

Regional Synthesis Report on Implementation of the HFA in Asia and Pacific 2007-2008/09



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
Secretariat, Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok

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Accronyms

AADMER	Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (ASEAN)
ACDM	Committee on Disaster Management (ASEAN)
ADRC	Asian Disaster Reduction Centre
ADPC	Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre
AHA	Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (ASEAN)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
APRSAF	Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum
CBDRM	Community Based Disaster Risk Management
CBDRR	Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction
CBO	Community Based Organization
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness Program of the European Commission for Humanitarian Aid Department
DM	Disaster Management
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
ERAT	Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ASEAN)
GFDRR	Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOM	Government of Mongolia
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015
HYCOS	Hydrological Cycle and Observation System (Pacific/ SOPAC)
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ICG	Intergovernmental Coordination Group
IOC	International Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Plan
NDRCC	National Disaster Reduction Center of China
NDRMM	Natural Disaster Rapid Response Mechanism (SAARC)

NP	National Platform
OSADI	Online Southeast Asia Disaster Inventory (ASEAN)
PDRSEA	Partnership for Disaster Reduction in Southeast Asia (DIPECHO-funded program)
PROMISE	Program for Hydro-Meteorological Disaster Mitigation in Secondary Cities in Asia (ADPC)
SASOP	Standard Operating Procedures for the Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (ASEAN)
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SDMC	Disaster Management Center
SNAP	Strategic National Action Plan
SOPAC	South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TEWS	Tsunami Early Warning Systems
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

1. Executive Summary

Objective:

The main objective of this report is to provide a synthesized overview of some of the main achievements, challenges and issues in implementing the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) in the Asia/ Pacific region from 2007-2009 as identified by national and regional actors.

The monitoring of progress serves the following main objectives:

- Identifying existing problems/ gaps and increasing their recognition and importance on the political agenda
- Promoting solutions through new or strengthened policies, programs, plans, capacities and resources
- Ensuring a joint prioritization of risk reduction and recovery actions, as identified at the national, regional and global levels

The regional synthesis report covers the period June 2007 –April 2009 within the second biennial HFA reporting cycle. An early draft of this report was presented at the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Kuala Lumpur, 2-4 December 2008.

Methodology:

The regional synthesis report uses the HFA, its three overall goals and five priority areas as the main frame of analysis. The structure of the report reflects the subsections and indicators of the UNISDR online Monitoring Tool enriched by the Regional HFA Progress Review Framework for Asia and Pacific 2008/2009. 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.

All reporting countries have evaluated their progress against five levels (1-5) which have been developed by UNISDR for the HFA Monitor. These are applied to all five HFA Priorities and facilitate a self-assessment of the extent to which policies, programs and initiatives have gained momentum in facilitating risk reduction on a sustainable basis. The levels of progress are:

- 1 – Minor progress with few signs of forward action in plans or policy.
- 2 – Some progress but without systematic policy and/or institutional commitment.
- 3 – Institutional commitment attained but achievements are neither comprehensive nor substantial.
- 4 – Substantial achievement attained but with recognized limitations in capacities and resources.
- 5 – Comprehensive achievement with sustained commitment and capacities at all levels.

The report is based on a review of reports provided by 3 regional and 17 national actors via the HFA Monitor tool, which is coordinated by UNISDR and hosted online at PreventionWeb. Regional organizations and initiatives that provided information are: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). National reports originate from the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong China, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lao's Peoples Democratic Republic, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Marshall Islands, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Yemen. Pakistan, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Singapore and Tajikistan also finalized national reports however these became available at a later date in 2009 and could not be considered for this report. 10 more countries prepared reports in draft form and agreed to finalize them at a later date.

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 and multi-lateral and bilateral agencies 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 comprehensive¹. Insights into progress made on key 'cross-cutting' issues, such as gender equity, social justice and governance, are highlighted where significant information has been provided in national or other reports. A number of key issues and important initiatives are highlighted in 10 additional text-boxes.

Findings:

The report finds that there are **"pockets" of progress** that are concentrated within the first three priority areas of the HFA. These are: priority area one and here in particular the policy and legal framework for DRR; priority area two with substantial progress in Early Warning, and priority area three where work on disaster management information systems figures prominently.

Altogether five countries revised or established new bills and acts on risk reduction in 2007/08. Similarly nine new policies or strategic plans were drafted in 2007/08. Maybe most importantly the policy frameworks and plans that were created 2005/06 in three reporting countries are in the process of implementation with a number of accomplishments in 2007/08. However not all national plans are well synchronized with national policy, or sufficiently coordinated among the different stakeholders. Together with a lack of institutional and human capacity as well as financial resources this results in slow implementation.

A recent mapping exercise on Tsunami Early Warning Systems (TEWS) in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia published by UNESCAP finds considerable progress with **governance and institutional arrangements** and **monitoring and warning** both at international and national levels. Though important advances have been made in some countries (Indonesia reports substantial achievements) **dissemination of early warning** and **community preparedness and response strategies** require further strengthening.

The establishment of disaster information management systems has attracted much attention during the reporting period. Eight countries report concrete initiatives in this area with important achievements in establishing an entirely new system (1), establishing important data-bases for the system (2), making important improvements to existing systems (3) or having initiated the development a new system (4). These national efforts are complemented by sub-regional disaster management information systems: the Pacific Disaster Net and the ASEAN Disaster Information Sharing and Communication Network that have been launched respectively further developed during the reporting period.

However while there are "pockets" of progress there are also **"holes" of stagnation** where very little progress or even activity is reported. Under priority 4 "Reduce the underlying risk factors" only a small group of well-advanced countries report important levels of achievement and continuing progress. While all country reports illustrate a reasonable level of commitment to "mainstream" DRR into development plans and projects, translating hazard and risk information into integrated policies across sectors and undertaking coordinated and concerted action is a challenge. Of particular concern is the slow progress in acting upon the DRR challenges of climate change. Overall low achievements in this area should not come as a surprise since priority 4 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.

Surprisingly the self-assessment of progress in priority area 5, disaster preparedness and response, an area that most countries have more solid experience of than risk reduction, is not very high. Yet this area scores lower

¹ It is important to acknowledge that countries that responded to the on-line monitoring tool represent a sub-group of countries with above average interest, higher capacity in risk reduction and/ or access to technical assistance in preparing the national HFA progress reports.

than both HFA priority areas 1 and 3. While institutional and policy development² and planning at the national level have been stronger, the areas of financial resources and mechanisms for local level preparedness and risk reduction capacities are lagging behind. Strategies and policies increasingly acknowledge the crucial significance of community preparedness and risk management; however capacities are often not in place to pursue nationwide implementation. Emergency response and contingency plans currently focus on response and do not cover the key areas of recovery and reconstruction potentially leading to delayed recovery processes where the integration of risk reduction is easily pushed aside.

The report analyzes some of the shortcomings of the current HFA reporting practices and format. There seems to be –particularly from a country perspective - too much concern with identifying the absolute levels of achievement rather than tracking progress. Country-level self-assessments tend to be overly positive in some cases, in other cases too self-critical and are not always backed up by quantified or qualified evidence. Furthermore, despite improvements in facilitating country-level reporting through the HFA monitor the work-load caused by HFA reporting is still substantial particularly for countries with lower capacities and/ or larger countries. The report suggests assisting with the formulation of more tangible reporting benchmarks and indicators of progress at national levels. This will avoid or at least minimize the work-load caused by the HFA reporting. Translating and generalizing the information provided in national reports into more general up-dates on progress could then be undertaken at sub-regional levels and constitute an important support function of sub-regional organizations.

Reviewing and reporting guidelines need to be further improved to address redundancies in the HFA reporting format. The section “drivers of progress” requires specific guidelines to explain the meaning and relevance of some of the terminology that does not translate well into other languages. To this date it seems that such core concepts as “mainstreaming” and “risk” are interpreted differently in different countries. This shows that emphasis needs to be on translation and adaptation of such concepts to national and local contexts. Revision of guidelines may include specifying roles of non government actors in the reporting process.

Conclusions

The following highlights some key challenges in making progress on the three strategic HFA goals based on observations from national and sub-regional actors and the preceding analysis of their reports.

Goal 1: The more effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with a special emphasis on disaster prevention mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction

The shift from disaster preparedness and response to an emphasis on risk reduction and development represents a major departure in many countries of the Asia Pacific region. Translating the HFA into a strategy that fits the conditions in each country and giving it the necessary legislative and political support is not trivial. There has been an impressive range of initiatives to design and enact new DRR policies, plans and legislation and these achievements should not be under-estimated. However policies and plans have only rarely been based upon comprehensive multi-hazard risk assessments and capacity assessments. Policies and plans are not backed up by adequate budgets and implementation is often dependent upon external support that tends to be selective. In addition stakeholder buy-in, particularly in line ministries and sectoral departments is not yet strong. Consequently there are so far only few examples of using existing national planning or development mechanisms to “mainstream” risk reduction. Local governments, who are, eventually, the government entities most critical to the progress of risk reduction often have no or little knowledge of the policy changes and/ or lack the instruments and capacity to translate them into local realities and enforce them. Only few countries have undertaken concerted efforts to discuss and consult DRR draft policies and legislation with key stakeholders and critically assess their enforceability. Last but not least resources outside the government are not sufficiently tapped into and cooperation with non-governmental actors is not based upon clear strategies and cooperation agreements.

Goal 2: The development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels in particular at the community level that can systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards

² Already highlighted under priority 1.

In many countries national efforts have so far focused upon the strengthening of national-level capacities often concentrating on the national “Disaster Management” or “DRR” agency. While this effort sometimes involves the institution and/ or strengthening of local satellite offices more needs to be done to build the capacity of a) local government actors and the community and b) of key sectors. This includes the understanding and commitment that such capacity building is not a one off exercise but an ongoing task that requires dedicated budgets. Furthermore multi-stakeholder platforms with clear tasks need to be created not only at national but also at the sub-national and local levels. Solid systems that would guarantee the dialogue, information exchange and strategic and operational coordination between different administrative levels and across key sectors are yet to emerge. This involves the need for better coordination and dialogue between government agencies and NGOs and CBOs. The effectiveness of public awareness campaigns and formal education programs has suffered from a lack of clear long-term strategies and harmonization of the various objectives pursued by key players. There is need for more targeted, hazard- and sector-specific inputs into curricula and training modules and for the identification and activation of local knowledge. In several countries this includes the requirement to address training of the informal sector, for example, in safe building techniques. With the exception of some community based DRR programs³ learning about and applying risk reduction measures is too often pursued in separation. Last but not least the role of women in the prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response and recovery is largely ignored and their capacities remain under-utilized.

Goal 3: The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programs in the reconstruction of affected communities

There is as of yet an insufficient linkage between hazard monitoring, risk identification and analysis and disaster preparedness and response including Early Warning. There is a need to design preparedness activities that are informed by both an understanding of risk and local capacities and of local knowledge including social factors that influence the decisions of communities to act upon hazard information and take precautionary measures. Such activities or programs are contingent upon local monitoring and risk management capacity which is still in short supply as national level capacity building efforts are rarely matched by sufficiently supported parallel efforts at local levels. Budgets for local planning and preparedness are highly inadequate in a majority of countries.

