

Child Centred Disaster Management Planning



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Disaster management planning in India is gradually shifting from an exercise in post-emergency ad-hocism to one that encourages long term planning for preparedness. Although, there is still a lot of scope for improvement, the focus on long term planning, preparedness and mitigation has definitely increased. This change is also visible at the national and sub-national levels of planning where state level and district level disaster management plans devote greater attention to preparing for disasters, than responding to them.

As the idea of reducing the underlying vulnerabilities for effective disaster/emergency management gains traction, it is important to acknowledge the importance of such an approach for safeguarding children against the adverse impacts of disasters. Children in India are exposed to multiple risks such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, child labour, inadequate access to food, water, healthcare and education. Such underlying vulnerabilities greatly amplify the impacts of disasters/emergencies on children.

This issue of *Southasiadisasters.net* focuses on the theme of 'Child Centered Disaster Management Planning in India.' As widespread poverty and climate change exacerbate the risk of disasters on children, it is time to embed corrective policy mechanisms that protect children against such risks. State and district disaster management plans are the instruments through which this objective can be accomplished. This issue highlights the ways in which children's rights to safety can be upheld in India. Most notably, the traditional knowledge of communities in reducing the risks of hazards has been discussed. Special attention has also been accorded to how the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) enshrines the protection of children against disaster risks.

This issue is a must read for all interested in knowing more about the state of children's right to safety in India in the context of disaster risk reduction. ■

- Kshitij Gupta, AIDMI

INTRODUCTION

Child Centered Disaster Risk Reduction in Long Term Recovery

Children are especially vulnerable to the adverse impacts of disasters. However, there is a multiplier effect of educating the public through children. Any message understood by a child can influence the actions of the entire family. In this manner, children may play a critical role in the promotion of disaster risk reduction (DRR) in recovery, by helping in usher better preparedness for the "next" disaster.

A child centered approach to disaster risk reduction can be both within the school, as well as include activities outside the school and for children not enrolled in the school.

For children in school, DRR can be integrated into the long term recovery strategy by ensuring that every school develops a safety plan, for better preparedness. This will necessitate training on emergency preparedness for all hazards in the area. The steps

involved may include:

1. Awareness program for school stakeholders, including teachers, parents and children using visual tools, and leaflets, simple manuals, and posters.
2. Establish a school disaster safety committee, including representatives of all stakeholder groups, including school children.
3. Hazard hunt & vulnerability assessment, primarily by involving school children, with the assumption that learning by doing is much more powerful than learning from texts alone.
4. Hazards and vulnerability mapping, again performed by the school children themselves, guided by the their teachers.
5. Prepare the school safety plan, showing the safe places and evacuation routes.
6. Conduct drills to validate the plan, and update as required.
7. Provide life skills training to children, such as swimming, first aid, etc.



Rescue boat prepared by the students. Kutch district, Gujarat.

Photo: AIDMI.

It must be noted that a school where children or youth are actively investigating local hazards can be a catalyst for more general community risk assessment and action planning. In addition, spontaneous school based activity can also help to mobilize and focus community energy on the lobbying and networking required to shift government policy and find necessary resources.

But what can be done for children who are out of the schooling system, for a variety of reasons? It is a challenge in areas with depressed economic development, especially where literacy rates are low and quality of education is not optimal and standardized. School safety programs may be available, but such programs miss the children who are not attending school. As a result, a significant number of children are neglected in any disaster risk reduction activity. To ensure outreach of disaster risk reduction message to such children is a challenge, especially so as they may be incapable of understanding the traditional forms of communication viz. newsletters, advertisements and brochures. How can we communicate



Photo: AIDMI.

with such an audience? The situation requires an innovative approach as evidenced by the example from the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. This innovation solution was to involve folk troupes who performed traditional arts such as *nautanki* (theater), puppet show, magic show, *nukkad natak* (street play), etc. Such groups were trained in delivering the message of disaster risk reduction through a three day workshop. On the first day the members of the folk troupes were given technical input on the messages that they were to deliver. On the second day there was experimentation and innovation by the groups. They experimented with

various means of delivering the message through their art. On the third day the scripts and performances were finalized.

Detailed documentation of the scripts was ensured so that the scripts could be utilized by others – a guidebook was published with the approved scripts, to ensure standardization as well as full transferability to other troupes. During 2005–2007 a total of 750 persons were trained and they presented 325 awareness programs in 13 districts covering a total population of 260,000 persons.

Furthermore, a number of solutions are possible for ensuring the participation of children in disaster risk reduction activities in recovery, including:

- Portable IEC materials developed for awareness on disaster risk reduction issues, so children can influence the planning on building back better in their communities
 - Audio cassettes in local dialect developed for awareness generation.
 - Advertisements on television and radio (Government Radio) explaining the concepts of recovery and building back better, and encouraging children to be part of the dialogue. ■
- **Sanjaya Bhatia**, Head, UNISDR Office for Northeast Asia and Global Education and Training Institute (GETI), Republic of Korea

The complex messages such as:

Authority	Collective Responsibility
District Emergency Authority consisting of: District Collector Factory Inspector Rep. of Pollution Control Board C.M.O. (District Health Officer) District Agriculture Officer Rep. of P.H.E.D. District Microbiologist / Pathologist Commissioner Municipal Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating to all concerned about the incident • Food rations • Preparation of emergency plans (off-site) • Management of disaster - control room facility • Alerts systems in case of emergency (wireless and reliable back-up communication facilities) • Information to and training of neighborhood population (dissemination of information through mass media and training activities) • Requisition of vehicles • Rescue • Evacuation • Provision of essential services • Sanitation • Shelter • Rehabilitation • Relief and compensation • Reporting

Communities Addressing Local Risks

This article was developed based on All India Disaster Mitigation Institute's work and through consultations in 3 slum areas of Gujarat and Bihar, India¹.

DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

While engaging communities in the discourse surrounding disaster risk reduction, it is important to differentiate between the terms *hazards* and *disasters* which are often interchangeably used. A hazard is a dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity or condition that has the potential to cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage. A disaster, on the other hand is the impact of a natural or human-made hazard leading to a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.²

Disasters are caused by an interplay of the exposure of a community to a hazard, along with its inherent vulnerabilities and capacities. These vulnerabilities and capacities are in turn shaped by a variety of social, economic, political and cultural factors. Thus, any risk reduction strategy needs to be grounded in the socio-economic-political contexts of a community. It is this need that seamlessly weaves disaster risk reduction into the greater development agenda of a community.



Photo: AIDMI.

This implies that effective disaster risk reduction cannot be achieved if underlying problems such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, lack of building codes and improper land use are not addressed. Moreover, it is essential to address the needs of the most vulnerable in order to break the vicious cycle of poverty and disaster risk. Otherwise, sustainable development will always remain as an impracticable and chimerical idea.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

Measures towards disaster risk reduction are undertaken at two main levels viz. regional and local. The regional level comprises of international, national and state institutions while the local level comprises of sub-national institutions.

The regional level's main responsibilities include research, formulation of policies and guidelines, training, monitoring,

evaluation and governance. Under this level lies the responsibility to ensure that disaster management is mainstreamed in the development agenda at a broader scale – an essential step to achieve integration, risk reduction and improvement in living standards in harmony with the environment. However, none of those can be achieved if the local level is not involved in the disaster management – it is mandatory for the policy design and implementation's efficiency.

The importance of engaging the community in the disaster management activities is no longer subject of doubt about its effectiveness, as past practices reveal the positive impacts of such an inclusive approach.

It happens for two main reasons: 1) the local level is comprised of the actors who truly and better understand the reality (e.g. what kind of hazards the region is vulnerable

1 Through a structured talk, people were asked about how disasters are related to their lives, to what extent their community is resilient and what are the biggest challenges faced during a disaster.

2 UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology>

to, what resources are available to cope with natural disasters, how the disaster impacts the economy, etc.) and 2) local actors are the first responders and the main responsible for the successful performance of the response plan during a disaster.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT PLAN

One of the most valuable ways to strengthen the local level is ensuring that the communities develop a powerful and substantial disaster management plan, while adding to it impactful initiatives in certain key areas (e.g. gender equality, inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, set up of climate-smart measures, etc.). This process should be conducted with the help of the government agencies and civil society organizations.

The planning is the sine qua non of disaster management and in achieving its mission of reducing risks and building community's resilience. But for that, the disaster management plan shall encompass steps and measures related to pre-disaster (prevention and mitigation) and post-disaster (response and recovery) phases. Together, they lead to community's disaster resilience and risk reduction.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT PLAN METHODOLOGY

When it comes to planning at the local level, the process must cover the four following points to ensure local commitment and empowerment:

1. People know what to do when the disaster happens (preparedness and response);
2. People know the dos and don'ts in order to reduce the disaster risks (prevention and mitigation);
3. People know the importance of doing so (awareness);
4. People encourage their fellow citizens' engagement (cooperation).

Besides that, AIDMI elaborated six Critical Success Factors (CSFs) to

guide the development of the disaster management plan and ensure that the purpose of "Resilient Communities" is achieved. They are as follows:

CSF 1: Engaging the community in the plan's preparation

Based on a holistic approach, the planning takes into account every stakeholder's need & feedback and ensure that the voices of the vulnerable and underprivileged are heard. Besides that, it counts on a significant assessment's sample size.

CSF 2: Preparing a thorough hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessment

The most important step was to conduct a proper and strong Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (HVCA). It is prepared based on one-to-one consultations with the government departments and on broad field assessments, encompassing different dimensions of the communities' reality (social, economic, environmental and institutional). It is also comprised of a smart safety audit of key institutions, such as schools and hospitals.

CSF 3: Planning and conducting capacity building activities

The planning's process places focus on the communities' capacity building through a variety of programmes and measures that encourage knowledge retention and a culture of information sharing. The capacity-building measures include awareness raising and developing specific skills on prevention, mitigation, preparedness and recovery.

CSF 4: Integrating gender concerns in the plan's preparation

The plan encompasses gender concerns as it is essential when assessing local risks and vulnerabilities. It relies on women's feedback to understand the disasters' impacts and to develop measures and recommendations. The objective is to enhance women's representation in Disaster Management.

CSF 5: Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation

The plan accounts for environmental issues and highlights the need for mainstreaming climate change adaptation in disaster management agenda. Creating a link between risk reduction, structural issues and climate change, it encourages the integration between Environment and Development.

CSF 6: Proposing sustainable measures and programmes

The plan envisions the sustainable development, where disaster risk reduction is an intrinsic part of the districts' planning and programmes. It addresses structural and non-structural elements and encourages the right choices to tackle the vulnerabilities in a broader way (i.e. targeting other complex issues that reinforce the vicious cycle of poverty).

