in other countries are now increasingly vulnerable to the loss of livelihoods and assets from climate exacerbated impacts.

In conflict- affected areas, climate disasters create complex emergencies that lead to more costly and comprehensive responses. For example, some research suggests that climate

change helped create the conditions for war in Syria, through deteriorating agricultural conditions caused by an unprecedented drought between 2006 and 2010, which contributed to more than 1 million of farmers flee to cities.[x] Climate change poses a formidable challenge for countries to continue to deliver development, as recurrent disasters continually erode assets.

*Climate change increases resource needs, but proactive investments pay off*
There is overall also a continued gap in terms of meeting humanitarian aid needs.[xi] The costs for climate change adaptation, and the residual loss and damage in developing countries are expected to increase significantly.[xii] Many analyses have also shown that investing in disaster preparedness is much more effective than emergency response assistance. This can be similar for adaptation interventions, as e.g. research in a CARE programme in Niger has shown.[xiii] This underlines the crucial importance of investments into disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation as a means of crisis prevention, which has also been stressed by a report recently prepared for the foreign ministers of the G7.[xiv]The fact that climate change has mostly been caused by overall a minority of wealthier populations in the world should also be reflected in the generation of additional resources.

*Tackling the needs of the most vulnerable requires a comprehensive approach*
It is estimated that by 2030 around 200-300 million people in the countries most exposed to increased incidence of floods, droughts and heat waves- mainly in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia- will fall in the extremely poor category making them particularly vulnerable to climate-related disasters.[xv] Also the IPCC concluded that "Climate change will amplify existing risks and create new risks for natural and human systems. Risks are unevenly distributed and are generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities in countries at all levels of development."[xvi]

Tackling the needs of the most vulnerable people requires a comprehensive approach involving action on climate change, disaster risk reduction, ecosystem management, sustainable development, resilience and humanitarian action. The way the international community deals with the increase and severity of climate-related disasters and climate disruption must now change, as business as usual is no longer an option.

*Role of 2015 policy agreements*
The international agreements to be reached on the post-2015 sustainable development goals and the future climate change agreement under the UNFCCC, together with the new Sendai agreement on disaster risk reduction and the Financing for Development (FFD) process, are an opportunity to drive forward ambitious action and a more integrated approach. For example, governments "recognize the need for the coherence  of  developmental and humanitarian finance to ensure more timely, comprehensive, appropriate and cost-effective approaches to the management and mitigation of natural disasters and complex emergencies" in the recent FFD outcome.[xvii]

 International agreements to be reached on the post 2015 must be people-centred and ensure a focus on the poorest and most marginalized/at risk people, who bear the highest burden of disasters. Efforts must focus on protecting livelihoods and productive assets as well as lives.

Synergies and cooperation should also be promoted on a more technical level. A concrete example is the UNFCCC Loss and Damage Mechanism's invitation to collaborate on assessing the capacities of humanitarian and disaster risk management systems related to climate change loss and damage.[xviii]

The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, however, will also have to consider the humanitarian implications if these agreements are not (yet) sufficient to avoid catastrophic climate change and to build sufficient adaptive capacity among the poor and vulnerable.

## CARE's Position and Experience

*CARE's Emergency Response and adaptation to Climate Impacts*
In recent years CARE has witnessed first-hand a tangible rise in the frequency and severity of extreme weather and climate-related disasters that directly and negatively impact the poor and most vulnerable people we work with. CARE, along with partners, has striven for decades to fight poverty and injustice, but is coming to realize that efforts to promote sustainable development will amount to nothing unless the world tackles climate change seriously. Climate change amplifies the risks facing people who are already marginalized due to inequalities, and at the center of CARE's concern is transforming the drivers that perpetuate vulnerability and injustice by focusing on human dignity and increasing women's empowerment.

As one of the world's largest development and humanitarian organizations, CARE works in 90 countries around the globe supporting 880 poverty-fighting development and humanitarian aid projects that have reached over 72 million people in 2014. In 2009, a CARE report mapped emerging trends and risk hotspots in the context of the humanitarian implications of climate change.[xix] The report "In Search of Shelter" investigated the linkages between climate change and migration and displacement.[xx]

CARE's experience in community-based adaptation (CBA) across different sectors and regions is well documented and provides important lessons learned.[xxi] Tools such as the Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (CVCA) or Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) also provide useful approaches in the context of preparing for and responding to disasters.

