

Development crises – who’s doing what?

A lot of organisations, communities and individuals are working on human development. The [UNDP Sudan CRMAT team](#) are working on mapping work in specific areas, and having been on a [3W team](#) and browsed the [Worldwide NGO directory](#), I’d say they have a lot of work to do. But although looking at who is working on development is interesting, we need to narrow down our search to people who search for, analyse and response to development crises.

There is a lot of information online about natural disasters and other drivers (UN Global Pulse found [39 early warning systems](#) in the UN alone), but less about the route from effect detection to decisions to act. Warning isn’t action, and we need to feed, track and encourage this cycle rather than creating yet another information-only system.

So who’s looking? And who is able to act? The shortest answer to that is “everybody” – when we start to be individually affected by a crisis, we’re usually aware of it, and begin to act to mitigate our own exposure and risk to it (for example, the [Coping Strategies Index](#) is a way of quantifying how people behave, in general, in response to a food security problem).

Organisations charged with preventing, mitigating and responding to development crises worldwide include the [UN](#), [USAID](#) and [World Bank](#), amongst dozens of others. There are global monitoring systems in place, although their ability to access and use data is still limited (which is why organisations like Global Pulse were formed): most UN agencies have people working on the ground (usually in a UN agency office loosely connected to a [resident coordinators office](#)) who are at least partially aware of local crisis effects, and at least one team, [HEWS](#), works and shares development crisis data across organisational boundaries. The HEWS website currently focuses on natural drivers of humanitarian crises, but does also contain a contingency planning toolkit that could be adapted to track longer-term issues (e.g. post-disaster effects on local agriculture).

The development world is shifting to help communities become more resilient, i.e. less likely to be severely damaged by a development crisis. The UN is working with governments on [sustainable development](#), which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Organisations like [Alnap](#) and [ICT4Dev](#) are starting to discuss structural drivers and mitigations – there are several good points and potential mitigation strategies for drought, for example, in Alnap’s “[Humanitarian action in drought-related emergencies](#)”, and of particular interest is their comment on the parallel coping systems ([zakat](#), migration, remittances, local NGOs, community help) that Western donors have tended not to track during responses.

Community knowledge (both receiving and improving it) is also becoming important to resilience work. The [World Bank](#) and organisations like Civic Commons are working with [Open Data teams in the developing world](#) to [improve community knowledge and resilience](#). This is a welcome step beyond [large, western, funding models](#) but we need to think about how to connect these and

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grassroots, community-based detections (e.g. [Ushahidi data](#)) of crisis effects to existing top-down monitoring systems?