ALIGNMENT WITH THE SFDRR

Empowering communities to address the risks at the local level is critical for effective disaster risk reduction. Since communities are the first responders to an emergency or a disaster, empowering them with institutional measures for good governance (such as a disaster management plan) can have life-saving implications. This sentiment is also echoed in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). The SFDRR is a voluntary, non-binding agreement which seeks to substantially reduce the impacts of disasters on countries, communities and businesses for a period of 15 years(2015-2030). The second priority of action of SFDRR emphasises '*Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk*'. This priority of action is aligned with the need to empower communities at the local level to respond to the risks faced by them. ■

- Ana Carolina Richter,
AIDMI

Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction

With the new Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction being signed, the world is looking forward to a highly robust framework that focuses on increased accountability by emphasizing the strong operational linkages among climate change, disaster risk and health related shocks.

This new framework has a more people centric focus and speaks of greater inclusiveness in recognising the stronger role of communities, women, youth and children in the disaster risk reduction (DRR) process.

While we are looking at the renewed commitments on DRR, it will be good to look back and appraise the achievements of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

Disasters can result in massive loss of human life and property. They bring suffering to people and bear a heavy economic burden to national economies. However, they also bring resolve for action and improved preparedness for the future. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) was developed in the aftermath of one of the most devastating disasters the world has suffered in decades – the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. The unprecedented devastation and loss of life brought on by this disaster was a wake-up call for governments globally and called for immediate action, resulting in the first ever globally agreed plan aiming to substantially reduce disaster losses by building the resilience of nations and communities.

Ten years after the signing of this important global agreement let's look at the remarkable achievements

of the HFA. Governments undertook robust action in developing relevant policy and legislation on Disaster Risk Management (DRM) by establishing an adequate DRM related administrative infrastructure. Robust action was seen in developing appropriate mechanisms for improved preparedness along with the development and strengthening of early warning systems. Increased regional collaboration and regional agreements have been developed in the most vulnerable regions of the globe, such as South and South-East Asia.

An estimated 95% of the countries have adopted a multi-hazard approach to disaster management with 56% of the countries recognising the socio-economic vulnerability of people contributing to greater exposure as well as the increasing contribution to vulnerability of existing and emerging environmental issues, climate change and growing global urbanization trends. More than 60% of the countries have invested in building capacities of stakeholders in DRM and an improved dialogue and multi-stakeholder engagement especially between government, civil society and non-governmental organizations was seen. Greater awareness and involvement of communities, women and children in disaster risk management at the community level has been observed as well.

However, certain challenges remain to be tackled. Often governments have limited themselves within the narrower approach of Disaster Management without taking sufficient action on risk reduction and prevention. Key impediments for

successful DRR strategies remained the limited awareness on the linkages of DRR with development and the limited efforts to mainstream DRR in development. Issues with successful translation of policy and legal frameworks into implementation were linked with the lack of dedicated budgetary allocation for DRR, with ambiguities related to roles and responsibilities and with a minimal investment in human and technical resource support.

Another major weakness observed was that DRR action was undertaken as a stand-alone activity within the national disaster management frameworks and little to no efforts were invested in mainstreaming DRR in the development process. The use of multi-hazard risk assessments to inform development processes was not noticeable and thus valuable risk information did not reach key decision makers in development. Further on, although strongly highlighted in high level global research, the obvious link between the impact of climate change on the intensity and frequency of disasters was not seen and linkages to climate change adaptation were minimal in DRR policies. Countries had little success in incorporating DRR into overall environmental issues as well.

Despite these shortfalls, the HFA has laid a solid foundation for a global, committed, organized and practical action in DRR. It is encouraging to see that the new Sendai Framework on DRR has built up on the successes of HFA and is taking strong and accountable action on DRR which can make a perceptible difference in peoples' lives and improve resilience. ■ - Mihir R. Bhatt

Views of Ahmedabad Youth on Disaster Risk Reduction

In the recent times alone, there has been a great loss of life as well as assets of nations due to different disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, along with violent weather related catastrophes such as floods, droughts, etc. which have become more frequent than ever.

As per UNISDR, there is no such thing as a 'natural' disaster, only natural hazards. However disasters often follow natural hazards and their severity depends on how much impact the hazard has on the society and the environment based on its vulnerability. And the scale of this impact in turn depends on the choices we make for our lives and for our environment. Each decision and action can make us either more vulnerable or more resilient to disasters.

With the kind of setback a disaster has on economic and social development of any nation, disaster risk reduction (DRR) should be one of the highest priorities of any nation. As mentioned above, DRR is also about choices. Therefore, DRR should be everyone's business and everyone has an equal role to play in reducing exposure to hazards, reducing vulnerability, wise management of land and environment, and improving preparedness. Moreover, I firmly believe that we as the youth of this world have a great role to play in making the world a better place to live in through youth leadership in DRR.

The risks of disasters can be reduced through systematic efforts to analyze and manage the causes of disasters. The following is an account from my colleague, who had experienced the wrath of the 2001 Bhuj Earthquake.

