



Adding to the Agenda of the 6th AMCDRR



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Advocating Disaster Resilience in South Asia since 2005



The 6th AMCDRR: Setting the Agenda for Future Deliberations

The stakeholders in Asia are gearing up for the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR). This conference will help inform and guide Asian nations in adopting Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)2 at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR), scheduled to take place in 2015 in Sendai, Japan. Seldom have the consultative processes for DRR been so wide ranging, deep, and all encompassing. The AMCDRR follows a similar process in Latin America and last month in Africa. At the sub-regional level the conference will build upon the recommendations and deliberations amongst the SAARC countries earlier in March in New Delhi.

From Bangkok the debate will shift gears and move to New York, where DRR and climate concerns will get mingled and be juxtaposed against MDGs, now being reincarnated as sustainable development goals (SDGs). The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has convened the UN Climate Summit 2014 in September this year which is expected to raise the political will and catalyze action. This will be attended by heads of state

and world leaders who are expected to bring to the table 'Bold Statements' for climate action or, as the 19th Conference of the Parties (COP-19) in Warsaw called them, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The announcements will be wide ranging and cover a range of issues and concerns of the developing and developed countries.

The NDCs, required under the UNFCCC process, will be prepared by all countries. These are national plans of action on climate change that will constitute the main part of the 2015 agreement. It is expected that Parties will present a draft of their NDCs during the 20th Conference of the Parties (COP 20) in Lima, Peru, in November 2014. The WCDRR in Sendai therefore will be the last formal opportunity for the countries to influence the outcome of three processes – HFA2, SDGs and reduction in carbon emissions through NDCs and climate negotiations – before COP 21 in Paris before the Christmas of 2015.

While there is a push from the developed countries to focus NDS on emissions reductions, particularly from the BASIC countries that include

two Asian economies, the developing countries on the other hand emphasize that the NDCs should vary according to national circumstances and include climate change adaptation, vulnerabilities and climate induced disasters. They also propose that developed countries should lead the process, and must include support to developing countries for capacity building, technology and climate finance. In several respects therefore the forthcoming AMCDRR has strategic importance for the Asian countries, particularly the south Asian counties that are plagued by widespread poverty, economic disparities, social inequities, exclusion, and growing climate vulnerability reflected through frequent droughts, floods, crop failures and urban disasters. Fortunately, the newly elected governments in the South Asian region has begun to give a renewed focus to DRR and to the needed integration between disaster risk reduction, environmental degradation and climate change. ■

– Ali Sheikh,

Director, Climate & Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) Asia, and Chief Executive Officer, LEAD Pakistan

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) will be held from June 22–26, 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand. As we inch closer to this conference, it becomes necessary to introspect on important issues that should be raised there. The theme of this conference is *Promoting Investments for Resilient Nations and Communities*. This is a vast theme that merits deliberation on a lot of important factors related with DRR in Asia.

This issue of Southasiadisasters.net is an attempt to deliberate on these important issues related to disaster risk reduction (DRR) in Asia. This issue contains articles on a variety of DRR issues ranging from Kosi floods to Tsunami rehabilitation, and from urban risks to under nutrition. The idea behind this issue of *Southasiadisasters.net* is to present the readers with an overview of important DRR issues that should be included in the deliberations at the 6th AMCDRR. ■

Adding to the Agenda of the 6th AMCDRR

The Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) is a biennial conference organized by United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and various Asian countries. Through these conferences, various Asian nations reaffirm their commitment in following and implementing the HFA through legal and policy declarations. Started in 2005, these biennial conferences have been organised around a central theme that has dictated the agenda for that edition of the conference.

The 6th AMCDRR will be held from June 22-26, 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand. The main theme of the 6th AMCDRR is '*Promoting Investments for Resilient Nations and Communities*'. The sub-themes include the following:

1. Enhancing resilience at local levels
2. Strengthening public investments for disaster and climate risk management to sustain and protect development gains
3. Public and private partnership for disaster risk reduction

This conference holds special significance for various reasons. Firstly, it is the final step before the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) to be held in Sendai, Japan in 2015. The AMCDRR will provide a platform for governments, humanitarian agencies and policy makers to take important decisions and set the agenda for the upcoming WCDRR next year. Secondly, the 6th AMCDRR will provide invaluable inputs from Asia on the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (commonly referred to as HFA2). Most importantly, the deliberations at the 6th AMCDRR need to incorporate the exigencies of newer instruments related with post-2015 development goals and climate change.

Having outlined the importance of this conference, it becomes necessary to raise important questions there. Newer perspectives on disaster risk reduction need to be posited and debated upon at this conference. Questions dealing with the problem of under nutrition in South Asia, the almost annual cycle of floods in South Asia, Post-Tsunami housing in Asia and impact of urban risks on the development of Asian cities needs to be explored at this conference.

Enhancing resilience at the local level is an important theme at the 6th AMCDRR. Apropos this theme, feasible strategies and interventions need to be debated upon. For instance, disaster microinsurance has emerged as an effective mechanism that enhances community resilience at the local level. The AIDMI has worked on a risk transfer project in the Indian state of Odisha to highlight the efficacy of disaster microinsurance as an effective local level resilience building mechanism. Similarly, such evidence based advocacy efforts by

other agencies working in Asia need to be highlighted at the 6th AMCDRR.