CARE has also developed climate change policy positions which, in line with a comprehensive risk management approach and pursuing climate justice, cut across the areas of cutting emissions, increasing efforts for adaptation and disaster risk reduction, addressing climate change loss and damage and promoting a human rights-based and gender equitable approach.[xxii]

*Example: Integrated DRR and Adaptation Plans reduce risks in Bangladesh*
CARE Bangladesh, has been working on improving the adaptive capacities and resilience of char dwellers to disaster and climate change impacts. An integrated CBA/DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) approach, which combines traditional knowledge with innovative strategies, has been adopted to address current vulnerability while building adaptive capacity to face new and dynamic challenges. In Char areas, the project promotes low-cost measures centred on building the resilience of both households and communities, through simple agricultural technologies/tolerant crop varieties, infrastructure development, energy efficient technologies, and local/traditional resource management practices.

**Policy Recommendations:**

- **Comprehensive climate risk management approach across the emergency-development spectrum, by**
  o Make mandatory climate- and disaster-proofing programs against risks,
    ▪ incl. "build back better" in concrete disaster/emergency responses, e.g. through protecting ecosystem and environment functions which are critical to livelihood adaptation; and rebuild infrastructure and housing in a climate-resilient manner;
  o Promote multi-risk planning frameworks cutting across ministries and sectors involved in humanitarian response, DRR, climate change, and development planning;
  o Increase the coordination and cooperation among policymakers and practitioners in humanitarian work, DRR and climate change adaptation, and longer-term development, across all levels, including for
    ▪ Assessing the capacity of humanitarian and disaster risk management systems for emergency preparedness and response; and explicitly increasing resilience during post climate-related disaster recovery, rebuilding and rehabilitation;
  o Improve and increase the use of innovative crisis modifier approaches in development programmes in climate risk hotspots ;
  o Improve effectiveness and collaboration on early-warning systems for humanitarian crises (incl. climate-related scenario analyses and stress testing) between humanitarian, development and climate experts, including through the UNFCCC Loss and Damage Mechanism's work in this regard, and in approaches such as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) system.

- **Address the needs and capacities of the most vulnerable in climate and disaster action**
  o Prioritise climate change adaptation and DRR finance for the most vulnerable populations and community-based approaches which address their critical livelihood needs;
  o Strengthen resilience of social safety nets against increasing climate-related disasters;
  o Promoting the use of comprehensive participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments, and monitoring and learning tools;
  o Strengthen climate information services as part of an improved package of information provision to the most vulnerable
  o Strengthen ecosystem management policies and practices in order to increase the resilience of natural systems and human societies to climate change impacts.

- **Implement a gender equitable approach that addresses structural inequalities[1]**

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[1] See also the *CARE Humanitarian Policy Brief on Gender in Emergencies* July 2015

- Promote gender sensitive analyses of capacities and vulnerabilities to climate related disasters;
- Addressing the causes of women's vulnerability including access to basic services, natural resources, social protection and insurance and opportunities to make a living;
- Adaptation planning needs to be led by communities and promote gender-equitable, rights-based and participatory action;
- Use of the gender marker tool along the programming cycle to assess and increase the level of gender considerations in humanitarian action.

- **Scale-up financial resources for humanitarian action, DRR and climate adaptation**
  - significant additional resources must be mobilized to respond to humanitarian emergencies, and DRR and adaptation needs, including through mechanisms which can generate truly additional finance (such as revenues from international sea and air transport), while avoiding double-counting towards distinct commitments;
  - Increase flexibility of humanitarian funding to better cut across the near-term emergency and longer-term development perspective;
  - domestic civil society actors (national and local) must be increasingly able to access humanitarian aid, DRR and CCA fund.

- **Add the humanitarian voice to the calls for a rapidly decarbonized world, and adapt its operations**
  - Humanitarian organisations should engage in the growing advocacy and concrete action movement which pursues the phase-out of fossil fuel emissions to keep global warming within the limit of 1.5 degrees;
  - Humanitarian organization should also develop organizational and business models which significantly reduce emissions and integrate climate change.

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