"I am Vivek Soni, Vice President Marketing of AIESEC in Ahmedabad. My hometown is Bhuj and thus I am among those unfortunate people who witnessed the core of disaster during January, 2001 earthquake in one of the closest cities to the epicenter of that earthquake. Thankfully my family and I survived but what I have learnt since then and what I believe is that disasters have been visiting every part of the globe at one time or the other. The world is becoming increasingly vulnerable to natural disasters. From earthquakes to floods and famines, mankind is even more threatened by the forces of nature. Disasters can strike at any time, at any place. Several thousands of people worldwide may have been

killed in past few years due to natural disasters such as landslides, earthquakes, floods, snow avalanches, cyclones, etc. In India, the geo-physical conditions and a large population make this developing nation highly vulnerable towards such calamities. I believe it is the need of the hour to focus on disaster management planning for prevention, reduction, mitigation, preparedness and response to reduce the loss of life and property due to disasters should be a main objective."

Ordinary humans often have no control over the scale or scope of disasters - be they manmade or natural. But nowadays, thanks to the progress made in the field of DRR, it is possible to limit the damage caused by disasters. Proper education and training of the general populace would play an important role in ensuring that swift action can be taken at times of crises and preventive measures can be implemented promptly and successfully.



Disaster risk education should not only remain as classroom study but also lessons turned into practice in the field. If the youth become aware of their responsibilities and realize the potential that they have to resolve serious problems faced by humanity, communities all over the world can be much more safer and resilient to disasters and their consequences. ■

- Nikita Koka,
President, AIESEC in
Ahmedabad

Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework Fails Millions at Risk of Disasters

The 3rd UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) held in Sendai, Japan during 14–18 March 2015 narrowly escaped the biggest disaster in terms of a 'no deal'. Thanks to Japan, the global leaders adopted the Sendai DRR Framework for the next 15 years (2015–30) replacing the Hyogo Framework of Action (2005–15) but with 'no tangible and measurable' actions. The language of the framework is pretty generalized and hence lacks any accountability on reducing disasters mortality and losses to infrastructure and the assets. Instead of using categorical numerical targets (such as 30%–40% or any other number, so to speak), they used the word 'substantial' reduction in global disaster mortality, number of affected people and economic losses. The word 'substantial' gives no idea of how much they intend to reduce rather it leaves every one to one's guess.

Oxfam believes that the world's poorest people, who are most vulnerable to natural disasters, have again been let down by the governments represented at the Sendai conference. "Negotiators in Sendai were supposed to agree on a much needed bold new plan to build country's resilience to events such as the latest in the series Cyclone Pam that has just devastated Vanuatu, one of our least developed nations. Instead, what was adopted is a set of half-measures that will not keep pace with rapidly rising disaster risk around the world," Oxfam's official reaction said.

Oxfam welcomed the agreement's emphasis on women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities who are particularly vulnerable to disasters, but warned that the

"international community's inability to make concrete commitments to finance disaster risk reduction threatens to undercut its ambitious anti-poverty agenda—and puts added pressure on governments to take bold action at more high-profile international conferences on the Sustainable Development Goals and an ambitious new global climate change agreement later this year".

Sendai DRR framework itself did not set numerical targets, which prompted DRR campaigners to continue with their fight for strong and accountable action to reduce disaster risk and ultimate pressure and responsibility will be on the national governments, as they have to save their people from impacts of disasters. Vulnerability and exposure to hazards is rising around the globe. Exacerbated by climate change, disasters are increasingly pushing people into deeper poverty and compromising their safety, one of Oxfam's blogs says.

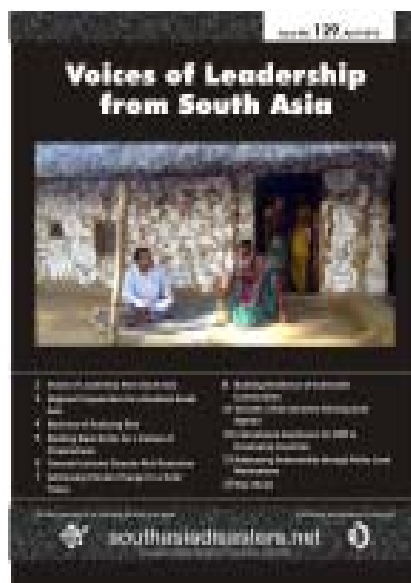
Oxfam is of the opinion that rich countries have failed to make

available additional financial and technical support to developing countries, which have less capacity to absorb and recover from disaster losses. This is a fact that developing countries are more vulnerable to disasters of various kinds and they do not have enough resources to fund the DRR activities on their own. We believe that both increased aid from rich countries and increased financial contributions from disaster-prone developing countries themselves are critical to ensuring comprehensive implementation of DRR measures in the vulnerable countries.

Oxfam is dismayed, but not discouraged. More than ever before, we need to increase pressure on governments and others to seriously invest in protecting lives, livelihoods, environments and economies from hazards. Although they're modest, there are some positive elements in this framework, and we need to hold governments to account for these commitments. ■

– Shafqat Munir,

Regional Rights in Crisis Coordinator
Asia, Oxfam Pakistan



PUBLICATION

This issue of Southasiadisasters.net highlights the country statements issued by the dispensations of various South Asian nations at the 3rd WCDRR. A compendium of these statements helps in understanding the South Asian perspective on DRR.

For download issue: <http://aidmi.org/publications.aspx>

Key Challenges in Vulnerability Assessment: A Personal Anecdote from the Field

Being very passionate about disaster management and vulnerability assessment, I have started working as a vulnerability and capacity assessment facilitator since 2011 even though I studied business management. I was able to work in some of the most vulnerable places in Bangladesh such as Hatiya, Nijhum Dwip, Manikgonj, Bogra, Bhola and other coastal and flood affected areas.

