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E/ESCAP/CDR/INF/4

21 January 2009

ENGLISH ONLY

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction

First session

25-27 March 2009

Bangkok

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME
OF THE THIRD ASIAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: FROM THE REGIONAL
TO THE GLOBAL PLATFORM**

(Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda)

**INTERIM REGIONAL SYNTHESIS REPORT ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK
FOR ACTION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
(JULY 2007 TO SEPTEMBER 2008)¹**

Background information note

SUMMARY

The Hyogo Framework for Action emphasizes the need to monitor and review progress in disaster risk reduction not only to document the good implementation of the Framework but to feed into informed disaster risk reduction planning and programming at national, sub-national and regional levels. This document presents the interim progress in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in some countries of the Asia and the Pacific region. It also presents key challenges and gaps against the HFA strategic goals in the countries of the region.

¹ This information note has been contributed by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, Asia-Pacific Regional Office.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities emphasizes the need to monitor and review progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR), not only to document the gradual implementation of the framework, but to feed into informed DRR planning and programming at national, sub-regional and regional levels. Responsibilities for monitoring the HFA are assigned mainly to States but are also identified for regional organizations and institutions, international organizations and ISDR system partners and the secretariat². It is expected that the national and regional reviews generated will help identify gaps and challenges in implementation and inform policy recommendations for Asia and Pacific.

2. For coordination purposes at the global level, the UN secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) has facilitated the first biennial cycle (2007-2009; i.e. the period between the first and second Session of the Global Platform) for monitoring and reporting on progress in the implementation of disaster risk reduction priorities, with support from many partners. The primary objective of setting up the biennial monitoring and progress reporting mechanism is to capture key trends and areas of progress and challenges at the national, regional, and global level with regard to achieving the strategic goals of the HFA.

3. To facilitate the national review process, an online tool – the ‘HFA Monitor’ was developed by UNISDR in early 2008 to enable countries to periodically monitor, self-assess and report on progress made in HFA implementation across the years and to establish country relevant baselines. The tool was launched on May 9th, 2008 and is hosted online on the PreventionWeb (www.preventionweb.net). It can be accessed by member states with a user id and password administered by the UNISDR.

B. Methodology and Structure

4. At the regional level, requests were sent by the UNISDR to regional inter-governmental institutions to contribute summary reports of progress made in the implementation of the HFA at the sub/ regional levels. The regional progress reviews were intended to include an assessment of overall trends in national progress across the respective sub/regions and also provide a self- assessment of the specific activities undertaken by regional institutions to reduce regional and trans-boundary risks.

5. To cover some key thematic dimensions, reports were also invited from international and regional partners and networks, in the areas of early warning, response and preparedness, recovery, education, health, gender, risk assessment, urban risk and environmental risk management.

6. The Interim Regional Synthesis Report for Asia and Pacific covers the period June 2007 – Sept 2008 within the first biennial HFA reporting cycle, and is based on national, regional and thematic HFA progress reports prepared and available at the time. The current report will be updated before the next session of the Global Platform in June 2009, as more national, regional and thematic reports become available.

7. The Second Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR in New Delhi on 7-8 November 2007 reaffirmed the regional commitment to the HFA while highlighting a

² Paragraph 30, 31, 32, 33 of the HFA.

number of areas of specific concern to the HFA agenda in the region. The Conference also laid the foundation for the establishment of a Regional Platform under the leadership of the Ministers in charge of DRR. Against this background, the Interim Regional Synthesis Report analyzes the progress achieved since the Second Asian Ministerial Conference. The analysis will contribute to the regional policy deliberations at the Third Asian Ministerial Conference, and the 2009 Session of the Global Platform on DRR.

8. The interim regional synthesis report uses the HFA as the main frame of analysis while also considering the Delhi Declaration on Disaster Reduction in Asia 2007. The structure of the interim report reflects the subsections and indicators of the UN/ISDR online Monitoring Tool enriched by the Regional HFA Progress Review Framework for Asia and Pacific 2008/2009. The report is primarily based upon information presented in the thirteen³ National HFA Progress Reports, as well as the advance draft reports from two sub-regions, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and two regional thematic reports. The Report "DRR in Asia and Pacific: Overview at the Start of the HFA Implementation Decade and Progress Made 2005 – 2007" provides an overall context for this information. Additional information on risk profiles and progress on DRR and HFA emanating from national and regional disaster risk reduction agencies, as well as research institutions, has been taken into account. While referring to selected country examples for the purpose of illustration this report seeks to identify common themes and challenges across the Asia and Pacific region. Against a backdrop of limited national reporting these issues are, however, indicative rather than comprehensive.