An important aspect of the 6th AMCDRR will be High Level Round Tables (HLRT) that will be convened to provide the disaster management ministers/heads of delegation of the member Asian states to report on their country's progress in implementing the HFA. Perhaps this HLRT can be leveraged to promote greater collaboration and cooperation among the various countries of Asia in achieving resilience against disasters. The upcoming HFA2 can incorporate these regional exigencies while making provisions to promote synergies between various Asian countries.

Asia is at the threshold of the HFA2 and this is perhaps the last opportunity to put forward Asia's case for DRR into the new framework. This conference should address these exigencies. The ideal of building a resilient Asia depends upon this. ■

- Kshitij Gupta

Climate Change: What Cities Can Do?

Cities have large carbon foot prints. Cities also have large potential to reduce or mitigate use of carbon.

Could Los Angeles prosper without electricity from fossil fuels? Could the city shun water imported from the Sierra Nevada, even as a changing climate brings hotter days and a declining snowpack?

The project, to be announced Friday, aims to unite more than 60 faculty members from a range of disciplines around an audacious goal: shifting the Los Angeles region to 100% renewable energy and local water by 2050 without harming biodiversity.

In the coming years, the university plans a sustained research effort by engineers, ecologist and climate scientists to reach technological innovations in renewable energy, water and wildlife conservation. Those advances could, in turn, spur new policies at the local and state levels.

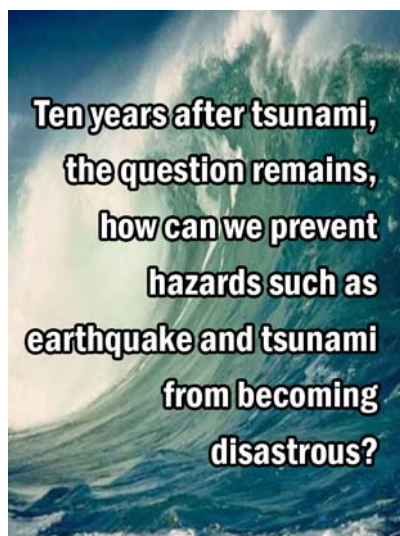
The U.S. Department of Energy has a grand challenge to make solar power cost competitive with coal. NASA started one to find asteroids threatening Earth. President Obama announced a challenge in April for researchers to unlock the mysteries of the human brain. ■

- Mihir R. Bhatt

Today's Imperative: Strengthening Resilience – Ten Years After Tsunami

This year 2014 marks the 10th year anniversary of the occurrence of the twin disaster (earthquake cum tsunami) that devastated many communities in Southeast and South Asia. The disaster challenged and overwhelmed the capacity of governments, non-government responders and communities in affected countries. However, it also provided them a great opportunity to serve the affected population, enhance their capacities and learn many lessons to improve their organizations' ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster's damaging impact.

The All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) was one of those, which came first to the affected areas. It facilitated needs and capacities assessment, emergency response, participatory disaster risk reduction and recovery planning and implementation. The AIDMI provided its assistance not only in India but also in other parts of Asia, where its services are needed. Much later on, it also got involved in real



time evaluation of the then response and recovery actions of the various agencies.

The lessons identified and learned from the tsunami were remarkable that resulted to more reflection and contemplation amongst non-government organizations on the way they handle disasters of that magnitude. The lessons also guided them in dealing with many issues faced during big disasters, both at the local and international levels.

Since the tsunami, many more disasters came and went – cyclone and consequent flooding, earthquakes and succeeding flash floods and landslides, and many other small disasters. Countries such as India, Indonesia, Philippines, Pakistan, China and even Thailand have their fair share in the devastation these disasters caused. Many organizations continue to get involved and enriched their practice.

Ten years are long enough to look back and see what have been accomplished in the long term. In 2010, the AIDMI with the support of the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (then Special Unit for South-South Cooperation Unit in the United Nations Development Programme) and UNISDR held the First South-South Citizenry Based Development Academy (SSCBDA) in Gujarat, India to primarily learn from the local communities' experience on how they responded to and recovered from the Kutch earthquake. The Second SSCBDA was held in Banda Aceh, which was co-organized by AIDMI, Syah Kuala University and UNOSSC, was about learning from the Tsunami reconstruction



initiatives. Five more SSCBDAs with different themes, were organized in India (New Delhi and Odisha), Indonesia (Kupang) and Philippines (Camarines Sur and Butuan City). From the point of view of local communities, these SSCBDAs, which started in Gujarat were a tremendous success. These Academies, which were participated by local actors from about 15 countries, mostly from Asia provided every participants a learning opportunity. Perhaps, another SSCBDA need to be held with the theme "Today's Imperative: Strengthening Resilience".