There is a need to intensify the exploration of alternative financial instruments to relieve address the burdens of response and recovery on communities and governments including micro-finance, micro-insurance and reinsurance options. Contingency plans currently focus on response and do not cover the key areas of recovery and reconstruction leading to delayed and inefficient recovery processes where local actors tend to get sidelined. If not properly considered beforehand and backed up by regulations and standards the integration of risk reduction gets easily pushed aside in the aftermath of a disaster. Business continuity plans for key local government agencies and solid coordination structures for both response and recovery require more attention.

Recommendations:

Analyzing these key gaps in HFA follow up the report concludes that there is need for **a smaller list of prioritized recommendations and more specific and time-bound targets per country**. These can realistically only be generated at the national level. The support given to the creation of National Action Plans at country levels, particularly in low capacity / high risk countries has been a good start but requires substantial follow-up, consolidation and support. Core gaps and limitations that require special attention and more specific interventions at country level are:

- Adapt risk reduction strategies and agree on national action plans that create a consensus amongst all key stakeholders on an **all of government risk reduction agenda covering national and local levels (HFA priority area 1)**
- Continue to gradually strengthen **multi-hazard and risk monitoring capability** while emphasizing the creation of integrated, user-friendly information management systems that can inform the design and regular review of national and local risk reduction strategies and initiatives **(HFA Priority Area 2)**

³ Some, because most CBDRR programs tend to focus upon preparedness and response.

- Urge governments to create **comprehensive risk reduction programs in the educational sector**⁴ through primary, secondary and higher education; address informal education needs; as well as interventions to increase structural resilience of educational buildings (**HFA priority Area 3**)
- Promote the **systematic integration of DRR and Climate Change Adaptation** in priority countries (**HFA priority Area 4**)
- Initiate or accelerate the design of programs and initiatives to **address underlying risk while prioritizing sector(s)** and areas that are at **high risk** and/ or **demonstrate particular interest in risk reduction and cooperation** (**HFA priority Area 4**)
- Ensure that **communities are at the centre of all aspects of preparedness, response and recovery strategies and planning** (**HFA priority Area 5**)
- Develop **more specific benchmarks and indicators of progress at national levels** against national targets and **strengthen national and sub-regional monitoring and reporting capacity**

2. Introduction

2.1 The Biennial HFA Progress Review Cycle

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 secretariat⁵. It is expected that the national and regional reviews will help identify gaps and challenges in implementation and inform policy recommendations for Asia and Pacific.

With support from many partners the UN secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) has coordinated monitoring and reporting on progress in the implementation of disaster risk reduction priorities during the first biennial cycle (2007-09) of the HFA. To facilitate the national review process and establish country relevant baselines, an online tool – the ‘HFA Monitor’ - was developed in early 2008. The tool enables countries to periodically monitor, self-assess and report on progress made in HFA implementation across the years. 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.

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-regions 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.

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.

The Regional Synthesis Report for Asia and Pacific covers the period June 2007 – April 2008 within the first biennial HFA reporting cycle, and is based on national, regional and thematic HFA progress reports available at the time. An early draft of this report was presented at the Third Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk

⁴ Possibly as a sub-section of national action plans

⁵ Paragraph 30, 31, 32, 33 of the HFA.

Reduction in Kuala Lumpur, 2-4 December 2008.

2.2 Disaster Risk in Asia-Pacific

Asia-Pacific is susceptible to a large variety of natural hazards amongst which floods, storms and earthquakes or seismic activity are the most significant. The UN's Global Assessment Report on DRR (2009) finds that the top ten countries with the highest number of people exposed to flooding are all in Asia. Absolute physical exposure to floods is highest in Bangladesh, China, Kazakhstan and India whereas relative⁶ exposure reaches particularly high levels in Cambodia, Bangladesh and Vietnam⁷. Asian countries also have the highest absolute exposure to storms and storm surges while Pacific islands with their small populations have a high relative exposure to these events (Fiji and Vanuatu in particular). An overlap of high concentrations of population and seismic activity generates very high absolute exposure to earthquakes, particularly in China, India, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In contrast, relative exposure is higher in small countries such as Bhutan and in a number of Pacific Islands States (Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Fiji) that are located in seismically active areas.

In the Asia-Pacific region high levels of exposure to a variety of natural hazards goes hand in hand with high levels of vulnerability resulting in significant disaster risks. However, levels of risks are unevenly spread across the region with huge variations even within countries, larger ones in particular. This is related to both the diversity of hazards and different types and degrees of vulnerability. The principal causes of vulnerability in the Asia and Pacific can be related to urban and rural poverty, environmental degradation and poor governance capacity to manage and reduce disaster risks. In some countries rapid economic growth has led to increasing concentrations of people, infrastructure and economic assets in urban centers, often in hazard-prone areas (coastal areas in particular). This may foreshadow higher human and economic losses in the future. At the other end of the scale some countries and sub-national areas in Asia and Pacific continue to struggle with very low economic productivity and lagging infrastructure. Rural livelihoods depend to a large degree upon agriculture and are particularly exposed to the impact from hydro-meteorological hazards.

High levels of disaster risk in Asia-Pacific find their expression in the historical frequency, severity and impact of disaster events. Between 1976 – 2005 Asia and Pacific experienced the highest number of natural disasters world-wide. During these three decades Asia-Pacific also had the highest average number of reported deaths per million inhabitants⁸. 2007 and 2008 have seen a continuation of this trend. 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 damage⁹. Asia was particularly affected by monsoon-related events with India, China and Bangladesh hardest hit. With two disasters of historical dimension, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Wenchuan earthquake in China, Asia was again hit by devastating disasters in 2008.

6 Proportionate to their population

7 See UN, Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk a, May 2009

8 See Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), GUHA-SAPIR D. Et al, Thirty years of natural disasters 1974-2003: The numbers, Presses Universitaires de Louvain: Louvain-La-Neuve, 2004

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

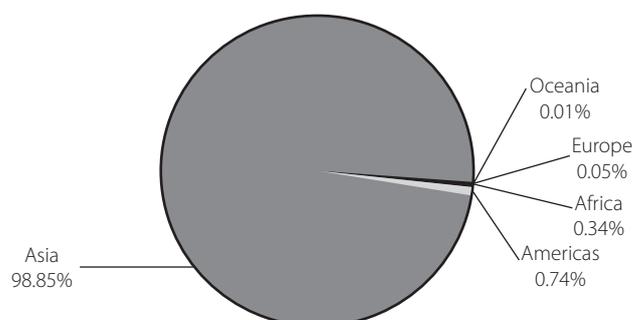
Table 1: Top Ten Disasters by number of deaths in 2008¹⁰

Cyclone Nargis, May	Myanmar	138 366
Earthquake, May	China, P Rep	87 476
Flood, June-August	India	1 963
Extreme winter conditions, January	Afghanistan	1 317
Typhoon Fengshen (Franck), June	Philippines	644
Hurricane Hanna, September	Haiti	529
Mass movement wet, September	China, P Rep	277
Flood, October	Yemen	180
Flood, June	China, P Rep	176
Flood, September	India	173

(1): Includes the reported missing persons

Out of the worst 10 disasters in terms of total human losses nine occurred in the Asia Pacific region. In 2008 98.75% of people killed by natural disasters worldwide were from Asia.

Diagram 1: Natural disasters by numbers of death in 2008



At the current pace of urbanization, environmental degradation and climate change the vulnerability of major Asian cities in floodplains and coastal areas is growing rapidly and effective urban risk reduction requires particular attention¹¹. However, rural vulnerability and poverty feed into the exponential growth of cities in Asia and therefore risk (and poverty) reduction in the country-side are equally important.

2.3 From Hyogo to Kuala Lumpur: Ministerial conferences to promote and guide the implementation of the HFA

Following the Hyogo Framework of Action regular ministerial conferences have been organized to harness political commitment for the implementation of HFA priorities since 2005. The first Ministerial Conference was held in Beijing, China, September 2005 followed by the Second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in New Delhi in November 2007. The “Delhi Declaration” reaffirmed the regional commitment to the HFA while highlighting a number of areas of specific concern to the risk reduction agenda in the region. These included mainstreaming DRR; early warning and preparedness; climate change; integration of DRR into recovery and reconstruction; the importance of public-partner partnerships and regional mechanisms to enhance cooperation. The Conference also laid the foundation for the establishment of a Regional Platform for DRR in Asia to serve as an effective link between the National and Global platforms for DRR. The latest event, the Third Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Kuala Lumpur in December 2008 revisited the issues of public-private partnerships and climate change while promoting further action in applying high technology and science for DRR; empowering local governments and civil society; mobilizing resources; engaging the media and strengthening public awareness and education.

¹⁰ Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED)

¹¹ Asian Regional Task Force on Urban Risk Reduction, Thematic Review. Overview of Urban Risk in Asia, 2008

Realizing that the gap between what needs to be done to implement the Hyogo Framework of Action and the reality at the community level is still significant, the Third Ministerial Conference agreed the arrangements for the production of a more specific and prioritized action-plan. The "Kuala Lumpur regional action-plan 2009-2010" is currently under preparation with UNISDR and ADPC in the lead. It promotes the implementation of the HFA while considering the resolutions from the earlier Beijing, Delhi as well as of the most recent "Kuala Lumpur" Declaration. An important aspect of this initiative is the attempt to anchor the plan in the objectives and existing commitments of national, sub-regional and regional partners, coming up with a prioritized list of specific activities that would cover the major thematic areas of the HFA. The plan will be presented at the Global Platform on DRR in June 2009.

2.4 Methodology and Structure of the Report

The 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 UNISDR 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 17¹² National HFA Progress Reports as well as 3 sub-regional reports (ASEAN, SAARC and SOPAC) and several 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 information¹³. 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 and multi-lateral and bilateral agencies 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.

The regional synthesis report covers the period June 07 – April 09 within the second HFA reporting cycle (which lasts from July 2007 until June 2009 i.e. the first and second Session of the Global Platform). The analysis of progress and key challenges will contribute to the regional policy deliberations at the 2009 Session of the Global Platform on DRR.

3. Progress in Reducing Risk

3.1 Priority for Action 1 "Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation"

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 programs 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. A group of 6 countries (Australia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand and Vanuatu) 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. In these countries the main focus is on the implementation and refinement of legislation. The Republic of Korea for instance has enacted 63 by-laws and regulations and the Islamic Republic of Iran reports ongoing work on the drafting of by-laws.

12 Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong China, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Marshall Islands, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Yemen.

13 In particular to distinguish and identify new developments in 2008/2009 since many national reports are unclear about dates and time-lines.

The remaining countries report more modest levels of achievements and 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. However the time and resources required for such work should not be underestimated and progress – even if moving from is therefore often substantial. Indonesia for instance has enacted and continues to implement a new disaster management law that stipulates the integration of risk reduction into development planning. Some countries such as Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Yemen are still in the process of drafting new policies and legislation, many of which are currently in the process of adoption by parliaments or equivalent institutions. Overall 2007/08 saw an intensified focus on legislation in the reporting countries. Feedback from sub-regional organizations seems to suggest however, that new disaster management laws or drafts, while a positive step, are not all considered comprehensive and that commitment, technical capacity and the support received from UN, donors, INGOs and sub-regional structures vary significantly.