C. Recent Disaster Trends in Asia and Pacific

9. In 2007, the Pacific region was mainly affected by meteorological and hydrological disasters, which is typical for the region. Cyclone Gupta which hit Papua New Guinea in November 2007, affected the biggest number of people with over 162,000⁴. A flash flood caused over 1.7 billion USD of damage in Australia. Asia remained the region most affected by natural disasters in 2007. 37% of natural disasters recorded by the EM-DAT data-base occurred in Asia, accounting for 90% of all the reported victims and 46% of economic damage⁵. Asia was particularly affected by monsoon-related events with India, China and Bangladesh hardest hit. With two disasters of historical proportion - Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake in China - the first half of 2008 reconfirmed the particular vulnerability of Asia and the continued if not growing importance to implement strategic risk reduction measures. At the current pace of urbanization, environmental degradation and climate change, the vulnerability of major Asian cities in floodplains and coastal areas is growing rapidly⁶. Therefore, it is paramount that risk reduction becomes part and parcel of urban planning and strategies are devised to manage and reverse urban vulnerability trends.

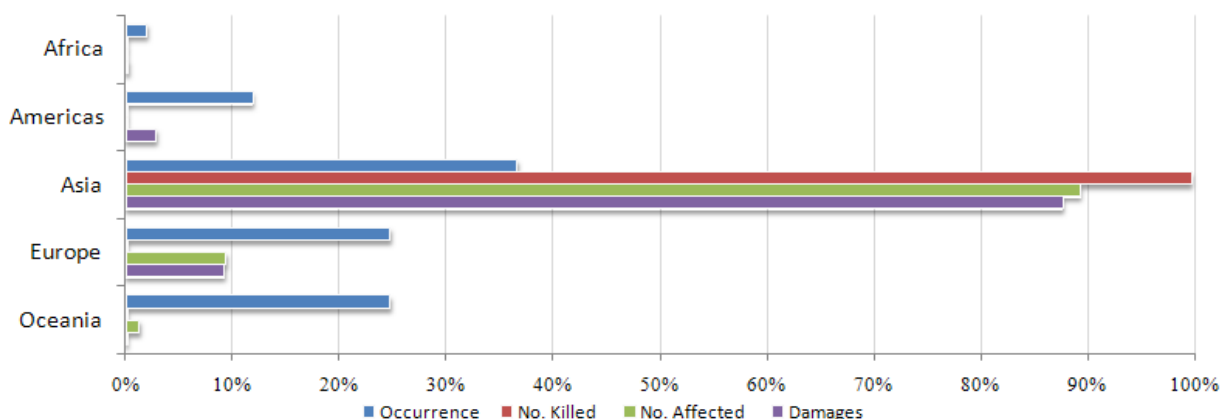
³ 2Australia, Bangladesh; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Islamic Republic of Iran; Lao PDR; Republic of Korea; Marshall Islands; Nepal, New Zealand; Philippines; Sri Lanka and Vanuatu. These are advanced draft reports. In addition 6 less advanced drafts from Bhutan, India, Maldives, Samoa, Singapore and Pakistan were consulted.

⁴ See Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), Annual Disaster Statistical Review. The numbers and trends 2007, Brussels (Belgium), May 2008.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Asian Regional Task Force on Urban Risk Reduction, Thematic Review. Overview of Urban Risk in Asia, 2008.

Figure 1. First semester 2008 natural disaster occurrence and impacts: regional comparison⁷



II. PROGRESS IN REDUCING RISK

A. Priority for Action 1 “Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation” (Delhi: mainstreaming)

10. Feedback from both individual countries and sub-regional organizations confirms that several countries have achieved progress in this area and that there is a continuing policy trend to move away from pure disaster response to risk reduction. Sub-regional frameworks on disaster reduction and programmes have helped to adapt objectives, further commitment and understanding. The extent of the shift from response to risk reduction varies from country to country and is related to governance capacity, socio-economic parameters and the time that has elapsed between initial policy formulation and implementation. One group of countries that started this process well before the HFA, reports comprehensive or significant achievements including strengthened capacity at various administrative levels and resource allocation. For instance both Australia and New Zealand can build upon a strong legislative framework and organizational structure for risk reduction. The Islamic Republic of Iran allocates 1% of its public budget to risk reduction.