Based on my three years of experience, I can claim that vulnerability analysis is not only a tool for assessment but also a tool for change. I've worked mostly using the 'Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment' (VCA), a methodology developed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and 15 other humanitarian organizations. The VCA is a method of investigation in to the risks that people face in their locality, their vulnerability to the risk and their capacity to cope with and recover from disasters (IFRC, 2007). Since the people of a particular community have a better idea of what their problem/vulnerability is, how to reduce it and what kind of support they need, this tool fulfills its purpose. Additionally, this tool addresses the vulnerability of a community by focusing on its capacity (ex: geographical, behavioral and indigenous practice/knowledge, etc).

Though this tool is very important for the development and betterment of lives at the grass root level, it also has certain limitations. According to my experience, some of the key challenges to conduct this assessment



are a lack of secondary data, access to resources, communication, community involvement and time span. These challenges are often inter-linked and can adversely affect the outcome of the assessment.

While it is very important to attain a preliminary understanding about a community before conducting an assessment, the lack of secondary data has been an issue for me whenever I have conducted any assessment. In a vulnerability assessment, most of the data is provided by the people of the community from their real life experiences but it is important to cross check the data with any secondary source data. However, it is very unfortunate to mention that we did not get enough specific secondary data from community. The data me and my team could manage was mostly Upazila level data. It was tough to find out specific data when we talk about a community that may be a village, part of village, group of people categorised by age, occupation, demand, etc.

In addition to secondary data on a community, we also need to use supplementary elements to understand the community where we conduct our assessment. A Risk and Hazard Map is one of the most popular tools through which anybody can understand a community's vulnerabilities and capacities on a map. In addition to Risk and Hazard Maps, we also have Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and the baseline survey. These tools of assessment are supposed to be self explanatory and easy to access to make an easy and more informative analysis. However, due to lack of access to information we could not use the available resources from other organizations. The government should make a knowledge hub where all organizations should keep records of the outcome of any assessment.

During my involvement in some assessments, accessing the data was not the only problem that we faced, accessing the community was also an issue to considered. Most vulnerable communities that I worked with are



in the rural part of the country. During assessment most of the times, we had to stay outside of community and communication became a main challenge. Coming back to the community to collect the data used to consume the largest part of working time as well as minimized the efficiency of the operations.

The success of a vulnerability assessment is predicated on an active participation from the community. In contrast, inadequate participation can hamper an assessment and make it difficult and cumbersome. For an effective Vulnerability Assessment, sometimes we need older people for historical calendar; and at other times we need women and children. Throughout my experience, it has been a very common problem that either we would not have enough number of participants or we would not have the right kind of participants needed to conduct an assessment.

Analysis duration is another challenge for assessment. How many days we spend with community and how many times a day? Reality says its 4/5/7 days and 5/6 hour in a day. It is true that the longer the analysis lasts, the greater the final cost. However, if it is about an effective analysis then I have to say, if we devote much time with community

analysis, the outcome will be better. When we spend more time with the community, we tend to get familiar with the climate, people, behavior, practice, coping strategy and so on. This understanding is vital to analysing data and cross checking information.

My motive is not to discourage anyone from conducting an assessment, instead I believe that having ideas about these limitations would help people to plan and execute their assessments better. Whenever anyone is going to conduct a Vulnerability assessment, understanding the community becomes very important. Respecting their beliefs, practices and culture is essential. The VCA is not only a project activity, it is a strong tool to reduce vulnerability and increase capacity. We need an alliance with governments, NGOs, INGOs and humanitarian organizations for better implementation, conduction and follow-up of vulnerability assessments. ■

- **Mohammad Shazed**, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment Facilitator, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

Source: <http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/vca/how-to-do-vca-en.pdf>

ABOUT THE BOOK

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN HAZARDS, DISASTER RISK AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RECOVERY FROM DISASTER



IAN DAVIS AND DAVID ALEXANDER



By Ian Davis and David Alexander

Series: Routledge Studies in Hazards, Disaster Risk and Climate Change

Disasters can dominate newspaper headlines and fill our TV screens with relief appeals, but the complex long-term challenge of recovery – providing shelter, rebuilding safe dwellings, restoring livelihoods and shattered lives – generally fails to attract the attention of the public and most agencies. On average 650 disasters occur each year. They affect more than 200 million people and cause \$166 trillion of damage. Climate change, population growth and urbanisation are likely to intensify further the impact of natural disasters and add to reconstruction needs. Recovery from Disaster explores the field and provides a concise, comprehensive source of knowledge for academics, planners, architects, engineers, construction managers, relief and development officials and reconstruction planners involved with all sectors of recovery, including shelter and rebuilding. ■

For more information visit: <https://www.routledge.com/products/9780415611770>

Drought in Bangladesh: Recent Work and Plans of IUBAT

Droughts in Bangladesh are a recurrent phenomena causing serious damage to crops, animals and livelihoods every year. Being a lower riparian country, Bangladesh is affected by all the three types of droughts: meteorological, agricultural and hydrological. The impact of droughts is accentuated by increasing climate change effects like erratic rainfall, delayed monsoon, longer dry period as well as human-induced activities.

Droughts in Bangladesh are hampering year-round production of crops like rice, jute, vegetables, tea, rubber and fruit trees, more particularly in the north and northwestern high-flat lands and in the northeast and southeast hilly areas. In the southeast and northeast regions, prolonged droughts in the dry monsoon cause hundreds of localized wildfires resulting in serious damages to tea, rubber and lemon plantations, along with forests and wildlife every year.