Ten years after tsunami, the question remains, how can we prevent hazards such as earthquake and tsunami from becoming disastrous? Are countries and communities ready to really address the root causes of vulnerabilities and focus on strengthening local capacities, while at the same time mitigating hazards through preparedness activities? Let us continue the discourse and do more! ■

– **Zenaida Willison**, DRR Consultant, Thailand

Water Related Disaster – A Case of Kosi Pralaya (Havoc)*



The Kosi, flowing from Nepal into India's Bihar State, is one of the major tributaries of the Ganges river. Through the 1954 Indo-Nepal Kosi Treaty, India in 1962 completed the construction of the 56 gated Kosi barrage in Nepal near the border with lengthy embankments on both banks of the river, upstream and downstream of the barrage. The barrage and its associated structures were primarily built for flood protection, irrigate lands in Bihar (969,110 hectares of land are irrigated in the state from Kosi irrigation structures) and generate 20 MW of electricity. Article 3 of the Kosi treaty vested India the entire responsibility for operation and maintenance the barrage and its associated structures. On August 18, 2008 the Kosi breached its left bank embankment at Kusaha in Nepal, about 12 km upstream of the barrage, causing *Pralaya* – the term used by Bihar's Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar, after his aerial survey of the affected area on August 20 – both in Nepal and India. About 50,000 people in Nepal and 2.5 million people in Bihar lost their homes, valuable farmlands and their means of livelihood. A portion of Nepal's east-west highway between the Kosi barrage and Biratnagar was washed away, resulting in disruption of the movements of thousands of Nepalese to and from the eastern part of Nepal. Although the onset of the 2009 monsoon, the Kosi river was diverted back to the original course through the barrage, six years after the breach, one can still see the scar of Pralaya: once fertile land now filled with sands, pebbles and barren along the entire course where Kosi meandered



Nepalese Army personnel helping flood affected people.

Source: http://apdforum.com/shared/images/2012/04/01/Flood_opt.jpg

after the breach. As per the Kathamndu Post - an English daily of March 25, 2014, 'relief eludes Koshi victims'.

The havoc attracted attention of both national and international media in Nepal and India. Surprisingly, the Embassy of India at Kathmandu laid the blame for the breach squarely on Nepal. But, as reported by the weekly India Today of September 15, 2008, Bihar's Chief Engineer, E Satyanarayana, stationed at Birpur near the barrage had informed the concerned government agencies as early as August 5, 2008 about the Kosi River's mounting pressure on the Kusaha embankment. With the situation worsening from August 9th, he (Chief Engineer Satyanarayana) sent frantic messages to senior flood management officials warning them of imminent danger. The institutions,

thus, within the government of India (Ganga Flood Control Commission based in Patna and Central Water Commission in New Delhi) and Government of Bihar had the information about the impending disaster. Ironically, the August 17, 2008 bulletin of the Bihar Irrigation and Flood Control Department claimed that all embankments on the Kosi river were safe. But as warned by Chief Engineer Satyanarayan, the Kosi River breached the Kusaha embankment on August 18, 2008. At the time of the breach, the Kosi discharge was reportedly only 146,000 cusecs. Flood discharges in the vicinity of 350,000 cusecs were considered 'normal' in Kosi. In the past, the barrage along with its associated structures had withstood the recorded high of 9,00,000 cusecs Kosi discharge.

* The author wishes to thank Mr. Santa Bahadur Pun, former Managing Director, Nepal Electricity Authority and former Officer on Special Duty, Ministry of Water Resources, Government of Nepal for his comments and suggestions in improving the contents and presentation of this paper.

So what went wrong? The havoc raised many questions in the minds of many people both in Nepal and India. Could the untold sufferings in Nepal and India have been averted? Whose negligence caused this *Pralaya* of August 18? To find answers to these questions, the Bihar Government had constituted a one-man judicial commission headed by ex-Chief Justice, R Balia. But the findings of that Balia Commission has, surprisingly, been not made public yet. The Indian media had reported about the charges and counter-charges between the State and Central level governments about this *Pralaya*. In the interest of both Nepal and India, the findings of the Balia Commission must be made public.



Kosi Embankment Breach.

Source: epaper.timesofindia.com

Whenever, such havoc occurs in the river flowing from Nepal to India, Nepal is always depicted as the bad guy. Some of the Indian media falsely

report that India, during the monsoon, suffers heavily due to the release of water by Nepal. But the fact is that there are barrages only three major rivers that have to do with both

Nepal and India, i.e. on the Kosi, Gandak and Mahakali/Sarada rivers. The concerned treaty signed between Nepal and India on these rivers categorically stipulates that the entire responsibility for operation and maintenance of these three barrages lay on the Government of India. Yet, Nepal is the bad boy. This is a subject that needs to be dispassionately studied by the professional organizations and professionals of Nepal and India. Effective use of existing bilateral committees and strengthening of early warning systems would definitely help to avoid the disaster similar to that of August 18, 2008. ■

- Dwarika Nath Dhungel,
Senior Researcher, Former Executive Director, Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) and Former Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, Government of Nepal

COMMUNITY VOICES

Voices from Small and Medium Entrepreneurs of Puri, Odisha on 2011 Floods

Livestock are most vulnerable during flood events as there are no safe places to keep them. You cannot pack them in bag. You cannot shut them up as children. During floods people lose their livelihood in the form of livestock. But loss estimates only focus on single source of income while most of us have small but multiple sources income.



- Shantilata Bhoi,
Coir worker, Madhuban village, Puri

The fertility of the land has been reduced drastically due to floods; Puri district was famous for its coconut and fibre production, however now the quality and quantity have diminished considerably. But who can raise this issue? We are all suffering.



- Jameshwar,
Farmer and vegetable vendor, Balapur village, Puri

(with UNDP support)

Under Nutrition in Humanitarian Crisis: What is Missing in South Asia

Some 70% of the world's children suffering from under nutrition live in Asia. South Asia has the highest level of under nutrition among the regions of the world (acute and chronic under nutrition, and underweight). India, with 20% of the world's population, has 36% of the world's undernourished children. Due to the sheer population numbers, there are more undernourished children in 4 states of India than in all of sub-Saharan Africa. While India is at the top of the list, Bangladesh and Pakistan are also among the top four countries with the highest rates of acute under nutrition.



