

ESCAP – Tohoku University

Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Improving Disaster Data to Build Resilience in Asia and the Pacific

30 September to 1 October 2013, Sendai, Japan

Summary and the Way Forward 1 October 2013

1. The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Improving Disaster Data to Build Resilience in Asia and the Pacific was organized in Sendai, Japan, on 30 September to 1 October 2013, by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in close collaboration with the International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS) at Tohoku University.
2. As the international community meets at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR) in Sendai in March 2015 to renew the commitments made during the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA), it has a strategic opportunity to further operationalize and propose an evidence-based framework for building “resilience”. In preparing for this EGM, participants expressed the view that this is a central proposition upon which the future disaster risk reduction framework (HFA2) must base its policies, institutional arrangements, and programmes for disaster risk reduction.
3. The preparatory process acknowledged (a) that the aim of HFA includes assisting governments and their partners in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development planning and increasing their ability to reduce disaster-induced damage and losses by achieving resilient communities and nations; and (b) the importance of assisting governments in measuring their own progress and achievements in disaster risk reduction at the national level, and that such efforts should be considered as imperative in HFA2.
4. The EGM met to explore how to build an evidence-based resilience system through improved collection and dissemination of disaster data for Asia Pacific. More specifically, it met to:
 - (a) propose a result and process framework for evidence-based resilience;
 - (b) assess the practices, innovations, and the available opportunities and hindrances at countries and initiatives and programmes of agencies;
 - (c) identify a core set of statistics in line with existing standards and mechanisms;
 - (d) further the opportunities to strengthen the coordination between National Disaster Management Agency (NDMAs) and National Statistical Office (NSOs);
 - (e) submit substantive actionable recommendations to the third Session of the ESCAP Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction on regional commitments and cooperation on improving disaster data; and
 - (f) establish a partnership to follow through the agreed action plan.
5. Attended by more than 40 experts from the government agencies including National Disaster Management Agencies, the National Statistical Offices of countries from the region, United Nations agencies, regional and international organizations, academic institutions, donors and civil society, the Meeting:
 - (a) recognized improvements in institutional and legal systems on disaster risk reduction that provide enabling environment for systematic collection, accounting and application of information in disaster loss database;

- (b) acknowledged the considerable progress made by countries, development partners, agencies and civil society in the area of disaster data collection and dissemination, and ever increasing coordination between the NDMAs and NSOs;
 - (c) noted the importance of updated and reliable disaster statistics for helping governments and their stakeholders to manage risk and effectively respond to disasters inclusive of and sensitive to the different needs of the marginal and most vulnerable segments of society including the elderly and persons with disabilities;
 - (d) urged the development planning and financing authorities at national and local levels to undertake low-regret investments based not only on cost but also on investment and asset benefits to the development;
 - (e) proposed an action plan in developing a core set of disaster statistics with the appropriate domain and themes containing the comprehensive categories of statistics to guide informed policy decisions on risk sensitive investment;
 - (f) noted the need for enhancing mechanisms for implementation at the country level that fully engages local governments and civil society in different facets of disaster risk management in terms of baseline data, historical disaster records, disaster emergency and rehabilitation/recovery-related data, predictive and risk probability data;
 - (g) acknowledged the opportunities to address current gaps and challenges in the coordination between national and local authorities by enhancing appropriate policies, platforms, mechanisms, standards and quality assurance schemes;
 - (h) recognized the need for regional level coordination to support NDMAs and NSOs build, plan, and implement disaster data management in a coordinated manner in the countries and to share and learn with other countries;
 - (i) noted the importance of UN agencies, international organisations, and development partners to coordinate effectively and form partnerships in the collection of disaster data to reduce the transaction costs on countries, avoid duplication of efforts and to use resources in the most efficient and meaningful manner;
 - (j) highlighted the need to increase capacity in furthering an evidence-based framework in disaster risk reduction that will complement the above efforts to strengthen the political commitment from member countries;
 - (k) recognized the need for further pilot studies in improving disaster data at the national level. The objective would be to grasp a comprehensive picture of the national level reality in the collection and dissemination of disaster data and to understand the capacity of the national statistical system, in order to define a needs-based regional framework on disaster risk reduction.
6. The EGM agreed on the establishment of an inclusive partnership to be the basis for developing an evidence-based framework in disaster risk reduction. The leading partners group thus far includes ESCAP, IRIDeS at Tohoku University, UNDP, UNISDR (Regional Office for Asia Pacific and North East Asia Office), Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), International Centre for Water Hazard and Risk Management (ICHARM) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Other agencies and governments actively engaged in disaster risk reduction in the region are also invited to

form a core group to continue the discussions.

7. The meeting will follow through this initiative by exploring or pursuing the deliberations in the third Session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, 27-29 November 2013 in Bangkok, and the Sixth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in June 2014 in Bangkok. The objective will be to review and consolidate the two streams into a set of proposed objectives, targets, and indicators pertaining to HFA2 ready for discussion and adoption by the WCDRR.
8. Finally, the EGM agreed to pursue the evidence-based resilience initiative with a second EGM in Sendai in 2014; and in this regard, noted with gratitude the offer by the President of the Tohoku University to host this second meeting, and to render the necessary support.

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