Table 2: Progress on legislation based upon national reports

Legislation put in place in 2005/06	New legislative initiatives in 2007/08
	Bangladesh: Final Draft of National Disaster Management Act submitted for adoption (2008)
	Cambodia: Government Order to shift focus from disaster response risk reduction (2008); National Disaster Management Bill draft (2008)
Indonesia: Drafting of the National Disaster Management Bill	Indonesia: National Disaster Management Bill enacted in 2007; Several Government Regulations on implementation
	Islamic Republic of Iran: Drafting of by-laws underway
	Nepal: New DRR Act draft (2008)
Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act 2005 enacted	Follow-up
	Vanuatu: Review of legal framework underway
	Tajikistan: Draft National Disaster Risk Management Strategy
	Uzbekistan: State Disaster Forecasting and Prevention Program (2007)
	Kyrgyzstan: Local Level Disaster Risk Management Program ("Mainstreaming DRM into Decentralization in Kyrgyzstan") for 2008-2010

Sri Lanka has been active in consolidating its new disaster management organization at national and local levels. Indonesia established a new National Disaster Management Organization including local satellites per presidential decree no. 8 in 2008. Practically all countries report the development or drafting of long-term Disaster Risk Reduction policies and plans sometimes referred to as "National Action Plans" (NAP)¹⁴ or "Strategic National Action Plans" (SNAPs) to promote the adaptation and implementation of HFA priorities.

Table 3: Progress on policies/ plans based upon national reports

National Plans 2005-06	National Plans 2007-08
	Bangladesh: National DM plan final draft 2008
	Cambodia: SNAP draft 2008 (needs more work)
	Lao: Work on National DM Strategy and Plan
Indonesia: National Action Plan for Disaster Reduction 2006-09	Indonesia: Implementation stage
	Marshall Islands: NAP submitted for endorsement (2008)
	Philippines: Strategic Plan for CBDRM (2008) adopted; SNAP advanced draft (2008)
Republic of Korea: National Safety Management Plan 2006-09	Republic of Korea: Implementation stage

¹⁴ Also called "Strategic National Action Plans" or SNAPs in some countries.

	Sri Lanka: National DM policy and plan final drafts but awaiting approval
Vanuatu: National Action Plan for DRR and DM 2006-2015	Vanuatu: Implementation stage
	Tajikistan: National Disaster Management Action Plan

Compared with 2005-06 efforts to create plans have clearly intensified in 2007-08 with three countries (Indonesia, Republic of Korea and Vanuatu) having moved into the implementation stage (countries such as Australia and New Zealand with plans that predate the HFA need to be added to this number). Seven more planning exercises have been undertaken in 2007-08. Four final drafts are currently waiting for adoption and enactment. Three planning exercises are underway.

Not all national plans are underpinned by/ well synchronized with national policy, or sufficiently coordinated among the different stakeholders. Together with a lack of institutional and human capacity as well as financial resources this results in slow implementation. The Bangladesh report emphasizes attitude-related challenges in changing the previous emphasis on response: ***“Introducing DRR culture and practices takes time to replace age-old relief culture.”***¹⁵

Box 1 Lessons learned from Strategic National Action Plans in Southeast Asia¹⁶

The production of Strategic National Action Plans (SNAPs) was initiated by UNISDR’s and UNDP’s regional offices in Asia Pacific in order to facilitate the translation of HFA priorities into relevant, affordable and sustainable action in selected countries. SNAPs intend to generate strong political commitment by involving stakeholders from different sectors and disciplines into a transparent and participatory process. With funding support from the Disaster Preparedness Program of the European Commission for Humanitarian Aid Department (DIPECHO) and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) UNISDR’s ADPC helped facilitate a number of SNAP development processes in Southeast Asia i.e. Cambodia, Philippines and Thailand and at the local level in Indonesia. While results in individual countries vary the following general lessons have been learnt during this process in 2007-2008:

- Broad multi-stakeholder consultations facilitate a thorough assessment of previous experience and provide a good basis for strategic planning
- Transparent and participatory consultations can be effective in changing perceptions about national disaster management agencies as “top down” and unappreciative about community concerns
- Broad-based consultations can raise the understanding and profile of DRR and consequently the importance that is attached to it
- During inter-active multi-stakeholder processes national government agencies, local government units, NGOs and CBOs can learn to appreciate both their own and each other’s roles, contributions and strengths in DRR
- Proper and comprehensive documentation of consultations and analysis is instrumental to ensure a systematic planning process that can be shared with a wider group of stakeholders
- Mobilizing interest in a multi-stakeholder consultation process takes time , particularly when dealing with governmental bureaucracies, who can be swamped with competing duties
- Depending upon context the participation of CBOs or people’s organizations in events that include government agencies can be a challenge due to a lack of trust and/ or communication challenges. Proper preparation and careful facilitation and support mechanisms are key factors to ensure that “every voice is heard”.
- Consultations, feedback- and validation-mechanisms need to continue from the assessment and analysis over the drafting stage to the finalization of the SNAP to generate ownership
- DRR planning processes like these need to lay the groundwork for a continuous and sustained process, requiring regular revisions with the participation of all relevant stakeholders

15 National Report Bangladesh, page 2

16 ISDR, Strategic National/ Local Action Plans in Cambodia, Philippines and Thailand, Draft Reviews, 2009

Progress in risk reduction is particularly difficult and slow at local levels. While Australia, Indonesia, Nepal, New Zealand and the Philippines express clear institutional commitment to the delegation of authority to local levels¹⁷ and remaining countries all emphasize the importance of local and community level empowerment, the level of capacity is highly variable. Local officials are not necessarily 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 (particularly in highly decentralized countries such as Australia).

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. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal and the Philippines and two countries in Central Asia, namely, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan specifically point out highly insufficient budgets for risk reduction that may also be prioritized or reserved for response related expenditures. All countries describe particular difficulties to ensure adequate levels of resources at the local level. In these conditions governments find it hard to steer and coordinate NGOs wishing to work at the community level since they are often the only source of funding for such activities.

The existence and shape of national platforms that could in principle serve as a mechanism to promote dialogue and mainstreaming across different stakeholders varies significantly across the region suggesting a lack of clarity and agreement on the purpose and expected structure of these institutions. Out of the 17 reporting countries Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan and Sri Lanka report the existence of a national platform. The platforms in Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Sri Lanka were both created during the reporting period. All other countries have multi-sector coordinating mechanisms¹⁸; however civil society¹⁹ or the private sector is not represented. New Zealand seems to remain unconvinced that a ***“singular forum or committee for hazard risk reduction”*** would be necessary when ***“continuing risk management and integrated policy and planning processes are intended to ensure that national priorities for risk reduction are established, [...]”***

Box 2 National platforms in Asia Pacific²⁰

Progress to establish National Platforms (NPs) has been relatively slow in the Asia-Pacific region. During the period 2007-2008 four New Platforms: Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Tajikistan have been added to the already existing platforms in China, Iran, Japan and the Philippines. An early draft progress review of NPs conducted by the UNISDR Asia Pacific Office refers to the following challenges in the establishment of effective bodies:

- Initial buy-in by national governments and prospective lead agencies
- Capacity and willingness of lead agencies to mobilize and engage with multiple stakeholders
- Equitable representation of stakeholders
- Shifting the focus from relief to risk reduction
- Lack of resources

The challenges listed above apply both to the initial set-up of a NP as well as to its effectiveness once it is in place. The establishment of a National Platform should not be regarded as an objective by itself. Well established integrated risk management policy and planning processes in multiple sectors will ultimately be more effective in advancing DRR than the existence of a committee. This suggests that the establishment of Platforms may be just one possibility to promote

17 In line with overall decentralization of authority.

18 Though some seem to focus on response and recovery coordination i.e. are mainly reactive.

19 Except the Red Cross/ Red Crescent Societies in some countries (Philippines; Islamic Republic of Iran; eventually others)

20 See UNISDR, Working Draft, progress Review of National Platforms for DRR in the Asia and Pacific Region, 2009; GTZ/ DKKV, National Platforms for Disaster Reduction, 2007; Indonesia/ National Development Planning Agency, Presentation, Mainstreaming DRR into sustainable development, Kuala Lumpur 2008

DRR where no integrated institutional arrangements and processes are yet in place to manage and reduce disaster risks. The establishment of NPs must then be preceded by an in-depth institutional analysis of the best way to mobilize and galvanize the commitment of key actors from multiple sectors to DRR in a given country. The answer may be to establish a committee but other, alternative or additional measures – such as bottom-up consultations and engagement of actors at various levels - may also be considered. From this perspective the rather slow progress in Asia Pacific may reflect two major approaches. One set of countries considers NPs to be inappropriate for their needs and circumstances. The other set of countries takes care and therefore time in designing NPs that are well embedded into broader institutional and legal arrangements for DRR and that have clear objectives.

Indonesia for instance, first laid the groundwork for a fundamental shift to risk management by enacting the new Disaster Management Law No24 in April 2007. Disaster Risk Reduction was introduced as a priority and allocated a specific budget-line in the annual development plans from 2007 onwards. As foreseen by the new law Indonesia then proceeded to establish a new lead agency, the National Agency for Disaster Management in 2008. From the outset of this process Indonesia employed multiple mechanisms to consult and involve multiple actors including CBOs, NGOs as well as bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies and donors. Focus-group discussions for the preparation of progress reports on the implementation of the HFA in 2007-2008 provided an additional opportunity to engage with stakeholders from the government, parliament/ political parties, private sector, NGOs, academia, the media, and the international community. This reinforced the idea and mutual interest to create a National Platform that would help to integrate strategies adopted by various sectors into a holistic and synchronized approach to DRR in development. The NP was ultimately set up in November 2008 and has been launched in April 2009.

3.2 Priority for Action 2 “Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning”

In 2005 very few countries in the region (including Australia) had conducted national multi-hazard risk assessments²¹. Since the adoption of the HFA Hong Kong China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea report significant achievements in this area. In the remaining countries there is common recognition of the need to conduct comprehensive assessments. Feedback 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 and data formats. Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka report a general lack of consistent approaches and objectives of risk assessments from the national to the local level. This includes a lack of common procedures on updating and disseminating the data. 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. In areas of higher climate risk, global climate change may considerably intensify established patterns of risk and stretch coping capacities to the limit; however policy-makers and planners have limited access to credible assessments and scenarios.

On the positive side some countries including Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu suggest, initiated or have a framework for risk assessments and the standardization of risk assessment procedures and methodologies (national/ and or local levels). There is recognized 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 an integrated risk information and monitoring system.

In the aftermath of major disasters remote sensing applications have gained further importance to support emergency response and recovery efforts in Asia Pacific. However the use of satellite-imagery requires solid and specialized disaster information management capacity on the ground as the following case from China illustrates.

²¹ World Bank/ISDR/ADRC/ADPC “Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific”, 2008

Box 3 Space Technology Applications for DRR in Asia Pacific²²

Satellite-imagery and related applications contributed to the timeliness of the emergency response to the catastrophic earthquake that occurred on 12 May 2008 in Wenchuan, Sichuan Province of China. The Richter-8.0 earthquake affected 46 million people in an area of about 100,000 Km². Within 2 hours after the quake, the National Disaster Reduction Center of China (NDRCC) produced the first map based on archived satellite images and other information from its database. The map indicated the epicenter of the earthquake and basic information about surrounding areas, such as the distribution of villages and population. Thereafter more than 120 satellite-derived monitoring and assessment reports and thematic maps identified the most severely affected areas, damages to roads and bridges and their restoring progress, facilitated risk assessment of secondary geological hazards and monitoring of dangerous quake-lakes. The reports and maps that used around 1300 satellite images acquired from 23 national and foreign satellites were instrumental for decision-making and planning.