With relatively stable and strong governments and economic growth, why is under nutrition remaining persistently high in South Asia?

The answer lies in the perception of under nutrition which is too often confused with hunger. Where hunger exists, under nutrition in children under 5 years of age, the most vulnerable group, is not necessarily a given. While hunger is a problem which in itself merits the full attention of decision-makers, it is related to Food Security and more specifically household food access. Under nutrition, especially severe acute under nutrition, is strongly linked to feeding practices, dietary diversity, and the sanitary and healthcare environment. Acute under nutrition is a treatable and preventable condition which can have grave consequences on quality of life in terms of long-term physical and intellectual capacity. It can also be deadly.

Child being weighed Saptari District, Nepal, January 2013.

The levels of under nutrition in South Asia have remained persistently at or above emergency (crisis) thresholds according to the World Health Organization (WHO) classification. Despite this, health systems and health practitioners still do not recognize under nutrition as a public health problem, and nutrition is not a part of medical curricula. This, and yet half of childhood deaths in the region are associated with under nutrition.

What do we mean by crisis?

One of the reasons the high level of under nutrition in South Asia does not meet with the same attention as in sub-Saharan Africa is that the levels of under nutrition persist year in and year out, and are not caused by but certainly worsened by drought, displacement, and other calamities. As such, the under nutrition in South Asia is tacitly accepted as a given, and is not mediatized in the same way as

crisis in other parts of the world. Partially in consequence, under nutrition is often overlooked in humanitarian responses to crisis in the region.

Moreover, the sheer numbers of children affected paralyse action. In India alone it is estimated that 8.3 million children suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), nearly half the global burden, though less than 12% have access to any form of treatment. Coverage of SAM treatment in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan is successively even less.

So what is missing to address the persisting crisis levels of under nutrition in South Asia? Firstly, hunger and under nutrition need to be distinguished in public and governmental eyes, and under nutrition recognized as a life-threatening disease. Secondly, it must be recognized that despite the persisting high rates of under nutrition since decades in South Asia, it is a crisis. Thirdly, the inter-related factors contributing to childhood under nutrition must be understood, notably the nutritional status of women of reproductive age. Fourthly, it is critical to recognize that addressing persisting under nutrition is essential for resilience and growth in the region. Fifthly, the political will to tackle under nutrition in the region has to be demonstrated by putting the issue at the forefront of country, regional, and donor agendas, whereby international standards are applied and funding oriented to both treatment and prevention. ■

– **Tarik Kadir,**

Regional Operations Director/
Directeur Régional des Opérations
Asia, Action contre la Faim, France

Impact of Climate Change to Farmers of South Asia

Although the South Asian sub-region has made rapid progress in the last three decades, it still has a large number of impoverished people. Besides the urban poor, most of the impoverished people are engaged in the agriculture sector, as landless labourers or small holder farmers. With over 60 percent of the labour force in the sub-region thus engaged in agriculture, any disturbances to the sector would have widespread impact on the sub-region's food security.

Climate change is already aggravating this rather vulnerable group which is so dependent on agriculture for its livelihood. The mean annual temperatures in South Asia are already trending upwards by about 0.4 °C per 100 years. This warming appears to have precipitated changes in the weather patterns across the sub-region, with less predictable monsoons, warmer winters, incursion of seawater into coastal areas from sea-level rise, and changes to river flows from the receding glaciers. Most marked however, is the increased frequency of extreme weather events – the sub-region is already experiencing more frequent and/or greater severity of floods, droughts and cyclones.

Change in climate also has a direct impact on crop yields. Moderate temperature increases (1–2°C) result in yield declines of as much as 15–17 percent in rice, maize and wheat, three major cereal crops. This is further compounded by more erratic and shorter rainfall patterns, droughts, and floods. With uncertainty in planting seasons, crop failures magnify and higher

temperatures lead to greater problems caused by pests and diseases. With much of the sub-region's agriculture under rain-fed conditions, farmers are far more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of climate change. Higher temperatures and erratic rainfall can also result in falling ground water tables, making farming far more risky. The risk has also spread to people dependent on coastal fisheries, as a rising sea level and increase in upstream salinity are having an adverse effect on river-based fisheries.

The phenomenon of climate change, and its devastating impact on agricultural productivity, is well acknowledged, but that has yet to translate into more meaningful action at national level. Perhaps, even more debilitating for the farmer is to be in a state where one is unable to counter the problems resulting from climate change.

There is available guidance. A number of adaptive strategies are available for the smallholder farming groups. They include: use of locally adapted varieties/species that can thrive in the new conditions; improvement of soils for enhancing water holding capacity; more efficient use of water; crop diversification (intercropping, agro forestry, crop-sequencing etc.); use of species resistant to pests and diseases; and integrating climate forecasting to reduce production risk. Many of these measures have been captured in FAO's *Climate Smart Agriculture*¹ initiative.

