

Agenda for 2018: Disaster Displacement

India has made commendable efforts in implementing the mandate of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). Through its National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) launched in June 2016, India became one of the first nations to have an NDMP aligned with the priorities of the Sendai Framework. However, there are several challenges that can impede the implementation of India's NDMP.

Perhaps the most pressing of these challenges is that of disaster induced displacement, which has an adverse impact on all kinds of development outcomes. Unfortunately, the understanding of the true extent and scale of the impact of disaster induced displacement is at best limited.

Estimates (limited official numbers are yet available) suggest that two out of five families who move from rural to urban areas in search of work and income move due to loss of livelihood or assets caused by floods, droughts, cyclones and other smaller local disasters.

Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President of India, has recently said to Economic Times that "reform, perform and transform" to move ahead. So NDMP needs to perform, reform and transform to directly address disaster related current and future displacements.

The recent South Asia Disaster Report (SADR) 2016 by Duryog Nivaran (DN) titled, "Are We Building Back Better" (http://www.duryognivaran.org/images/Reports/sadr/SADR%202016_v6.pdf) has implied that taming the factors that cause displacement after a disaster must be urgently addressed. These factors include loss of livelihoods, productive assets, and basic services such as water, health, education, and connectivity.

India's development is more and more linked with the USA and Japan's economic development in the recent years. The ongoing USA-

Japan talks to better coordinate in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) areas has not directly addressed the challenge of displacement and disasters that they may individually or jointly have to address in the event of a major disaster in India as both these countries are India's major partners in its economic development and strategic matters.

The UNDP project in India titled "Enhancing Institutional and Community Resilience to Disaster and Climate Change" has indicated the need for more focus on disaster related displacement from rural to urban area and account disaster related displacement.

The on-going work of Dr. Uposana Ghosh on social network analysis in Sunderbans delta in India shows that disasters destroy social networking as well. The loss of social networking is not accounted for in the current post-disaster loss and damage assessments. The disrupted social networks when rebuilt can accelerate recovery. Accelerated recovery reduces the negative impact of displacement on the displaced.

A policy event organized by UNICEF and Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG) in Delhi titled National Workshop on Climate Change and Disaster Resilience for Urban Children focused on children and the risks they face from extreme events. In the session titled, "Resilient Development Planning" it was highlighted that a greater focus is required on planning the prevention of displacement and the rehabilitation of displaced children after disasters in India. Almost three out of seven destitute children in India lose their family members or get separated from them due to extreme climate events or disasters like floods and cyclones.

In India, regional priorities for disaster related displacements are different. In the North East, there is a possibility of trans border displacement both, across the states



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and across the international borders. A major earthquake can easily lead to the movement of tens of thousands of distressed families from Nepal or Bhutan or Bangladesh into Assam or Sikkim or West Bengal.

Dr. Walter Kalin who chairs the Platform on Disaster Displacement as a follow up to Nansen Initiative has attracted global policy attention to disaster related displacement at Sendai and has recently offered a detailed report on how national governments can take steps to move ahead in addressing disaster related displacement.

The following three steps need to be taken to address the rising challenge of disaster induced displacement in India. One, disaster induced displacement needs to be explained with evidence to policy makers and practitioners. Two, the measures to address displacement must be institutionalised; and three a few pilot projects may be taken up. Key partnerships and stakeholders from global to local level must be identified to join in this initiative.

Policies, regulations, and accountability will be the three strategic areas to address a wide range of displacement related issues. In a vibrant democracy like India, bottom-up community level displacement measures will be far more effective than top-down legal measures. ■ - AIDMI Team