11. Other countries have mainly focused on the formulation of new risk reduction policies and legislation and the reform or establishment of organizational and institutional structures for risk reduction. Indonesia for instance has enacted and continues to implement a new disaster management law that stipulates the integration of risk reduction into development planning. Sri Lanka has been active in consolidating its new disaster management organization at national and local levels. Overall feedback from sub-regional organizations seems to suggest that new disaster management laws, while a positive step, are not all considered comprehensive and that commitment, technical capacity and the support received from UN, donors, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and sub-regional structures vary significantly.

12. While several countries report the development of National Action Plans to promote the adaptation and implementation of HFA priorities, these plans are not always well synchronized with national policy or coordinated among the different stakeholders. Together with a lack of institutional and human capacity as well as financial resources this results in slow implementation. Progress on risk reduction is particularly difficult and slow at local levels. While several countries express

⁷ CRED, *CRUNCH. Disaster Data: A Balanced Perspective, Issue 14*, September 2008

commitment to the delegation of authority to local levels, many officials are not yet familiar with new regulations and there is a lack of dedicated organizational local capacity for planning and implementation. In the absence of clear monitoring and evaluation criteria the enforcement of new regulations poses major challenges. This is compounded by a general lack of clarity on the roles of local government and/ or competition of different administrative levels over authority and resources. Community based risk reduction initiatives are pursued in several countries, however coverage and quality is often uneven and projects are yet to be linked into a wider risk reduction system linking local, provincial and national levels. The active coordination of NGOs wishing to work at the community level remains a challenge for national and local governments, particularly in those countries with limited resources to strengthen community capacities. Several countries report highly insufficient budgets for risk reduction that may also be centralized and/ or prioritized for response and preparedness.

13. The 2007 Delhi Declaration on DRR re-emphasized the mainstreaming of DRR into development plans and policy. Evidence from national reports suggests that the implementation of DRR is highly sector-specific and not integrated. Some countries have introduced risk reduction into development or other relevant plans (such as climate adaptation plans), however, related objectives are rarely translated into dedicated budgetary, sectoral and department/ agency or business plans. However some positive examples include (schools/ health). The existence and shape of national platforms that could in principle serve as one mechanism to promote dialogue and mainstreaming across the various stakeholders varies significantly across the region suggesting a lack of clarity on the purpose and expected structure of national platforms.

B. Priority for Action 2 “Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning” (Delhi: trans-boundary and end-to-end)

14. In 2005 very few countries in the region had conducted national multi-hazard risk assessments. With the exception of these “outperformers” this situation remains virtually unchanged, even though there is common recognition of the need to conduct comprehensive assessments. Feedback from countries indicates that national-level information on hazards is easier to come by than information on vulnerability, though hazard assessments are often sector-specific and hard to integrate since different sectors employ different methodologies. Several countries report a general lack of consistent approaches and objectives of risk assessments from the national to the local level. Methodological issues include the need to define “community reliance” or “safety” within a broader risk assessment framework to monitor and document the effectiveness of investing in risk reduction at the local level.

15. On the positive side several respondents mentioning these methodological challenges suggest or have already initiated the establishment of a framework for risk assessments and the standardization of risk assessment procedures and methodologies (national and/or local levels). There is need to identify the impact of climate change on risk patterns and scenarios particularly at the local level. Bangladesh reports considerable progress in assessing the risk from climate change on agriculture but this seems an isolated case. According to feedback from respondents the majority of current risk assessment activity seems to be happening at the sub-national and local level though initiatives tend to be scattered, externally funded and often detached from a risk information and monitoring system.

16. The Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster has prompted the establishment of early warning systems (EWS), particularly in the sub-regions directly affected but also generated interest in other areas (Lao, x). At the national level several countries have made progress in system development but experience continuing challenges to

disseminate information to end-users at the community level, particularly those in less accessible locations. Another challenge is the ability of communities to respond adequately to warning messages. In many countries targeted investments in preparedness of high risk communities remain sporadic, dependent upon external aid and insufficiently harmonized with each other. An end-to end early warning system as emphasized in the 2007 Delhi Declaration therefore remains an urgent and valid ambition.