Despite their limitations, some farmers are already employing a few of these adaptive measures. They divert water from springs into tanks for use during the dry periods, use infiltration pits to capture more water during the rainy season, and are introducing crops that are more drought tolerant. These are significant examples that point the way for resource-constrained farmers to adapt to the changing climatic conditions. Admittedly, these adaptation strategies still remain fragmented, and have yet to be linked to the national climate change strategies, disaster risk reduction approaches and national agricultural policies. In summary, an urgent move is needed to increase the conceptual understanding of climate change in relation to agricultural practices, as an integral part of sustainable development throughout the sub-region. ■

– Appanah Simmathiri,

Climate Change and Bio-energy
Officer (acting), FAO Regional
Office for Asia and the Pacific



1 FAO (2013). Climate-Smart Agriculture Sourcebook. FAO of the United Nations. Rome, Italy.

Ten Years of Disaster Risk Reduction in Bangladesh



Disasters are frequent phenomenon in Bangladesh ranging from devastating floods to cyclone, tornado, storm/ tidal surge, river bank erosion, drought, salinity intrusion and expansion, arsenic contamination in ground water and many more. There is also risk of earthquake as well as human induced disasters and hazards such as infrastructural collapse and many more. Disasters, be in natural and human induced, interrupt the process of social and economic development of the country. Disasters in Bangladesh are contributed by many factors such as geographical and topographical features; confluence of the major rivers; high monsoon rainfall within and outside Bangladesh; climate change; low mean sea level; rise of sea level; siltation of rivers; flood control measures; deforestation; earthquakes in the Himalayan and Andaman islands; use of chemical fertilizers; excessive withdrawal of ground water; shrimp cultivation and unplanned urbanization and industrialization.

Although disasters are as old as its history, Bangladesh has gradually become well known for her disaster management and risk reduction approaches within the South Asian region. Being the most disaster prone country within the region Bangladesh is the first to establish a separate Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) in 1993. The country has also introduced other departments and programmes for disaster response (Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation). Bangladesh has drafted a well designed document- Standing Orders on Disasters (SoD) in 1997 (revised in 2010), which explains specific roles of relevant stakeholders during different phases of a disaster. In 2004

the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management (Since 2012 it is Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief/ MoDMR) launched the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) to facilitate the reform of the disaster management approach by expanding its focus from reactive emergency response to proactive risk reduction.

Over the last ten years the country has initiated a good number of institutional structures to achieve technical monitoring, capacity building, preparedness and response in reducing disaster risks. The MoDMR, with its line agency Department of Disaster Management,

Major natural and human induced disasters in Bangladesh over last 10 years

Year	Disaster	Death
2004	Flood	747
2007	Flood	896
2007	Cyclone <i>Sidr</i>	2,942
2009	Cyclone <i>Aila</i>	330
2013	Tornado	31
2013	Cyclone <i>Mahasen</i>	17
2013	Garment Factory collapse	1,129

is responsible for coordinating national disaster management efforts across all agencies. Bangladesh has also created a simplistic model to guide disaster risk reduction and emergency response management efforts in Bangladesh. The model has three key elements and ensures that the move to a more comprehensive disaster risk reduction (DRR) culture remains central to all efforts. This also gradually focused on mainstreaming efforts adopting inclusive approach including gender mainstreaming in DRR. The National Plan for Disaster Management (2010-2015) and the Disaster Management Act (2012) have become functional. A Disaster Management Policy has also been prepared and is waiting for final approval. In addition to MoDMR, DRR issues have also been taken as one of the key components of several policies and legislations in Bangladesh. Some of the DRR inclusive documents can also be found in the plans and policies of other Ministries, few of them are: the Sixth Five Year Plan (2010-2015, Ministry of Planning), Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP, 2009, Ministry of Environment and Forests/MoEF), National Women's Advancement Policy (2011), National Child Policy (2011) and Children Act (2013,

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs/MoWCA), National Education Policy (2010, Ministry of Education), National Agriculture policy etc.

Bangladesh has a comprehensive disaster management programme, a well developed plan, mainstreaming strategies, Community Risk Assessment guideline, disaster management institutions from central to local levels and some other etc. However, the whole operation of the disaster management is yet to be decentralized. The local government institutions completely depend on the decision and resources of the central disaster management authority to response to the DRR efforts and addressing needs of the disaster affected. Other activities related to risk reduction mostly remain silence throughout the year. Moreover, reducing the adverse impact of climate change is becoming more challenging for Bangladesh and her DRR efforts due to its multifaceted and multilayered governance. Lack of global accountability and commitments are hindering the country's efforts to reduce adverse impacts of climate change. South Asian regional risk reduction issues, often shaped by political crises, are also creating more challenges.

It must be mentioned here that although Bangladesh is well known for her natural disaster risk reduction efforts, human induced disasters are yet to be received adequate attentions. Examples may be given from the catastrophic event that has occurred on April 24, 2013 while an eight-storied building collapsed in Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. This has questioned the country's readiness to face a disaster which is human-made. The great tragedy that had been fallen on over 4,000/5,000 workers, causing deaths of 1129, in garment factories, mostly women, has sent shockwaves around the world. The catastrophic event has generated lot of questions to rethink about managing and preventing such disaster. Attempt should be taken to grasp the harsh realities and thereby lend policies in context of both natural and human induced disasters. DRR efforts of South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, will be most effective if they are backed by strong policy supports, implementation guidance and coordinated efforts of national, regional and global perspectives for both natural and human induced disasters. ■

- Mahbuba Nasreen, Ph.D.,

Director and Professor,
Institute of Disaster Management and
Vulnerability Studies, University of
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Governance of Hyogo Framework for Action 2

What are the key areas of actions for the governance of Hyogo Framework for Action 2 (HFA2) when it is launched in 2015? The following areas are coming up for discussion.