China, a country that has the capacity to launch and operate satellites had the systems in place to receive and process data from remote sensing sources. This included the capacity to integrate satellite-data with existing data on hazards, historical records on local disasters, population and settlements in the affected area to analyze the situation. However in many countries of the region such disaster information management systems are still in the process of establishment. The capacity to receive and to process satellite-data into clearly defined decision-making products including the integration of locally available information on hazards, vulnerability and risks and disaster management practices is therefore often missing. Many smaller countries may not even need to develop a fully equipped technical system. Added value space information products could be provided through well institutionalized cooperation mechanisms.

A number of efforts to institutionalize regional cooperation and mutual support in the use of space technology for DRR are already underway and supported by all space faring countries in the Asia Pacific region. For instance, under ESCAP's Space Applications Program for Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific (RESAP), China, India and Indonesia have recently started to provide training opportunities to Asian-Pacific countries in the use of space information and GIS for DRR. Together with China, India and FAO ESCAP is also promoting regional cooperative mechanisms for drought disaster monitoring and early warning. Possible modalities are currently under discussion. Another important initiative is the Sentinel Asia initiative led by the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAP). The project is a cooperative effort between space and disaster management agencies from APRSAF's member states and has recently completed stage 1, the establishment of a pilot, web-based dissemination system to share satellite-borne disaster information across the Asia-Pacific region. Stage 2 is currently underway and aims at the expansion of the dissemination system to a comprehensive regional disaster management support system. However, as of yet these initiatives are still in early stages and clear visions and modalities for sharing and mutual support arrangements including the support to least developed national systems to use and process relevant data are yet to emerge.

Another good example in the region of Asia and Pacific is the installation of a seismic monitoring network in Tajikistan. A network of seven digital stations replaced the old and hardly functioning net of 49 analogue stations most of which were destroyed in the civil war of 1992-1997. The project supported by the Swiss agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provided funds for the installation of state-of-the-art digital stations produced by the Canadian company Nanometrics. This promoted acceptance of Tajikistan into the Federation of Digital Seismic Networks (FSDN) and the establishment of the State Geo-Physical Survey under the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan (2008).

The Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster has prompted the establishment of early warning systems (EWS), particularly in the countries directly affected but also confirmed or increased interest in others to review and update their systems (Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, South Korea, Vanuatu). At the national level Sri Lanka and Indonesia have made significant progress in system development but challenges to disseminate information to end-users in less accessible locations have not yet been fully resolved. 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. Cambodia for instance reports that some local authorities have not been adequately involved in the development of a flood early warning system in the Lower Basin of the Mekong. In these districts the termination of external support led to the discontinuation of EW activities. An end-to end early warning system as emphasized in the **Delhi Declaration** therefore remains a valid ambition, particularly

²² See UNESCAP/ ADRC, Biennial HFA Progress Review 2007-2009. Space Technology Applications for DRR, 2008

in countries with low capacity that have not benefited from heightened levels of support following the Indian Ocean Tsunami.

Box 4 Early warning Systems in the Tsunami Affected countries²³

Since the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, intensive work has been carried out by a range of stakeholders to support development of all elements of the regional tsunami early warning system (TEWS) in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Important issues concern the long-term sustainability of the system (e.g., ongoing provisions for early warning in national, provincial and local budgets) and strengthening “end-to-end” warnings that reach people at risk and generate an appropriate response.

A recent mapping exercise on Tsunami Early Warning Systems (TEWS) in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia published by UNESCAP finds considerable progress with governance and institutional arrangements both at international and national levels. The regional tsunami warning system is coordinated by IOC UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Coordination Group (ICG) for the Indian Ocean and a separate ICG for the Pacific. Many countries have developed or revised disaster management laws and institutions following the Indian Ocean tsunami. In many cases, additional work to develop implementing regulations and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is ongoing.

There has been significant progress in monitoring and warning, in particular through the establishment of tsunami watch provider services in the region, and installation of networks of seismic and sea level stations on which these services depend. Countries face however a challenge in terms of expertise and allocating funding to manage and sustain the stations. Risk assessment guidelines and an Indian Ocean tsunami hazard map based on current knowledge have almost been completed. However, the high-risk tsunami zones and the overall tsunami frequency in different parts of the region are still poorly known, even at the broadest level. Applying risk knowledge for planning and vulnerability assessments is also a challenge, especially at the local level.

Systems of dissemination and communication require further strengthening, in particular at the downstream level. Several countries are developing Standard Operating Procedures for tsunami warnings, but only a few countries have moved into the final stages of this process including testing. Significant gaps include effective and redundant channels of communication to the community level, and design of clear warning messages that are understandable to end users. However there are success stories: Indonesia is now capable of providing tsunami warnings within 5 minutes of detection.

Intensive work on community preparedness and response strategies is carried out in many countries. However, activities are confined to selected areas and often dependent upon external support. A comprehensive program is not available in most cases. Many tsunami drills have been carried out in the region since the Indian Ocean tsunami, although there is no comprehensive regional program for drills and other assessments of the status of the TEWS over the long-term. While there are numerous actors involved in this area of work there are also many gaps in education, awareness, and operating procedures.

Regarding the exchange of information and better regional cooperation across countries, equally called for by the **Delhi Declaration** 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 2007. South Asian nations have also agreed on the establishment of a regional EWS coordinated by SAARC. In the Pacific regional cooperation in EWS has concentrated on monitoring and forecasting, spread out over a range of initiatives addressing floods, droughts and volcanic eruptions. Tsunami plans and early warning arrangements have been reviewed.

Only 5 countries report progress on trans-boundary risk reduction at sub-national levels. This includes comprehensive capacity and achievements in Australia, New Zealand and South Korea and selected intra-district or intra-provincial initiatives in Indonesia and the Philippines. According to national reports the Mekong River Commission is in the initial stage of addressing regional cooperation to manage trans-boundary risks at local

²³ See UNESCAP, Report on Regional Unmet Needs and Recommendations: Tsunami Early Warning Systems (TEWS) in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, 2009

authority levels. It is fair to conclude that trans-boundary risk reduction practices are still in their infancy as solid local and regional risk reduction capacity has still to emerge in a majority of countries.

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

Five countries (Australia, Hong Kong China, Islamic Republic of Iran, New Zealand and Republic of Korea) report substantial and even comprehensive achievements in the development of disaster management information systems. In six more countries there have been focused efforts to improve or establish new information management systems as illustrated by the table below.

Table 4: Progress on Disaster Management Information Systems in 2007/08

Bangladesh: Disaster Management Information Centre established
Indonesia: Started to develop Disaster Management Information System
Lao: Standardized data collection formats under development to improve existing system
Nepal: Disaster-base on historical record of disaster over 35 years (“DesInventar”) established
Maldives: GIS based system under development/ reliance on Pacific Disasters Net
New Zealand: Standardized data sharing protocols under development to improve existing system
Sri Lanka: “DesInventar” established; disaster resource data-base under development

In the Pacific SOPAC has developed a shared 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”**²⁴ 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. 3 countries (Australia, New Zealand and Vanuatu) have standardized tools for local risk assessments; other countries such as Cambodia observe a multiplication of tools many of which have not been tested systematically and exceed the capacities of local users. In general there tend to be more tools for hazard assessments. Cost-benefit analysis of investments into DRR has so far only been conducted in the Pacific, namely in Fiji and Samoa. In Fiji, a cost-benefit analysis influenced the government’s decision to install a telemetry warning system for floods in the Navua river basin.

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 and reiterated in the **Delhi Declaration**. Three years, however, seem too short to reach considerable progress. While an outperforming group of four²⁵ countries (Australia, Hong Kong China, Islamic Republic of Iran and New Zealand) report comprehensive or substantial achievements, Bangladesh, Republic of Korea and Nepal have reached institutional commitment. The remaining countries have not yet made significant progress. However, both Sri Lanka and Nepal as well as Tajikistan in Central Asia have introduced DRR into school curricula of selected grades during the reporting period.

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

²⁴ ASEAN, “Sub-regional report on DRR and then Current Status of Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in South Asia”, October 2008

²⁵ 5 for public awareness

countries. The New Zealand report highlights the need for a sustained, long-term approach: ***“The major challenge is changing behavior of individuals and organizations, and progressing intentions into actions”***²⁶ 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.

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 8 countries indicate that initiatives in the area of DRR concentrate on “projectized” activities often implemented in areas recently hit by major 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. Furthermore very little is done to increase both the structural resilience and non-structural safety of school buildings. This was for instance confirmed by a review of school safety and resilience undertaken by the National Disaster Management Office in Vanuatu.

Box 5 Promoting School Safety in Asia²⁷

Over the last five years thousands of children have died in the rubble of their school buildings: in the 2005 Kashmir earthquake in India and Pakistan and most recently in the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in China. The UN Hyogo Framework for Action stresses the importance of including DRR in school curricula. More recently, the 2006-7 UNISDR campaign “Disaster risk reduction begins at school” aimed to promote the integration of disaster risk reduction into government plans for school curricula and to ensure that school buildings are safe from the impacts of natural hazards. Regional agendas such as the Delhi Declaration in 2007 and the Bangkok Action Agenda (Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on School Education and Disaster Risk Reduction in 2007) confirmed DRR in schools as a priority.

In the Asia-Pacific region many projects and initiatives have been launched to advocate, pilot and run DRR initiatives in the educational sector. However institutionalization has been slow. Where school safety activities are promoted by NGOs, the government or corporate sector follow-up has often been lacking. Initiatives tended to focus upon the integration of DRR into formal and sometimes informal education, but not or only insufficiently on the policy, legal, technical, financial and social aspects of creating structurally safer schools. Partnerships with the private sector and civil society (teacher/ parent organizations, for instance) have been given insufficient attention. In May 2008 a conference sponsored by the Aga Khan Planning and Building Service and Focus in Islamabad, Pakistan and bringing together 125 participants from about 15 countries reviewed these issues more systematically. The following are some of the key recommendations:

1. National governments develop a school safety policy as part of their national development plan that is proactive and focuses on preparedness and mitigation.
2. National and local governments create and consolidate a school safety information base that reflects local physical and socio-cultural realities to inform policy and practice.
3. National governments in partnership with local authorities create a National School Safety Program and Fund to implement action plans for structural and non-structural initiatives so that new schools are disaster resilient and existing ones are properly retrofitted.
4. National governments as the regulatory body for private schools ensure that private sector schools raise their standards to be safe schools within the next five years.
5. Local governments develop school safety action plans, within the framework of the national school safety programs that are formulated in consultation with communities and address their identified priorities.
6. Local governments partner with private institutions and corporations, seeking their support and commitment for the implementation and finance of the plans.

²⁶ New Zealand Progress Report 2008, page 8.