Due to the drying up of surface water bodies, the dependency on groundwater has been increasing. However, withdrawal of groundwater diffuses understanding about the severity of drought. Fish farming and aquaculture, and water transportation systems have been impacted badly due to the drying up of perennial water sources. Extreme water-stress has an adverse affect on both the ecology and the agricultural production which in turn threaten food security and livelihoods, causing famine (locally called 'Monga'). Thus, a large number of people suffer from malnutrition and epidemics which forces many to migrate to the cities, every year.



Poor monsoon rain has made the government think of a drought-tolerant rice seed, Nerica for food-insecure Bangladesh in 2009. (*The Bangladesh Today*, 25 August 2009).

More than five million people of the Barind Tract are under a great threat due to severe impact of drought forcing use of arsenic contaminated ground water. Throughout Bangladesh, about two million small farmers and 2.4 million rural wage laborers are vulnerable to severe droughts. In the hills, more than 90% perennial streams have lost their flows in the dry monsoon resulting in serious water crisis for the hill-people, resulting in the outbreak of diarrhea, dysentery and cholera, etc. During the last 50 years, Bangladesh suffered from 20 extreme drought conditions. Despite the recurrent and devastating nature of droughts in Bangladesh, it has attracted far less scientific attention than floods or cyclones. However, losses from droughts should be seen as more severe than from floods in Bangladesh. The impact of droughts is of the same magnitude or even higher as compared to the impact of floods.

Drought assessment and alleviation is far more difficult than any other disaster; procedures set in place for flood management cannot be

transferred directly to drought management. The Government of Bangladesh has taken initiatives to cope with the effects of drought with its Disaster Management and Climate Change Adaptation programs. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) have developed a project on "Livelihood adaptation to climate variability and change in the drought-prone areas of Northwest Bangladesh". A resource book, "Climate variability and change: adaptation to drought in Bangladesh" has been tested and prepared for capacity building. More research is in progress to develop drought resistant crops.

IUBAT SADMC has started research on drought for mitigating and adaptation and building awareness since 1991. It contributed in many national and regional disaster management activities and acknowledged by international organizations as a pioneer organization in the field of disaster management and awareness breakthrough in the country. Now,

SADMC is working as the Secretariat of the Association of Disaster Management Institutions in South Asia (ADMISA).

The International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) Centre for Global Environmental Culture (CGEC) initiated work with wider environment and sustainability issue-based researches since 1999. The CGEC is now acknowledged by the United Nations University (UNU), Japan as the host organization of Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development Greater Dhaka.

IUBAT researchers have contributed as lead and contributing authors in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation, 2012. A collaborative synthesis research work on the theme

of Global Environment Change and Sustainable Development: the Needs for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is being carried out with support from International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP) and Global Change Research Program of the Asia-Pacific Network (APN) since 2011. Drought in Asian LDCs is one of the focus areas for synthesis and the following papers are being published in a special issue of the Elsevier's Weather and Climate Extremes Journal:

1. Drought in Least Developed Asian countries: Vulnerability and Sustainability.
2. Natural and Traditional Defense Mechanisms to Reduce Climate Risks in Coastal Zones of Bangladesh.
3. Drought Risk Management for increased cereal production in Asian least Developed Countries.
4. Weather and Climate Extremes. Modeling recent climate change induced extreme events in Bangladesh: A review.

Besides, four related papers have been contributed in national and international conferences.

IUBAT and its research centers have been actively engaged in multidisciplinary programs involving traditional, conventional and spatial and GIS-based modeling for a national and regional sustainable drought impact mitigation policy. Under this theme, a project on Capacity Building for Sustainable Landscape Management of Bangladesh is under consideration by the APN. Another study on micronutrient to protect the crops from drought using the severity index is under progress. IUBAT is hosting an international conference in March 2015 on "Global Environment Change and Sustainable Development" involving droughts in Asian LDCs as a major section. ■

- **Professor M Alimullah Miyan**,
Chairperson, South Asian Disaster
Management Centre,
IUBAT, Dhaka, Bangladesh

CAPACITY BUILDING

Skills for Safety: Possible Areas for Disaster Risk Reduction in North East India

With 2015 being the last year for the term of the Hyogo Framework for Action, the international community has more or less taken stock of the past decade and prepares for the next framework.

There has been a concerted effort across the world to create and ameliorate capabilities and establish institutions for pre and post disaster management. However, the future challenges are looking far greater given the increasing frequency and magnitude of natural disasters, which have been further exacerbated by the impact of climate change.

The Brobdingnagian proportion of havoc due to natural disasters is

evident in India; the cases in reference here are Uttarakhand, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh coast, Kashmir valley and Gujarat. While there have also been substantial activities in the realm of establishing disaster risk reduction and post-disaster risk management institutions, particularly following the National Disaster Management Act in 2005, creation of the National Institute of Disaster Management, the National Disaster Management Authority and similar structures are being created at the state level.

Though the immediate impact of natural disasters is quite egalitarian in nature, the enormity is devastating and perpetuating for (a) economically

marginalized segments, (b) remote and rural areas, (c) inaccessible regions - on account of infrastructure and natural barriers. The North East region of India is most certainly vulnerable since the situation corresponds with the above mentioned categorization.

Therefore, there is an instant need to enable the region to be equipped for the eventualities that may down upon it at any point in time.

The training and education of youth would be a fundamental requirement for reduction of disaster risk and capacity building for pre and post management of disaster in the region. Hands-on training is the call-of-the-

hour to address the vulnerability challenge and be prepared to counter, cope and re-build on account of natural and man-made disasters.