1. Country Business Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). What countries have is road maps and often broad list of activities or impressive projects. But a business plan for disaster risk reduction are not made at national level. As a result national and international resources are invested in darkness. A country

business plan is one way to improve governance of HFA2.

2. Result based Financing and Administration of DRR. Most financing of DRR projects and programmes is allocation based. At the most what was built is available. But results of financing and administration are not. And this is a major limitation.

3. Executing and Implementing Capacities at local level is uneven. Some districts have excellent skills and teams but limit project resources. Other districts have large

projects but limited skills or capacities to manage the project cycle.

4. Sectoral Community of Practice does not exist. For example, all those who are busy using livelihoods roots to reduce risk are not part of a community. Nor the corporate business continuity experts. As a result the governance of disaster risk reduction across sector remains uneven.

The HFA2 process needs to look at these with more care. ■

- Mihir R. Bhatt

ResilientAfrica Network (RAN)

ResilientAfrica Network (RAN) is a partnership targeting 20 universities in 16 African countries. Funded by USAID, RAN is one of the 7 university based development labs in the USAID's Higher Education Solutions Network under the Office of Science and Technology, and the only lab from Africa.

Its aim is to strengthen the resilience of communities vulnerable to recurrent shocks and stresses in sub-Saharan Africa by leveraging the vast potential in University scholars to identify, develop and scale up solutions that build on their adaptive capacities to mitigate their vulnerabilities.

The objectives of RAN include the following:

1. To design a resilience framework for Sub-Saharan Africa
2. To strengthen resilience of communities through innovations
3. To enhance resilience-related knowledge generation and sharing

The RAN team has also established strong links with some of the great innovator communities including those in the Silicon Valley. Additionally RAN participated in the Technical Convening (TechCon 2013) held in Virginia, Colonial Williamsburg. This convening brought together several innovators, faculty and experts from all the HESN Labs and a team of Makerere University Students (Matibabu-non invasive Malaria diagnosis application) being supported by RAN pitched their idea and emerged the best, winning other six universities based in USA. This among others is



Prof. David Serwadda-RAN Technical Advisor (left) leads the RAN Team to engage for "solutions through innovation".

aimed at continuous learning, brainstorming and leveraging on existing expertise to enrich African innovators.

Approaches to sourcing innovation:

There will be two alternative ways of sourcing innovations:

1. Searching from among existing innovations that are at prototype level and such projects will be

given a 'push' to move to the next level

2. Completely new ideas developed by findings from the resilience data collection

The Network is led by Makerere University in Kampala Uganda and the secretariat is located at Makerere University School of Public Health. The core partners include Tulane University's Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy (DRLA) (RANs lead in supporting resilience), Stanford University (RAN's lead in supporting innovations) and Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), (<http://www.ranlab.org/>).

Prof. William Bazeyo, who is also the Dean School of Public Health, Makerere University, heads the ResilientAfrica Network as Chief of Party. ■

- Harriet Adong,

Communications Manager at Makerere University School of Public Health- ResilientAfrica Network (RAN), Uganda

"RAN is employing science and technology to harness innovations from faculty, students and the communities. It is imperative that we work together to move universities from the universities to the communities, build on the existing, avoid duplication and wastage as we all strive to create impact in the communities" Prof. William Bazeyo-RAN Chief of Party.

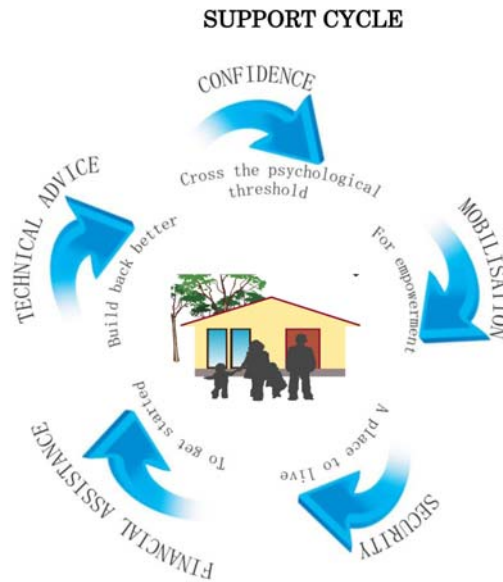
Post Tsunami Housing Reconstruction: Mainstreaming the People's Process

The Cases of Sri Lanka and Indonesia

It is nearly ten years since the Indian Ocean Tsunami devastated the coastal areas of Indonesia, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives and the east African states. In terms of loss of life in countries affected by this disaster on the 26th of December 2004, it is recorded as the one of the ten worst in the history of humankind. In the end an estimated 230,000 people lost their lives with Indonesia recording 167,799 and Sri Lanka 35,322. Along with lives, people's economic assets were completely destroyed, most importantly their homes. In Indonesia, over 250,000 families and in Sri Lanka over 100,000 families lost their houses.

Ironically it was the poor and the vulnerable who suffered the most.

After the initial humanitarian recovery phase, governments, donors and non- governmental organization scampered to rebuild housing for the people. Initially the agencies' plan was "let's build houses and give them to the people". That was the response of most agencies; that's what the



agencies are familiar and comfortable with. So the technocrats and bureaucrats were grappling with numbers; how much money is available? How much should a house cost? How many bricks? How many tons of cement? So on and so forth. The answers to these questions are not easy to come by and then the plan gets mired in debates that are never conclusive.