²⁷ For full text see Islamabad Declaration on School Safety, May 16-18, 2008 <http://www.schoolsafetyconference.org/Islamabad%20Declaration.pdf>

3.4 Priority for Action 4 “Reduce the underlying risk factors”

The **Delhi Declaration** on DRR re-emphasized the mainstreaming of DRR into development plans and sector strategies to reduce underlying risk factors. On the whole countries report the lowest progress levels against this priority. 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. The national report from **Cambodia** puts it succinctly stating: **“There is no common understanding of multi-sector integration approaches and lack of comprehensive understanding of disaster risk reduction and vulnerability reduction [by] development agencies.”**

Linkages with poverty reduction and national MDG strategies are a rarity. Only Australia, Iran and New Zealand report substantial achievements whereas the remaining 10 countries see themselves between 2 “some progress” and 3 “commitment attained”. One of the obstacles is that the inclusion of DRR objectives in development or sector plans is not always followed up by dedicated budgetary, department/ agency or business plans. In addition some of these initiatives are small-scale pilots that need yet to be translated into policy and institutional commitment.

Overall low achievements in this area should not come as a surprise since 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.

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 natural resource laws do provide a framework, their interpretation does not easily translate into instruments for DRR and DRM.”**²⁸ Work on climate change as re-emphasized in the **Delhi Declaration** is underway in some countries; the Republic of Korea for instance reports very specific work to adapt DRR plans and standards in the light of climate change scenarios (against a sobering realization that growing risk exceeds the current ability and practices to mitigate). In Australia, Bangladesh and Vanuatu the linkages between work on DRR and climate change focus on the preparation of climate adaptation frameworks and programs. However, overall progress to better integrate DRR and climate change plans and institutional frameworks is slow.

Box 6 Climate Change Challenges²⁹

Since hydro-meteorological events account for about two thirds of natural disasters in the Asia and Pacific region expectations are that global warming will result in more frequent and damaging events. However, climate change modeling and socio-economic projections are as of yet associated with great uncertainties. Many policy makers in the Asia Pacific region find it difficult to allocate scarce resources to imperfectly understood risks in a distant future. At the same time climate change is already happening. Rising sea levels threaten the existence of many Pacific small island states. During the Pacific Islands Forum Summit Meeting held in August 2008 Prime Minister Toke Tufkia Talagi from Niue said: “[...] the international attention now focused on climate change presents an opportunity for the region to negotiate and secure tangible assistance for people already affected by climate change.”

Both DRR and climate change deal with future risks. In order to predict risks DRR has often access to knowledge about the characteristics of hazards and historical disaster events. Given the relatively short human memory, climate change deals with a relatively unknown and complex phenomenon that occurs over long periods of time. Even minimal changes in underlying assumptions (of greenhouse gas emissions, average temperatures etc.) lead to dramatic differences in the

²⁸ Philippines National Report 2008, page 12

²⁹ On the subject see ADPC, Asian Disaster Management News, January – April 2008; Tearfund, Linking climate change adaptation to disaster risk reduction, 2008. For Prime Minister Talagi’s quote see. <http://www.reformtheun.org/index.php/eupdate/4404>

predicted scenarios. One way of approximation is to assume that climate change risks would mimic current climate variability patterns. Existing human experiences could then be drawn in to build resilience. While this does not address the possibility of more dramatic and sudden changes it may be the most pragmatic approach to address climate-risk related challenges. Gaps between present day capacity and capacities needed to withstand amplified risks from climate change impacts would need to be thoroughly analyzed and addressed. Existing DRR tools effective in dealing with weather-related events (vulnerability/ risk assessments; early warning etc.) can be used and further developed in such adaptation processes.

On a pilot scale such climate change/ DRR projects are already undertaken in a number of Asia-Pacific countries though this does not seem to be the product of systematic integration of DRR and climate change adaptation. Currently the institutional frameworks, political processes, funding mechanisms and information exchange platforms of the two communities remain largely separate, not only in Asia Pacific but world-wide. Maybe even more importantly both climate change and DRR are insufficiently linked into development planning and practice. This bears the threat of an inefficient use of resources and unsustainable risk reduction and/ or climate change adaptation solutions. The DRR community needs to make a more conscious effort to account for the exacerbation of existing risks and new risks in policies, plans and initiatives. This may require the revision and adaptation of existing tools and new or stronger partnerships with bodies dealing with climate change. Together better informed and more effective efforts could be undertaken to influence development patterns for sustainable outcomes.

Only Australia and New Zealand base their work on an explicit social inclusion agenda though all reporting countries recognize the need to address the social vulnerability dimension of risk. However instruments to address social vulnerability remain often restricted to conventional programs such as food aid. From a more positive perspective there are encouraging initiatives such as in the Philippines where the National Anti Poverty Commission has designed a poverty reduction strategy for people in hazard prone areas incorporating interventions ranging from microfinance and insurance instruments to rice credits and cheap food and burial benefits. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic the United Nation's Development Assistance Framework (in support of the Sixth National Socio Economic Development Plan) lists disaster risk management as a critical component of the poverty reduction framework. Nepal is conducting a study on the relationship between poverty and disasters. A growing diversification of social safety net programs with a very active role of NGOs is reported from Bangladesh. Yet these initiatives require detailed evaluations to identify the exact benefits for communities and to better understand the inter-relation between microfinance and risk reduction.

With the exception of the highly industrialized countries that are part of this small sample efforts to address vulnerability through economic and productive sectoral policies are few and far between. One of the very few examples is a project that aims to mainstream DRR into the transport sector in the Philippines. There is no doubt that the attempts to increase the resilience of (often privately owned) critical infrastructure through public-private partnerships in high income countries (such as Australia) represent innovative examples, however they cannot be easily transferred to nations where large segments of the population earn a livelihood in the agricultural sector and poverty levels are high. The National Report from Indonesia captures this when it says: **"...the assumption that better or improved public private partnership can provide protection to vulnerable economic activities seems to be not always the case."**³⁰

Climate change has added to a renewed interest in agriculture and Bangladesh reports studies on agriculture resilience. Risk transfer schemes such as crop insurance- if existing - are at a stage of experimentation and require an increased dialogue between regulating agencies (i.e. the government) the insurance industry and representatives of the intended client groups. An example of an index-based agricultural insurance initiative comes from Mongolia. The case indicates the complexity of the issues involved and - somewhat counter-intuitively - the need for risk-taking in pursuing novel DRR approaches that are capable of addressing sector-specific vulnerabilities and needs.

30 National Report Indonesia, page 13

Box 7 Innovative risk transfer: Index-based livestock insurance in Mongolia³¹

Risk reduction requires both innovation and the careful consideration of prevailing livelihood characteristics and existing risk management practices. The index-based livestock insurance program in Mongolia, the first of its kind combines both.

In Mongolia agriculture contributes nearly one-third of the national GDP with herding accounting for over 80 percent of the sector. Animals are the main source of livelihoods for nearly half the residents of Mongolia. From 2000-2002, 11 million animals perished due to harsh winters with extremely low temperatures and unusually high levels of snow-fall (*dzud*). Such losses have devastating implications for the rural poor and for the Mongolian economy. Major "dzud" disasters are common in Mongolia due to climate variability. Most herders are following semi-nomadic migratory patterns with limited shelter resources. Traditional livestock insurance based on individual losses has turned out to be ineffective in Mongolia: "moral hazards" i.e. failure of insured herders to take all effective measures to protect their stock against calamities or falsely reported animal deaths is among the key endemic problems. Monitoring individual herders in the vast territory of Mongolia is a nearly impossible task. The reactive funding by the government in the aftermath of major catastrophes such as the series of dzuds in 2000-2002 is however unsustainable and ineffective. Scarce funds are diverted from much needed development investments and disbursements are usually delayed deepening the economic and social disruption caused by the disaster. As the problem has both social and economic dimensions the Government of Mongolia (GoM) approached the World Bank to provide research on this issue.

The solution developed as a result of this request involves a combination of self-insurance by herders, market-based insurance and social insurance. The insurance program relies on a mortality rate index by species in a given local region (*sum*). Herders pay a premium based on the value of their animals reported and the relative risk in the *sum* that they choose. The *sum* is selected based on herder's knowledge of where his/her animals are most exposed during the year. Herders are able to insure between 25 and 100 percent of the estimated value of their animals. The index provides strong incentives to individual herders to take maximum care of their livestock, since insurance payouts are based on local mortality, not on individual losses. That means those who increase the care for their animals during a major event would likely be compensated for this effort since payments begin once the predetermined threshold of mortality for the *sum* and species is exceeded. Herders retain small losses, larger losses are transferred to the private insurance industry, and extreme or catastrophic losses are transferred to the GoM using a public safety net program. Given that this is a novel approach to a significant problem in Mongolia, the GoM agreed to initiate a pilot program. During the first round of sales of the insurance product 9% of eligible herders joined in 2006, followed by already 14% in 2007. In addition to the methodological challenges in the elaboration of a workable index and insurance scheme, the pilot program addresses capacity building of government, statistical office, insurance companies and promotion/ public awareness amongst the herders. The program will be scaled up in 2009.

The regional record regarding spatial planning and land use control is equally diverse with considerable achievements in Australia, Islamic Republic of Iran and New Zealand, some institutional commitment in Hong Kong China, Republic of Korea, Nepal and Yemen, and very limited progress in the remaining 8 countries. The biggest difficulty reported concerns the enforcement of codes and regulations which is related to complex land tenure conditions, a lack of clearly designated authority and ability to impose sanctions, and conflicting interests between various layers of government, to name just a few. However these difficulties often reflect the lack of a broader framework and strategy for urban development that emphasizes accountability of those involved in urban planning and construction. There is a general lack of awareness of minimum building standards among the population. Codes require reviews in the light of climate change and changing risk patterns. The use of GIS technology for land-use planning is becoming more common throughout the region though issues related to compatibility of data-bases and clear protocols for data-entry and use persist in some countries.

31 Mahul O., Skees, J., Managing Agricultural Risk at the Country Level: The Case of Index-Based Livestock Insurance in Mongolia, *WB policy research paper 4325*, August 2007; Lester, R., *Presentation on Catastrophe Risk Financing Applications*, July 2008

Box 8 Urban risk reduction in Asia³²

Most major cities in Asia are located in hazard-prone areas: river deltas, coastal zones and seismically active zones. The fast expansion of such urban areas is a source of major concern. Urban risk in Asia is configured by a variety of factors: Many Asian cities suffer from poor infrastructure, erratic water and electricity supply, deficient sanitation and drainage. This applies in particular to “informal” settlements. They often lack access to basic services and tend to be in particularly exposed locations. In urban mega-cities like Jakarta, Manila and Mumbai almost 25 to 30% of the population lives in informal settlements. However many secondary cities have also experienced rapid expansion as economic growth transformed them into new hubs of livelihood opportunities. Environmental issues such as water contamination, ground subsidence and water table reduction plague several urban centers. Caused by the over exploitation of underground water Bangkok for instance suffers from a subsidence rate of 25 to 30 cm per year. Overall urban management has not kept up with the heterogeneous and dynamic growth of cities in Asia. A lack of administrative capacities, poor resource generation and outdated urban planning increases the vulnerability of urban centers. Climate change adds to the urgency of addressing urban risk reduction, particularly in coastal areas and river deltas.

In recent years a number of institutions have started to address urban risk in Asia. The Asian Regional Task Force (RTF) on Urban Risk Reduction, a thematic group of the ISDR system in Asia with 16 member organizations is currently making an inventory of these initiatives. One of them, the USAID-funded Program for Hydro-Meteorological Disaster Mitigation in Secondary Cities in Asia (PROMISE) is being implemented since October 2005 by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) in six secondary cities in Bangladesh (Chittagong), Philippines (Dagupan), Pakistan (Hyderabad), Sri Lanka (Kalutara), Vietnam (Da Nang) and Indonesia (Jakarta). The program focuses on the need to reduce the vulnerabilities to climate change and to minimize the destructive impacts of the hydro-meteorological hazards on vulnerable urban communities and economic infrastructure through enhanced preparedness and mitigation. Program components include city demonstration projects, regional and national capacity building, advocacy for mainstreaming risk management in urban governance and regional networking and information dissemination focus.