The training would be designed, developed and delivered covering rescue operations, first-aid procedures, health and hygiene training, food distribution, pre-disaster awareness, community engagement and handling of machine, tools and equipment used during the disasters.

The purpose of the proposed training is to have a community that is enabled and possesses the required competency to navigate relief and rehabilitation in the aftermath in the most efficient and effective manner. Further, the training will play a crucial role during the pre-migration to secure camps and ensuring continuity in supply of food, water and medicine.

The training will also focus in dealing with people who require special care.

Centurion University - Gram Tarang's experience in operating in Eastern India - *where we are also one of the leading skill development providers, in addition to our financial inclusion arm*

-has a presence in over 9,000 villages in Eastern India. Our presence in the North East includes 7 training centers and 1,100 customer service points (CSPs) in rural areas. From our experience, we believe that the delivery of disaster risk reduction and management training to the youth could be imparted in the North East keeping in view the following points.

Firstly, the design of any training in the community will be required to be outcome-based with regular assessment and certification - the trainees would need to reskilled and upskilled.

Secondly, delivery of training to the individual level in the North East is always a challenge, particularly given the dearth of competent trainers and remoteness of the areas.

There is already a network of professional skill development companies in the region (albeit in major population centers), for example partners of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) including Gram Tarang, who have the access and infrastructure to design, develop and deliver training to rural youth.

Thirdly, any training program will have to be largely activity-based rather than lectures/ handout/ manuals oriented. The training would be delivered bilingually and where required, be absolutely vernacularized.

CUTM-GTET has in-house competency to comply with any methodology in training delivery across the country.

We believe such training is not only essential in the North East but also in other existing and potentially vulnerable parts of the country. Building the competency and dexterity of youth to encounter natural disasters for relief and rehabilitation efforts while ensuring zero-fatality, would be the fundamental aim of the proposed training.

These trained youth will be able to provide support to their families and community while ensuring team effort and work-in-tandem culture during the relief and rehabilitation efforts. ■

- Aditya Saikia,

Director of Strategy & Growth, Gram Tarang Employability Training Services, Centurion University, Odisha



Photo: AIDMI

Ms. Menka Sanghvi from Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) and Dipak Bora, small business operator - plants - discussing the existing insurance products and its impacts on their lives and business in Guwahati, Assam.

Leveraging Risk at Local Level: Support and Facilitation of Civil Society towards Formulation of DDMPs in India*

I welcome this National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Dialogue. I am encouraged to say that this is the first dialogue, meaning that there will be a second, third, and more dialogues. Shri P.K. Mishra, Additional Principal Secretary of Prime Minister's Office, Government of India, rightly reminded us all today that reducing risk requires "all of society" efforts. Risks cannot be reduced by authorities or CSOs or both, but only by all of society. Such dialogues are the basis of any real implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). Let me draw from AIDMI's past five years' experience of making DDMPs and ask key questions for us to discuss today.

Let me start by asking an overwhelming question to you all that can **India be one of the first Asian countries to take SFDRR to the most appropriate level, the district, and do so by offering universal coverage?**

I am asking this question by drawing strength from the overwhelming commitment found in the speech of Shri Rajnath Singhjee in Sendai, Japan, where at The Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 he said how India is trying its best to reduce the risk faced by its citizens, and share this Indian experience with the neighbours in Asia and friends in Africa to multiply risk reduction impact across the globe.

Shri Rajnathjee added, so clearly, that **India has pledged its full support to SFDRR** and will do so by what he called "**promoting cooperative federalism and devolving more**

power and resources closer to the ground of action".

Let me therefore ask if Cooperative Federalism is only cooperation among the member states of this grand federation called India? Or also cooperation among all its citizens and the social formations such as CSOs? Let me ask if the district is for all disasters ground of action? Can anything be more suitable to take India's pledge at Sendai ahead than forming a District Disaster Management Plan (DDMP) with support from CSOs?

What are the reasons why we want better and greater CSOs involvement closer to the ground of action? Because we want to know how much disasters cost us at district level? Where and for whom disaster risk is going to increase in each district? Are we making "real" progress on the ground? And what causes disaster risks to continue in communities? Shri Jain, Member Secretary, NDMA, has rightly invited us to ask such questions in his opening remarks.

Let me propose **four sets of questions for CSO involvement and support to DDMPs**.

a. First, can CSOs help assess DDMP costs and enhance benefits? Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) has taken up this exercise, for example, with SWAD, CYSD, CordAid, XIMB, other CSOs and UNDP before and after cyclone Phalin and has gone a step ahead to incorporate ecosystem costs as well as benefits. Though the work is not finished nor universal, it points

to DDMP links with the private sector, insurance, and investments. More attention on role of higher education in India in addressing these costs and benefits—society, economic, political, and technological—is a way forward.

b. Second, can CSOs help **strengthen accountability of and around DDMP, upward and downward?** This is what the Bihar State Disaster Management Authority (BSDMA), for example, has so boldly taken up in all its districts by inviting a wide range of CSOs such as Sphere, PGVS, GEAG, CARITAS and others to make DDMPs with direct focus on the poor. The UN system has a lot to offer to such statewide coverage in terms of strategies and plans as well as methods and tools for strengthening accountability of DDMPs. We can also not forget the work initiated by Government of Jammu and Kashmir in preparing State Disaster Management Plan with Tata Institute Social Sciences in this regard.