At the same time UN-Habitat advocated the time tested approach of the People's Process of Housing. After all, people, especially the poor, are the biggest producers of housing in our countries. UN-Habitat had promoted and implemented housing by the people since early eighties in many countries and strongly believed that the affected people are biggest resource in the rebuilding process. When the affected are empowered to be in charge and in the decision making process, they can rebuild their lives according to their own needs rather than sitting and waiting for hand outs.

The programme was launched with the following key principles:

- Respect the primacy of the needs of the affected families.
- Recognize people's organization and their capacities.
- Ensure security, protection and the right to a place to live.
- Responsibility for recovery and rebuilding rests with the families and communities.



Community Action Planning, Banda Aceh.



Post Tsunami Houses under Construction: Banda Aceh and Sri Lanka.

- Devolve decision making to the point of action.
- Support from the authorities is essential for people to take recovery into their own hands.

Mobilization of the community to think and work together becomes the real resource for people to overcome the trauma of the disaster and set their minds to rebuilding their lives. Mobilization and organization of Community Development Councils through a democratic process, builds the social capital that is essential for building self confidence for people to embark on rebuilding their lives. The process involves Community Action Planning, where the community comes together, identifies their problems, prioritize them collectively through negotiation and determine how they are going to address the problems. The role of the agency's staff and external actors is to facilitate this process. It is important to note that in both Sri Lanka and Indonesia, the women took the leadership in planning and organizing their work.

By implementing a concerted programme of the People's Process, families were able to rebuild their houses very quickly for a third of the cost of conventional building. While some families may be vulnerable on their own, their coping ability is enhanced as result of being part of Community Development Council. Purchasing materials collectively and building together forming mutual help groups, transformed devastated communities very rapidly. One important lesson in both cases was that communities assisted to rebuild their housing were the first to complete their houses while international NGOs were still trying to find contractors to build houses. This set the precedence and some donors were convinced that the People' Process was an effective form of rebuilding housing and people's



Completed People's Process Houses: Galle Sri Lanka.

lives quickly and cost effectively. With this realization several INGOs and local NGOs adopted the People's Process in their programmes.

In terms of satisfaction of beneficiaries, it was clear that families were happy that they had the freedom to build the house that they wanted rather than receiving a standard type plan house. Settlements built by the people create so much variety and color rather than the standard housing schemes. Houses provided by agencies very often did not meet the social and cultural needs of the families. Then they were of a poor quality, since contractors cut corners and the corruption that goes along with it. On the other hand when people build their own housing they make sure that it is up to the standard and they also add their savings and gifts of funds from relations, friends and well wishers and make a much better house.

The significant breakthrough from this experience is that governments, international agencies, international NGOs and national NGOs adopted the people's process as the mainstream approach of post conflict and post disaster reconstruction. In Afghanistan, it has been the main method of reintegration and

resettlement of returnees since 2002. In Pakistan, the post earthquake reconstruction (2006 - 2010) was uniformly based on the people's process in what was called "*home owner driven reconstruction*" which is directing reconstruction grants directly to the families to organize themselves and rebuild their housing with agencies providing training to build back better. This programme can be cited as one of the most successful programmes of post disaster reconstruction with over 550,000 houses rebuilt in about 4 years. Today in post conflict housing reconstruction programme in Sri Lanka, the Government of India which is assisting the reconstruction of 50,000 houses and other major donor like European Union, Australian Government is adopting the People's Process of reconstruction. UN-Habitat has been advocating the People's Process of rebuilding policy in all these countries and also providing the technical assistance to the families. Therefore it can be firmly concluded that the People's Process of reconstruction has now become the mainstream of post disaster and post conflict reconstruction. ■

- Lalith Lankatilleke,

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UN-Habitat in Sri Lanka Plans Ahead

The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) team within UN-Habitat Sri Lanka is working with Local Authorities (LAs) to ensure their Urban Development Plans incorporate DRR measures and to assist with their preparedness and response planning. The Disaster Resilient Development Strategies for Sri Lankan Cities Programme (the Project), funded by the Australian Government, has been rolled out in eight cities - Akkaraipattu, Balangoda, Batticaloa, Kalmunai, Mannar, Mullaittivu, Ratnapura and Vavuniya. Planning ahead for the future - a future that is disaster resilient and sustainable is driving this Project.



Kalmunai community hazard identification and ground-truthing of DRR solutions.

Each city selected in this Project, has been declared under the Urban Development Authority (UDA) Law as a development area – as such the government will be encouraging future development into that region. The LAs vary between Urban Councils, Municipal Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas, they have populations that range from 34,573 (Mullaittivu) to 83,277 (Vavuniya). They are located in vastly different regions – from the central hilly area, to the dry zone in the centre of the country, to the east and west coasts. The different locations and situation around each the town means each is affected by different hazards and experiences different vulnerabilities and risks. The key common features that the towns share include:

- Vulnerability to multiple hazards;
- Outdated or non-existent town Development Plans; and
- Commitments from the LAs to improve their resilience.

The Planning process has actively engaged with as many stakeholders as possible, this includes, community members, national, regional and local government departments, centers and authorities, such as disaster management, road development and the water board, experts from universities and institutions, civil society, political figures and leaders of community based organisations (CBOs).