17. As for the exchange of information and better regional cooperation across countries, the sub-regional organizations of ASEAN, SAARC and SOPAC have provided important support and coordination. Agreements on trans-national and regional cross/ border risks have been reached in the ASEAN sub-region to develop the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System. A Regional Early Warning Strategy was endorsed at SOPAC's 13th Regional Disaster Management Meeting. In most national reports regional trans-boundary initiatives are given more weight than the consideration of trans-boundary hazards in local and provincial risk assessment and risk reduction plans.

C. Priority for Action 3 “Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels”

18. Five countries initiated the development of disaster management information systems before the HFA and report substantial and even comprehensive achievements. In the Pacific SOPAC has developed a regional information base (Pacific Disaster Net) to assist members in the implementation of their national action plans. Out of the remaining eight countries six report institutional commitment to the establishment of a central and comprehensive information management system, however progress has been slow and often dependent upon external aid. While there are numerous studies and assessments undertaken across the region the information is often sector-specific, therefore dispersed and not presented in a format that can be easily accessed (which points back to the lack of standards raised under Priority 2). ASEAN's sub-regional progress report summarizes these challenges succinctly: *“The issue appears to be not in the availability of information but in the duplication and inefficiency of distribution of such information”*.⁸ This is at least partly related to the lack of awareness on the usefulness of consolidated information, the lack of incentives to share information as well as institutional and human capacity gaps. A minority of countries has developed risk assessment tools; in general there are far more tools for hazard assessments, and cost-benefit analysis of investments into DRR remains uncommon

19. The integration of DRR into school curricula and public awareness has been high on the agenda of multi-, regional, bilateral and national governmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Three years, however, seem too short to reach considerable progress. While an outperforming group of four⁹ countries report comprehensive or substantial achievements, two have reached institutional commitment and a majority of countries (seven) have not yet made significant progress. Several national reports reflect a certain degree of skepticism regarding the effectiveness of current public awareness activities and describe the absence of clear national strategies, of solid monitoring and evaluation systems and a top-down approach that takes insufficient notice of cultural and linguistic differences within countries. The New Zealand report highlights the need for a sustained, long-term approach: *“The major challenge is changing*

⁸ ASEAN, “Sub-regional report on DRR and then Current Status of Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in South Asia”, October 2008

⁹ 5 for public awareness

behavior of individuals and organizations, and progressing intentions into actions".¹⁰ Yet in many countries public awareness remains dependent upon foreign aid and sustainability is limited. There is growing awareness of the role the national and local media can play in public awareness; however their potential requires enhancement and remains underutilized.

20. Starting DRR education early i.e. in school and even pre-school is commonly seen as an important strategy to effect change in perceptions and behavior. Reports from seven countries indicate that initiatives in the area of DRR concentrate on "projectized" activities often implemented in areas recently hit by disasters. There are few systematic efforts starting with clear needs assessments, strategies and an approach that looks for opportunities in both extra- and intra-curricular activity as well as formal and non-formal education. Countries remark the absence of technical capacity to design DRR curricula and training materials and the need to create a cadre of trainers and educators.

D. Priority for Action 4 "Reduce the underlying risk factors"

21. On the whole countries report the lowest progress levels against this priority. Only three countries report substantial achievements whereas ten countries see themselves between 2 "some progress" and 3 "commitment attained". This should not come as a surprise since HFA priority 4 is in many ways the most challenging area, signifies the biggest departure from the previous emphasis upon response and depends upon the preceding priorities i.e. solid risk assessments and information management systems, clear risk reduction strategies, strong institutions, awareness of risks and risk reduction options and capacity to implement/enforce and evaluate. All responses illustrate a reasonable level of commitment recognizing the need to integrate DRR into environmental plans, land use and natural resource management, economic human settlement planning, major development projects etc. However translating hazard and risk information into integrated policies across planning documents and undertaking coordinated and concerted action is a challenge. While three countries are clearly ahead, there are a number of initiatives underway in the remaining countries which include studies, preparation of national policies and programmes, revisions of codes, updating of plans, etc.

22. In general most countries report some initiatives on environmental and natural resource management policies and standards though it is not always very clear to what degree these really include DRR objectives. Some reports seem to reflect an assumption that environmental and DRR objectives largely overlap. Others are more skeptical, the Philippines report for instance remarks "*While environmental and*

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