c. Third, can CSOs help in **reforming DDMA governance in terms of participation and outreach?** This is being worked on, for example, by Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), by now over 3 years, in each district. Not only DDMPs are audited for content and process, but also by those who will implement it. Perhaps Manu Gupta will share with us in the next session how a wide range

* Opening remarks, AIDMI at Agenda for NDMA – Civil Society Dialogue, NDMA, Delhi, June 29, 2015.

of innovations are being done, both, by the authorities as well as CSOs at district level in India towards better governance of Disaster Risk Reduction. AIDMI is busy enlisting needs for such innovations in say for example enforcement of building bye-laws or insurance coverage for small businesses. The experience shows that not only education and health, but also urban sector demand reforming governance of DDMPs in India. Smart Cities cannot have dumb DDMPs. The recent South Asia City Summit organized by Cities Network Campaign and supported by Climate and Development knowledge Network (CDKN) attracted active mayors from the region. The mayors and city officials demanded safer cities and climate compatible urban development. The Housing for All, Digital India, and Make in India are national initiatives again where far more can be done at local level through DDMPs.

- d. Fourth, can CSOs help line department's move from information to insights and knowledge use? This for example, Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA) in Gujarat has tried to do with success with the help of leading CSOs such as Red Cross, Unnati, CEE, and TARU. Similarly work of climate change programme of Department of Science and Technology, Government of India with Swiss Development Cooperation shows what value CSOs can add to hazard, vulnerability, risk, and adaptation analysis for districts in Himalayas. What is striking in these efforts is the process as well as the product. Process is open and inclusive, but systematic. The product is specific and for use. Sarbjitjee added in the previous session how last mile connectivity is

integral to making DRR information used as well as why India cannot now afford to leave out this last mile gap any more. Scope for developing risk metrics as well as industry and business continuity standards is more inherent in such knowledge based DDMPs.

Let me conclude by asking can there be a piecemeal or phased approach of DDMP preparation or updating? This approach has been taken earlier but cannot be taken any more. There are several reasons for this. The most compelling reason is that the State is obliged to protect all citizens, simultaneously and equally. The State cannot select to protect citizen in some districts more and first over citizens in other districts.

What we now seek in the implementation of SFDRR in India, is full coverage of all the districts by District Disaster Management Plans that are both too sketchy and cut and paste nor too elaborate and costly. **Universal coverage of all the districts with DDMPs is needed and possible.**

In the end **CSO involvement must make both, good financial sense as well as a good democratic sense if universal coverage is aimed at within a time bound programme.** Unless we have a baseline of DDMPs we cannot measure the real progress. In other words, CSO involvement must reduce costs of loss and damage, private and public, as well as individual and institutional, as well as add value to the democratic processes, institution, and ideas at the local level. AIDMI is finishing its short review of District Disaster Management Planning at Local Level in India and finds that the process and activities, both, offer wide scope for being cost effective as well as citizen sensitive. India cannot grow at 6% GDP (and more) and leave this new hard earned prosperity exposed to disaster shocks. **CSOs of India can help make this prosperity sustainable, safe and bottom up.**

Thank you all so much in joining me to think ahead how implementation of SFDRR at national level where the local actors, the citizens, are in the centre. ■ **- Mihir R. Bhatt**

LAUNCH OF GLOBAL ASSESSMENT REPORT ON DRR



"Make risk integral to development decisions" agreed Mr. Mihir R. Bhatt of India, Muhammad Tahir of Bangladesh, and Amzad Bhatti of Pakistan at the launch of Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 in Colombo hosted by Duryog Nivaran, United Nations Development Programme, and Government of Sri Lanka, September 2, 2015.

AIDMI's Commitment to India's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)

The year 2015 has been momentous for humanitarian policy and action, as it witnessed the finalizing of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As the year draws to a close, the nations of the world have convened in Paris at the Conference of Parties (COP 21) to settle on a new deal on climate change. The Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) form the basis of these negotiations in Paris.

As a participating nation at COP 21, India has committed itself to an ambitious target of reducing its emissions intensity per unit GDP by 33 to 35 percent below 2005 by 2030, and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide through additional tree cover. Since the past 20 years, the All India Disaster

Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) has been at the forefront of disaster and climate risk mitigation in South Asia. This year we renewed our commitment to risk reduction by seeking to integrate the priorities of SFDRR, SDGs and now the INDCs in our work.

In pledging allegiance to India's INDC, AIDMI has decided to focus on institutionalizing and mainstreaming activities at the local (district) level that will help in the achievement of the stipulated targets.

DDMPs present the perfect opportunity to institutionalize the INDCs at the local level by focusing on areas like livelihood security, children's risks, urban planning, energy efficiency, natural resource management, finance, health, and sanitation along with water security.

An internal discussion on India's INDC took place among the team members of AIDMI. Several insights and areas of intervention emerged from this discussion. It was decided that the District Disaster Management Plans (DDMPs) represent the perfect opportunity to institutionalize the INDCs at the local level by focusing on areas like livelihood security, children's risks, urban planning, energy efficiency, natural resource management, finance, health, and sanitation along with water security.

In promulgating its INDC, India has put its faith in a unique model of climate sensitive development. It is up to civil society organizations like AIDMI to take this faith forward by working on the adaptation and mitigation measures at the local level. ■

- Kshitij Gupta, AIDMI

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AIDMI is delighted to receive generous support of UNICEF (India) towards this issue.



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