One of the most positive aspects of the program is the peer mechanism for knowledge sharing from city to city. Over three years partners have gathered experience in addressing urban disaster risk reduction developing their own strategies to map hazards, assess vulnerabilities and design hydro-meteorological risk management practices covering CBDRM, early warning and land use planning amongst other initiatives. While results are still tentative the following key lessons have been learnt:

- Community level capacity building, awareness creation, effective information dissemination and advocacy are effective tools in reducing the vulnerability to climate change impacts and in strengthening DRM processes at local level.
- Networking and partnership among different stakeholders such as government agencies and institutions, different city authorities, NGOs and private sector is critical in implementing successful disaster risk reduction and mitigation activities.
- Strong political will and leadership guarantees higher success in achieving urban disaster risk reduction by integrating DRR and development activities. Continuous advocacy both at the national and local government level is needed to sensitize decision makers.

The record regarding procedures for the integration of risk reduction into major development projects is a little better as 4 countries (Australia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Marshall Islands and New Zealand) report comprehensive achievements, 6 institutional commitment and only 4 modest progress. Vanuatu has initiated the development of an overall policy requiring risk assessments for all development projects, the Republic of Korea has established a disaster mitigation impact regulation for development planning and other countries have decided to focus upon a priority sector (Philippines: transport) or a densely populated urban area (New Zealand: Wellington; Yemen: Sana'a). Common obstacles to push the integration of risk reduction include the lack of an effective regulating agency and enforcement capacity. An increasing commitment to addressing risk in development projects seems contingent upon a realization of the cost-benefit ratio of investing in risk reduction.

Countries³³ that have had recent experience of significant disasters such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sri Lanka report institutional commitment to integrate DRR into recovery and

³² See Asia Regional Task Force on Urban Risk Reduction, Thematic Overview of Urban Risk in Asia, 2008; ADPC, Safer Cities 25. Case studies on mitigating disasters in Asia and the Pacific.

³³ Other countries such as Hong Kong China, Republic of Korea and Vanuatu have also reached institutional commitment or even more significant levels of achievement (Australia, Marshall Islands and New Zealand).

reconstruction strategies (also an action point of the *Delhi Declaration*). However, experience has shown that translating these resolves into reality is easier said than done, particularly in the absence of resilient coordination mechanisms, guidelines and other relevant specifications and previous experience. Obviously difficulties affecting the sustainable development of settlements during “normal” times will also affect reconstruction after disasters including complex or insecure land tenure systems and a lack of community awareness. Successful risk reduction practices in recovery start to emanate but are overall far and few between.

3.5 Priority for Action 5 “Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels”

It may come as a surprise that the self-assessment of progress in disaster preparedness and response, an area that most countries have more solid experience of than risk reduction, is not more positive. Yet this area scores lower than both HFA priority areas 1 and 3. Australia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Korea and New Zealand report substantial achievements and Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Marshal Islands, Nepal and Yemen report only minor to modest progress while the remaining 6 have achieved institutional commitment but not solid levels of performance. There are many possible explanations for this phenomenon (amongst others longer experience in disaster and response that may lead to a more critical self-assessment). The reports also suggests that while policy development³⁴, institutional development at the national level and planning have been stronger, the areas of financial resources and mechanisms for local level risk reduction including preparedness capacities are lagging behind. In other words capacities are simply not in place to pursue nation-wide implementation of policies and plans.

Box 9 Promoting the institutionalization of CBDRM³⁵

One of the great challenges of community based disaster risk management (CBDRM) initiatives is sustainability. In the region CBDRM programs are often implemented by NGOs and CBOs and face problems of continuity once external funding runs out. To meet these and other challenges governments need to get involved in CBDRM to create supportive policies, frameworks and legislation that will facilitate the inclusion of CBDRM in local development and disaster plans. Agreeing on a common conceptual understanding of what CBDRM is what objectives it pursues and how it contributes to risk reduction and how the impact of these contributions can be measured are essential. This must be based upon a clear understanding of appropriate roles and responsibilities for communities, civil society organizations, governments and the private sector in the process. Capacity building at sub-national and local levels is important to create adequate support structures for CBDRM.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to promote CBDRM at sub-regional levels. One of the most comprehensive is the Partnership for Disaster Reduction in Southeast Asia (PDRSEA), a multi-phased project that has been running since 2001. The project is supported by DIPECHO and implemented in 4 countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam) with support from ADPC, UNESCAP and a number of international NGOs. Starting from a mix of awareness raising, capacity building and networking at the local level, the program shifted its focus to the promotion of institutionalizing CBDRM at top-policy-making levels in 2005, the start of its third phase, thereby bridging local and national initiatives. During phase 4 one of the key goals has been to integrate CBDRM into national socio-economic development processes. Two countries: Cambodia, Philippines developed national strategic plans on CBDRM, whereas Vietnam preferred to update its existing long-term National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention to 2020. This important strategy now includes the CBDRM concept.

In Cambodia and the Philippines the development of a national CBDRM strategy overlapped with the development of Strategic National Action Plans. There are capacity and resource issues associated with a systematic implementation of these plans, particularly in Cambodia. Indonesia was not ready to develop a CBDRM strategy during phase 4 of the PDRSEA program but has prioritized CBDRM in its National Action Plan for Risk Reduction (2006-2009) that has been consulted and “socialized” at various administrative levels including communities. Subsequently the annual budgeted work plans of the Government (RKPs) for 2007 and 2008 have started to list Disaster Mitigation and Management as one of nine national development priorities. An important target is the strengthening of community capacity to prevent and mitigate the risks of future natural disasters. This may illustrate one important point: while sporadic projects at the community level are unsustainable, national policy formulation exercises need to outline a strategy (a budget) for the resourcing of dissemination and follow-up activities at sub-national levels i.e. engaging and building capacities of local governments together with communities.

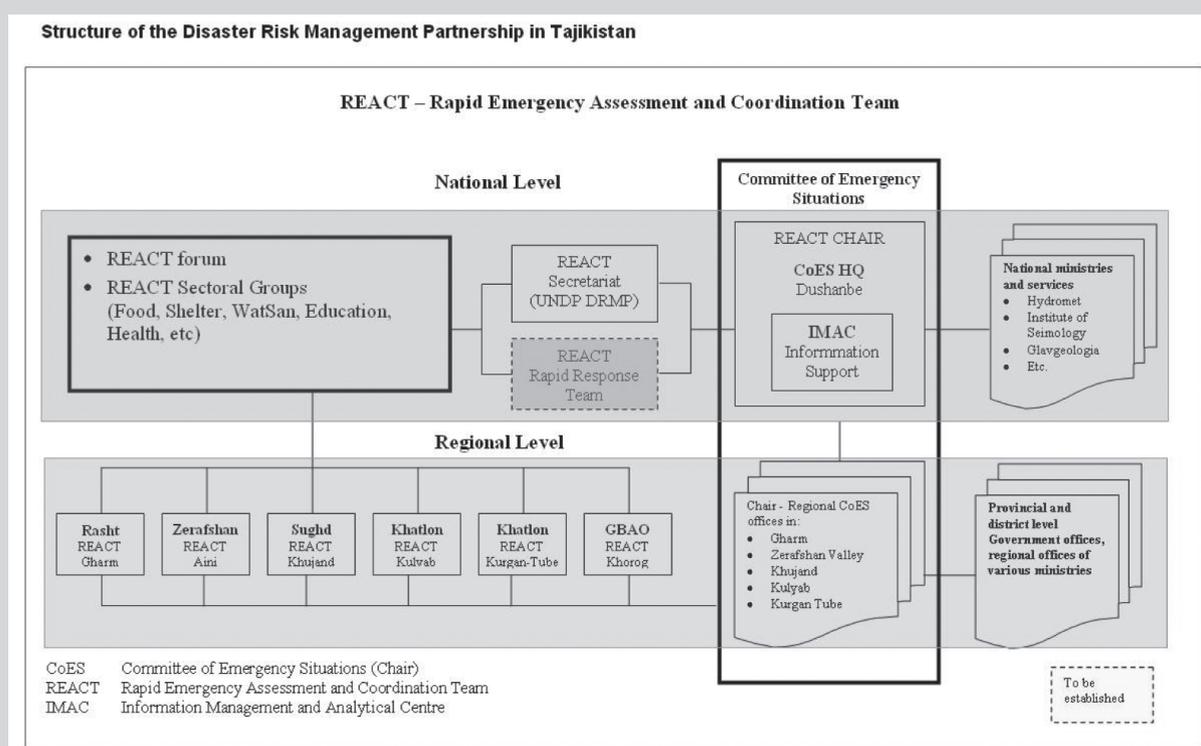
34 Already highlighted under priority 1.

35 See UNESCAP/ PDRSEA, Regional Experience on Institutionalization of CBDRM in South East Asia, 2008; RCC, Implementing national programs on community-based DRR in high risk communities: Lessons learned, challenges and way ahead, 2008

Box 10 Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT)

Tajikistan has been in the forefront by establishing Rapid Emergency Assessment and Coordination Team (REACT) back in 2001 together with UN OCHA. The group was established, initially to coordinate disaster response and comprised of 12 DRM stakeholders. REACT has now grown to a fully-fledged Disaster Risk Management Partnership and now includes more than 70 member organizations, including donor agencies, UN, IFRC, and Red Crescent Society and local NGOs. The team is led by Committee of Emergency Situations (CoES) as Chair of the group.

REACT is an extremely useful mechanism that supports improved coordination and information sharing amongst all actors in the field of disaster risk management, as well as in strengthening the leadership of government stakeholders (CoES) in disaster risk management activities.



All countries, except two, report the existence of permanent emergency funds, however two main problems are mentioned: the insufficient level of funding and slow disbursement mechanisms. Slow disbursements may not only be related to decision-making and administrative procedures but also be caused by weak post-disaster assessment capacity and poor information management mechanisms. On a positive note the concept of Emergency Operation Centers is spreading and currently actively introduced in the Philippines and Sri Lanka together with standardized information management systems. Other countries such as the Marshall Islands have been exposed to the concept by training events.

Except for the 4 outperforming countries mentioned above availability of funding for preparedness, particularly at the local level seems another important concern. Only the Philippines report the possibility to use National and Local Calamity Funds for pre-disaster activities. While efforts are reported to strengthen local disaster preparedness capacity this is frequently related to UN- or NGO- programs raising questions of sustainability. The Philippines and New Zealand remark that supporting local disaster preparedness requires the development of standard assessment tools for benchmarking capacity to determine required investment and monitor performance. Well targeted training in preparedness and disaster response at the local level for both decision-makers and technicians requires more attention.

With regard to the development of disaster and contingency plans to reduce the loss of life and property, an item that was again included in the *Delhi Declaration*, most countries report success or continue to work on such plans.³⁶ However, there are huge variations in scope and geographical coverage of these plans between countries and the various national, sector-specific and local plans seem not always integrated into an overall planning framework.

