

The HYOGO framework for action (HFA) established in 2005 aims to reduce the disaster risk globally. 6 years since its inception, Views from the Frontline (VFL) recently completed the second phase of its research programme investigating the perceived impact of HFA at the grassroots level. Gamos has participated in the most recent stage of the research process providing the statistical analysis for the data gathered from 500 organisations in 69 countries.

In addition to more than 20,000 face to face interviews, VFL also piloted a new survey method utilising SMS (short message service – known as texts) on mobile phones. This pilot project generated over 36,000 responses from disaster affected countries.

This stage of the VFL research focused on governance. A country's ability to prevent disasters is not just about financial resources. Decision-making processes are vitally important. They determine how resources are allocated and managed. The public's access to information and ability to mobilise themselves are helped or hindered by these processes. Local government therefore is a critical link in the chain.

VFL findings from 2009 showed that progress in establishing national policies and legislation under HYOGO had not generated widespread changes in local practices. Furthermore, participants identified supportive government cultures, open to the formation of local partnerships, as the single most important factor to accelerating implementation of risk reduction policies at a local level.

Gamos' structured analysis firstly categorised the descriptors present in the data and then explored respondent's attitudes to the two primary research questions concerning losses to disasters and performance of local government. Secondly, the data was then analysed to look for relationships that may exist with a range of poverty indicators, using country level data.

The principle findings included:

Concerning perceptions of disaster risk:

- 57% felt losses had increased over the last five years, compared with only 21% who felt disaster losses had decreased.
- 58 countries feel disaster losses are getting worse. Only 8 countries feel they are decreasing.
- Women tend to have a more pessimistic view of changes in losses than men
- There are marked differences in views held by rural and urban residents – urban residents have a more positive view of the performance of local government across all the indicators.

- Countries reporting the most dramatic increases in disaster losses are Pakistan, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, El Salvador, Gambia and Armenia.
- Bangladesh, Nepal, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan Egypt, Algeria, Malawi and Ethiopia feel that disaster losses have reduced.
- In some countries such as Madagascar, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Somalia, although the mean score is only weakly negative, this hides the fact that there are large proportions of respondents who feel that losses have decreased i.e. respondents are highly polarised – some feel things have improved whilst others feel things have got worse.
- Local governments and local communities share similar views on changes in disaster losses and disaster threat
- Disaster losses and threat are felt to have increased more in rural than urban areas – EM-DAT data confirms this perception.
- Over 42% of the sample believe their communities are at high or very high risk.
- 25% of the sample regard themselves as being at minimal or low risk of disasters.