Through the Planning process the Project has sought to improve the existing situation in each town, as well as future scenarios, through a thorough analysis of the existing situation that includes DRR considerations derived from the hazard, vulnerability and risk assessments undertaken. This has provided a solid basis for strategic town development planning. Working closely with each LA and

training a member of their staff has been an integral component in the success of this project. Each LA has had to commit to establishing a budget line for DRR activities and to establishing technical working groups (TWG) and standing committees to monitor resilience and make suggestions for improvements and new activities or projects that could be undertaken within each area. The formal structures for the TWGs and standing committees were either established as new entities within each LA, or existing groups were amended where appropriate.

The Planning that has been undertaken has sought to empower both communities and government to act prior to a hazard, to ensure they are prepared, and to ensure that the citizens know how to communicate their concerns to the LAs, and equally, that the LAs know how to respond.

This improvement to communication has benefits for all as real concerns can be responded to quickly and the future planning of the LA is widespread in scope and has been conducted to ensure input from all stakeholders has been considered, responded to and addressed as appropriate.

Outputs from this Project include an LA specific Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Plan, as well as revision to UDA plan to ensure DRR measure are embedded into the planning scheme. Both processes occurred in parallel and relied on each other for improvements to the final output. The stakeholder consultation,

hazard, vulnerability and risk assessments, as well as the TWG and standing committee. Clear leadership and support from the elected leaders of each LA, as well as the government professionals has been key in ensuring the success of the Project in each location. This support has also illustrated to the communities that DRR and improved resilience are keen considerations for the LAs and they are acting to make their cities more resilient.

This Project has demonstrated to LAs the difference that planning ahead can make. Planning ahead includes both planning to cater for future growth, as well as planning to counter current

risks and hazards. Pro-active planning that is embedded in LA structures and includes financial mechanisms helps each LA consider costs and benefits of both problems and solutions as well as view the situation within the wider picture of the whole LA. The Planning Process, which has enabled these LAs to plan ahead, has also strengthened both local governance and community participation and understanding of hazards and response to the situation. UN-Habitat in Sri Lanka has been driving the planning process to ensure planning ahead is core business for LAs and the communities are involved in this process. ■

- **Saman Ekanayake**,
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NEW DIMENSIONS IN DRR

Tourism: A Potential Tool for Community Resilience

Disasters are as diversified as the types of suffering they cause. They can be of physical character such as natural disasters (tsunamis, earth quakes, erosions, heavy rain falls and dry periods) or on a socio-cultural basis such as political conflicts and civil wars. What all disasters have in common and what defines them as such, is a disintegration of the community as it was before. Disasters lead to poverty, poor health conditions and occasionally to crime.

Tourism can help these disaster affected communities to resurrect themselves. For such communities, community-based tourism could be a source of income until the economic infrastructure and resources are re-installed. Furthermore tourism can generate national and international awareness about the situation of communities which were struck by a socio-cultural crisis as well as force the local government to install safety

measures for tourists from which the local community can benefit as well (mainly police forces, doctors/hospitals and sanitation systems).

The tourism product appropriate for building community resilience could be of different types such as community-based tourism where the tourists pay to live among locals and help them rebuilt their homes or education based tourism which aims at an inter-cultural exchange.

The effects of tourism implementation in disaster struck communities are diverse and range from possibly positive to possibly negative.

The main strength of tourism is that it can have significant economic benefits to communities, as long as the tourism development is planned and financial leakage limited. In a scenario where tourism is

successfully implemented among a disaster affected community it can influence the community's mentality by giving a feeling of support where the locals do not feel left alone with their suffering. This mentality might give the community the mental strength and motivation for a successful rehabilitation into economy and social ties.

The main weakness of tourism is that it is difficult to implement the exact way it was planned. Tourism development is a constant, but dynamic process which can quickly go off the pre-defined rails of its development.

With Tourism, opportunities rise for the local community, such as the possibility to broaden the horizon and to enhance inter-cultural learning - which might lead to new ideas and solutions for existing problems.

The main threat of community based tourism is the risk that the community might become over-dependent and that it adapts the belief that as long as the community is being seen as a "victim" there will be financial support by tourists. This may lead to a mentality which hinders the reconstruction of the community towards its previous structure. Another possible threat of an unplanned tourism development is that the tourists might influence the locals in ways that negatively affect and transform the local culture.

The following graph illustrates the SWOT analysis of tourism development in disaster affected communities. It can be seen that the possible influences are very balanced and highly depend on a successful implementation of a sustainable tourism development strategy.

Tourism can positively affect the economy and mentality of disaster

STRENGTHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic help • positive influence on community's attitude 	WEAKNESSES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult to implement • dependence on economic aid
OPPORTUNITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inter-cultural learning • generating new ideas and solutions 	THREATS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possible dependency on 'being a victim' • alternation of local culture

affected communities in India but must be planned in advance with the involvement of the local community. The importance of planning the development of tourism is that the community must decide upon the expectations it has from tourism. The benefits/advantage of implementing tourism in disaster affected communities is that there is often no pre-existing tourism structure and therefore tourism can be planned from scratch, which means that it can be designed in order to meet the local

community's needs and wishes, according to a context-based approach that considers the individual situation of each community. Only planned tourism can help the community without affecting the culture of the community by altering the original community culture into a charity tourism depending culture. Disaster tourism can therefore offer an alternative source of income, but should not replace the already existing culture. ■

- Ennio Valentino Picucci

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