Table 5 Initiatives in support of local disaster/ contingency planning in 2007/08

Bangladesh: Contingency Planning for earthquakes in three cities. Part of national planning effort.
Cambodia: Sporadic local planning in selected areas. Project –dependent.
Indonesia: Sporadic local planning exercises often sector-specific.
Lao: Sporadic local planning exercises in selected provinces. Project-dependent.
Marshall Islands: Sector-specific planning (health). Project-dependent.
Nepal: Sporadic planning at district levels and below. Project-dependent.
Sri Lanka: Concerted national effort with 12 plans completed at district levels, divisional and GN plans in progress
Philippines: Concerted national effort to prepare contingency plans in 50 provinces (total:81). Planning manual drafted.
Vanuatu: Legislative and institutional arrangements are being put in place.
Yemen: National disaster management plan drafted as a basis for local planning.

While Australia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand have developed frameworks for local disaster planning the remaining countries struggle to put clear arrangements and guidelines in place. As table 4 illustrates initiatives are often sporadic, dependent upon projects and external support and there are limited funds to exercise and simulate plans. However, Vanuatu and the Yemen report systematic efforts to create national legislative arrangements and institutionalize local disaster planning. The Philippines and Sri Lanka have both embarked upon a more systematic and concerted effort to establish disaster plans across the country.

Some national and local plans are reportedly outdated and funding as well as the human and institutional capacity to actually implement (and update) these plans can be inadequate. On a positive note there are an increasing number of drills and simulations in reporting countries of the region. Debriefings and post disaster reviews are held more frequently though a culture of regular learning from disaster response operations is yet to emerge in most countries.

Contingency plans mostly stop short of a systematic treatment of the transition phases to early recovery and recovery. Including recovery – and recovery that is built on the principle of risk reduction – is still a new approach that needs to gain further ground in the region.

³⁶ Only one country emphasizes that it does not have a contingency plan at any level.

Box 11 “Sharing practical recovery lessons when it matters: China, June/ July 2008”³⁷

To be effective disaster recovery needs to be an integral part of national response planning systems. In addition disaster recovery needs to be informed by an understanding of underlying risks and options to reduce these risks in the recovery process. Legislative and institutional arrangements including financial mechanisms that would support the systematic integration of risk reduction into recovery are as of yet the exception in the Asia Pacific region. However, recognition that DRR must be a component of all recovery efforts is increasing. An indicator is the rising demand for the sharing of relevant experience from previous recovery operations. The Government of China requested such expertise in the aftermath of the Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan Province on May 12, 2008. Expertise in recovery was provided in the form of expert missions, policy papers summarizing key strategic lessons and two international workshops, one organized by the Government of China and the World Bank in June followed by a second workshop organized by the Government of China and the United Nations in July.

The workshops were timely as post disaster operations were just entering the recovery and reconstruction phase. Workshops exposed Chinese government officials to the conceptual framework of designing a reconstruction and recovery program based upon a comprehensive damage and loss assessment. International speakers gave tangible examples of post-disaster reconstruction experiences such as the Gujarat Earthquake (India), the Marmara Earthquake (Turkey), the Kashmir Earthquake (Pakistan), the Niigata-Chuetsu Earthquake (Japan), Indian Ocean Tsunami (Sri Lanka), Hurricane Katrina, and the Northridge Earthquake (US). Specific attention was given to community participation, gender, environment and capacity building, in particular during the early recovery phase.

International representatives and experts also shared sector perspectives related to post-disaster recovery highlighting lessons related to issues such as: housing reconstruction, environmental considerations, livelihood support, health and education programs, transportation networks, and dam safety. Longer term risk management aspects, such as catastrophic risk financing, was also explored as an option for the Government of China to consider. It is worth noting that Chinese line ministries and local governments have been applying some of these lessons to their recovery operations. For instance 17% of the total approximately USD 33.5 million of the UN China Appeal for Early Recovery Support, that was launched in July 11, 2008, has been allocated to the environment. Following the Wenchuan earthquake the Government of China has approached the ADB for technical assistance on the development of an inclusive disaster risk management strategy.

3.6 Roles and progress of sub-regional organizations to promote HFA

3.6.1 Background on sub-regional organizations and DRR

The degree and type of progress reported from sub-regional levels depends on two main factors a) the sub-region and its characteristics and b) the nature and capacity of sub-regional institutional and organizational arrangements for DRR. There are some significant differences in particular between the Pacific sub-region and South, South East, West and Central Asia. The Pacific Islands Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) has been in existence since 1972 and started to focus upon DRR in the 1980s. With shared hazards and similar socio-economic characteristics, the small island states of the Pacific have routinely mandated the Secretariat of SOPAC, to implement various regional DRR projects and activities. The Disaster Management Unit provides SOPAC member countries with capacity building advice and support to strengthen the national disaster risk reduction and response capability.

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) cooperation on disaster management dates back to its founding days in 1967. Regional cooperation on disaster management was significantly upgraded with the establishment of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) in early 2003 followed by the adoption of the [ASEAN Regional Program on Disaster Management 2004-2010](#). Priority areas include advocacy, capacity building, information sharing, promotion of cooperation amongst member- states, and networking with other partners. ASEAN has limited dedicated DRR capacity in its Secretariat and reports limited funding.

SAARC's (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) involvement in DRR started in 1995 with the establishment of a Meteorological Research Centre, however its involvement in DRR markedly intensified after

³⁷ See Thematic Review on Recovery 2007-2008, International Recovery Platform Secretariat, 2008; MOFCOM China, Synthesis Report on International Workshop on Post-Earthquake Reconstruction Experiences

the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004. In quick steps a regional framework on disaster management was developed in 2006 followed by the inauguration of SAARC Disaster Management Centre in Delhi the same year. The Centre provides policy advice and facilitates capacity building services for effective disaster risk reduction and for the planning and coordination of a rapid regional disaster response mechanism.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (**ECO**) is an intergovernmental regional organization established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for the purpose of promoting economic, technical and cultural cooperation among its member states. In 1992, ECO expanded to include seven new members, namely: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. ECO's more substantial involvement in DRR started in 2006 with the holding of a school safety workshop in Istanbul. Its activities in DRR intensified further after signing a joint MOU with UNISDR in May 2007. In consecutive years several ECO workshops and conferences were devoted to DRR. Furthermore, ECO established a specialized centre on drought and flood early warning in Mashhad/Iran in 2007.

With these differences in history and capacity in mind it is not surprising that the type and degree of progress reported by sub-regional or regional organizations shows important differences. Given the established operational role SOPAC plays in supporting DRR in the Pacific region, its achievements are the most tangible. With the recent establishment of its Disaster Management Centre SAARC's sub-regional role in promoting DRR is just gaining momentum as is ECO's involvement in the subject³⁸. ASEAN's level of involvement is somewhere in the middle between SAARC and SOPAC assuming a coordination rather than implementation role.

Reports, particularly those submitted by SAARC and SOPAC, tend to focus upon activities undertaken or envisaged by the Disaster Management Centers/ Units and do not clearly analyze regional progress against indicators. The ASEAN sub-regional report provides a well argued analysis of the status quo against HfA priorities however it is vague on specific progress made in 2007-2008. These weaknesses are at least partly due to the reporting format which may be inadequate for sub-regional entities as argued under 5.2.

3.6.2 Progress at sub-regional levels

All three (sub-) regions i.e. Pacific, South and South-East Asia have undertaken work to translate the HFA into regional strategies and frameworks: the Regional Framework for Action on Disasters adopted by the 12th Pacific Regional Disasters Managers Meeting in 2005 and the Disaster Management Framework adopted by the 14th SAARC Summit in 2007. The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) has so far been ratified by seven out of its 10 members and has therefore not yet been fully enacted. ECO has developed a biennial working plan on implementation of HFA for 2008-2009.

In the **Pacific region** some main accomplishments in 2007/ 2008 are briefly summarized below:

Concerted efforts have been undertaken by SOPAC to help member states develop national action plans on DRR. This has included the elaboration of guidelines that detail an eight step process for the development of these plans in 2007 and 2008. These guidelines have since been used to facilitate the successful establishment of national DRR plans in Cook Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu.

Under priority 2 SOPAC facilitated the development of simple hazard maps promoting basic GIS applications in eight countries. Importantly this initiative has fed into the analysis and mapping of tsunami run-up, tectonic and landslide prone areas in the Solomon Islands, the development of a flood early warning system for the Navua Delta in Fiji and the study of flood hazards in Samoa.

SOPAC confirmed its capacity in providing technical assistance to member states by supporting post-disaster hazard assessments following the Solomon Islands Tsunami of April 2007 and more recently the floods of Fiji and Solomon Islands in early Jan 2009.

With the formation of the Melanesian Volcanological Network (MVN) 2008 a cost effective and sustainable operational framework for volcanological monitoring that allows for the sharing of resources between the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea has been established. Another collective effort is the Pacific

³⁸ ECO did not submit an official report on HFA implementation, however information was provided on some key activities.

Hydrological Cycle and Observation System (HYCOS) which aims at the installation of a flood monitoring and forecasting system and at a common approach to drought forecasting in Pacific Island Countries. Yet another initiative, the Pacific Islands Climate Prediction Project targets National Meteorological Services (NMS) of each participating country (Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands) and will be completed in 2009. It aims at improving long-range forecasts for multi-sector applications and includes forecasts for severe weather.

In relation to 3 a regional information database (Pacific Disaster Net) in relation to Disaster Risk Management has been officially launched in September 2008 to assist member countries in the implementation of the Regional Framework for Action. The information system can be accessed at www.pacificdisaster.net. Furthermore SOPAC reports the application of cost-benefit analysis for disaster management and disaster risk reduction, namely in Fiji and Samoa.

Overall achievements reported by SOPAC are mostly related to priorities 2 and 3. Reporting under action point four and five is somewhat less prominent. In relation to the reduction of underlying risk factors this is clearly related to the need for further research into feasible and affordable risk management practices. For instance the World Bank is currently undertaking a study into the feasibility of a Catastrophe Risk Insurance Pool for the Pacific.

ASEAN's involvement in DRR is constrained by two main factors: limited technical capacity in DRR at the secretariat level as well as the fact that the AADMER has not entered into force yet. However progress has been made. In October 2007 a prototype Online Southeast Asia Disaster Inventory (OSADI) was launched as part of the ASEAN Disaster Information Sharing and Communication Network (ASEAN DISCNet). The online Southeast Asia Disaster Inventory (OSADI) is a web-based disaster database that compiles historical records of disasters in ASEAN Member Countries, hazard maps and other spatial disaster-related data.

The main focus of ASEAN has been on the strengthening of the regional disaster preparedness and response capacity. During the reporting period the ASEAN Standard Operating Procedures for the Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP) have been developed in 2007 and adopted in 2008. The SASOP sets out the standard operating procedures for ASEAN countries to prepare for and respond to disasters occurring in the region. The SASOP is based on the voluntary agreement that Member States shall earmark assets and capacities for regional relief and response missions. It details arrangements for ASEAN Member States with reference to: disaster preparedness, assessments and monitoring, emergency response procedures and the facilitation and utilization of military and civilian assets and capacities. In addition it provides a logistical framework for appealing for assistance in times of disaster and responding to such appeals. The procedure also include the establishment of an ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA Centre) to facilitate cooperation and co-ordination among the Parties, and with relevant United Nations and international organizations, in promoting regional collaboration.

As part of the ongoing development and implementation of ASEAN's response capacity, the ASEAN Emergency Rapid Assessment Team (ERAT) was deployed to Myanmar in the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in May 2008. The team assessed the situation and drafted recommendations for ASEAN's humanitarian assistance. Based on the experience from the Myanmar response and following the ASEAN Regional Disaster and Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX) 2008, recommendations for the continuous improvement of the SASOP have been made.

During the reporting period **SAARC** fully set up its Disaster Management Center (SDMC), defined a program of activities and budget. In so far as the unit is part of the sub-regional institutional DRR architecture this is an achievement under priority 1 of the HFA. SAARC's DMC helped to facilitate the drafting of seven roadmaps on selected priorities of the regional framework on disaster management. These include roadmaps dealing with the topics of community based Disaster Management; applications of science and technology for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; coastal and marine risk reduction in South Asia; climate change and disasters; mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in development and earthquake risk assessment and mitigation. With support from a fully established Disaster Management Centre these will move into implementation during the next reporting period. In 2008 SDMC has also been entrusted to develop a sub-regional Natural Disaster Rapid Response Mechanism (NDRRM) for South Asia.

ECO has developed a biennial working plan on implementation of HFA. During its 3rd Conference on DRM in 2008 in Tehran ECO has also approved 22 recommendations in line with 5 HFA priorities of Action. ECO's decision to establish a center on drought and flood early warning supports priority area 2 of the HFA.

4. Drivers of Progress

4.1 Multi-hazard approach

As to be expected the situation among responding countries varies considerably reflecting the different stages of overall DRR development and the varying level of resources available. However the validity of this approach seems commonly recognized and only one country reports no or little reliance on the multi hazard approach (while indicating policy commitment). Ten countries have undertaken integrated multi-hazard analysis though the scope of these studies ranges from comprehensive to sector- or area-specific. Some experience with taking multi hazard analyses and approaches down to the local level includes that local governments tend to find it easier to focus on one hazard (Philippines) while an integrated approach at the community level seems to encounter less difficulties (Bangladesh). The application of multi hazard risk assessments in policies and development planning is currently institutionalized in 4 countries (Australia, Islamic Republic of Iran, New Zealand, and Republic of Korea). In the Philippines the approach is currently tested and applied in 27 provinces within the framework of an externally funded Community Based Disaster Risk Management Project (READY).

4.2 Gender

Only New Zealand country reports a significant reliance on the adoption of gender perspectives on risk reduction mainly because gender is not seen as a significant determinant of vulnerability as equal opportunities are well established. Overall the record on gender, re-emphasized in the **Delhi Declaration**, is rather weak with four countries indicating no or minimal and the remaining 8 countries only partial reliance. There is acknowledgment of the issue and gender has been integrated into strategic and action plans and policy directives of 6 countries, yet very little is done about it. Some responses reflect a perspective of gender that concentrates on vulnerability rather than on the capacities and complementary roles women and men can play in risk reduction. It may be indicative of the significant cultural differences in the region that only one country, Vanuatu, emphasizes the role of women in DRR: **"The role of women in relief, rehabilitation and recovery is common knowledge in Vanuatu. Their roles as disseminators of traditional knowledge and food security is also acknowledged by the community [...]."**³⁹ Some countries report the lack of disaggregated data on gender and the impact of disasters that complicates the design of comprehensive strategies. Policy directives that promote the participation of women in DRR decision-making may encounter resistance at the local level, particularly in multi-cultural societies.

4.3 Capacity Strengthening

Capacity building, particularly at the local and community level as emphasized in the **Delhi Declaration**, is a subject that all country reports reflect upon as a central requirement for the implementation of the HFA. However, only Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea report dedicated budgets and systematic national and local initiatives to build DRR capacity on an ongoing basis. In the other countries efforts can be more sporadic and centre on the national level. Local level efforts can be dependent upon external funding and (I)NGOs that work through CBOs and link residents to resources. This dependency often leads to significant imbalances in coverage with funding and activities typically restricted to areas recently hit by major disasters, while highly vulnerable areas that may experience smaller-scale disasters on a much more frequent basis remain uncovered. It is important that local governments are sufficiently involved in community capacity building initiatives. National reports refer to capacity strengthening in line ministries as another necessity that can be difficult to obtain funding for.

³⁹ National Report Vanuatu, page 18.

4.4 Human Security and Social Equity

Poverty as an important determinant of vulnerability is not yet fully appreciated and many national legislators are yet to be convinced that risk reduction can help to alleviate poverty. Only Australia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and New Zealand report a systematic integration of social equity approaches into DRR and recovery activities. While the Marshall Islands, Sri Lanka and Indonesia indicate the inclusion of social equity perspectives into DRR policy and legislative frameworks implementation can be weak. As for the concept of Human Security different countries seemed to interpret it differently (relating it to either conflict or to environmental safety) and no clear picture emerges from the reports.

4.5 Engagement with non-governmental actors

Even though almost all countries (12) report - often considerable - involvement of non-governmental organizations in DRR activities only 5 countries (Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia) report dedicated legislation, formal agreements and MoUs with non-governmental actors. Genuine partnerships as called for by the **Delhi Declaration** are a rarity. Australia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka highlight the current lack of a common understanding of DRR and mutual roles between governmental and non-governmental agencies and the need to develop well-defined quality partnerships. Despite these limitations the engagement with non-governmental actors in Indonesia has gained considerable momentum and will be formalized by the creation of a National Platform. In Nepal the "DP net" emerges as a forum for government and (I)NGOs to exchange information, coordinate and share best practices.

While the Philippines report successful engagement with professional associations, and Sri Lanka has entered into agreements with mobile phone providers (in the context of its Early Warning System) linkages with the private sector seem to be overall less common than partnerships with (I)NGOs and CSOs. Corporate or social responsibility is still a new concept in many countries. Working with non-governmental actors requires clear selection criteria and well defined commitments as the following quote from Sri Lanka demonstrates: **"Prolong sustainability of some partnerships has become a difficult[y] as these have been created for the benefit of organizations rather than the communities they work for."** This also underlines the need to enhance the capabilities of communities including organizational development so communities can find their own "voice" and become less dependent upon intermediaries.

5. Conclusions and Outlook

5.1 Key Challenges and Gaps against HFA strategic goals

It is important to acknowledge that countries that responded to the on-line monitoring tool represent a sub-group of countries with above average interest, higher capacity in risk reduction and/ or access to technical assistance in preparing the national HFA progress reports⁴⁰. The distribution against income indicators (Gross National Income)⁴¹ may illustrate this point: four belong to high income countries, 6 to low middle income countries and 3 to low-income countries⁴². In this small sample the correlation between high levels of income and high levels of achievement is consistent, however the example of the Islamic Republic of Iran demonstrates that a long-term strategy and consistent levels of commitment may generate high levels of progress in countries with lower incomes. This also applies to Bangladesh that despite being a low income country reports levels of achievement that exceed the performance of several lower middle income countries.

The following highlights some key challenges in making progress on the three strategic HFA goals based on observations from national and sub-regional actors and the preceding analysis of their reports.

40 Out of 13 countries submitting reports summarized in this synthesis report 6 received such assistance from UNDP/ ADPC.

41 See World Bank Atlas Method, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/>

42 According to World Bank Definitions. Bangladesh, a low income country, also compares favourably with the more advanced middle income countries.

The more effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with a special emphasis on disaster prevention mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction

The shift from disaster preparedness and response to an emphasis on risk reduction and development represents a major departure in many countries of the Asia Pacific region. Translating the HFA into a strategy that fits the conditions in each country and giving it the necessary legislative and political support is not trivial. Some countries in the region have been working towards a more integrated risk reduction system and capacity for the past 30 years⁴³. Others have really only initiated this process 3 years ago, often in the aftermath of recent major disasters. There has been an impressive range of initiatives to design and enact new DRR policies, plans and legislation and these achievements should not be under-estimated. However policies and plans have only rarely been based upon comprehensive multi-hazard risk assessments and capacity assessments. Policies and plans are not backed up by adequate budgets and implementation is often dependent upon external support that tends to be selective. In addition stakeholder buy-in, particularly in line ministries and sectoral departments is not yet strong. Consequently there are so far only few examples of using existing national planning or development mechanisms to “mainstream” risk reduction. Local governments, who are, eventually, the government entities most critical to the progress of risk reduction often have no or little knowledge of the policy changes and/ or lack the instruments and capacity to translate them into local realities and enforce them. Only few countries have undertaken concerted efforts to discuss and consult DRR draft policies and legislation with key stakeholders and critically assess their enforceability. Last but not least resources outside the government are not sufficiently tapped into and cooperation with non-governmental actors is not based upon clear strategies and cooperation agreements. As rapidly increasing risk in the region threatens to outstrip the mitigating capacity there is need to translate the growing momentum for risk reduction into rapid action based on sound strategies.

The development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels in particular at the community level that can systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards

In many countries national efforts have so far focused upon the strengthening of national-level capacities often concentrating on the national “Disaster Management” or “DRR” agency. While this effort sometimes involves the institution and/ or strengthening of local satellite offices more needs to be done to build the capacity of a) local government actors and the community and b) of key sectors. This includes the understanding and commitment that such capacity building is not a one off exercise but an ongoing task that requires dedicated budgets. Furthermore multi-stakeholder platforms with clear tasks need to be created not only at national but also at the sub-national and local levels. Solid systems that would guarantee the dialogue, information exchange and strategic and operational coordination between different administrative levels and across key sectors are yet to emerge. This involves the need for better coordination and dialogue between government agencies and NGOs and CBOs. While post disaster recovery operations following the large scale disasters in the region have involved investment in public awareness campaigns and formal education programs their effectiveness has suffered from a lack of clear long-term strategies and harmonization of the various objectives pursued by key players. There is need for more targeted, hazard- and sector-specific inputs into curricula and training modules and for the identification and activation of local knowledge. In several countries this includes the requirement to address training of the informal sector, for example, in safe building techniques. With the exception of some community based DRR programs⁴⁴ learning about and applying risk reduction measures is too often pursued in separation. Last but not least the role of women in the prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response and recovery is largely ignored and their capacities remain under-utilized.

The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programs in the reconstruction of affected communities

There is as of yet an insufficient linkage between hazard monitoring, risk identification and analysis and disaster preparedness and response including Early Warning. Warnings that do not lead to an adequate response of the targeted communities are of little use. There is a need to design preparedness activities that are informed by both

43 The following sections concentrate on the gaps and weaknesses of those countries that report more modest HFA achievements as making progress in these, often high-risk, countries constitutes the main regional challenge.

44 Some, because most CBDRR programs tend to focus upon preparedness and response.

an understanding of risk and local capacities and of local knowledge including social factors that influence the decisions of communities to act upon hazard information and take precautionary measures. Such activities or programs are contingent upon local monitoring and risk management capacity which is still in short supply as national level capacity building efforts are rarely matched by sufficiently supported parallel efforts at local levels. Budgets for local planning and preparedness are highly inadequate in a majority of countries.

There is a need to intensify the exploration of alternative financial instruments to relieve governments and communities from the burdens of response and recovery including micro-finance, micro-insurance and reinsurance options. Contingency plans currently focus on response and do not cover the key areas of recovery and reconstruction leading to delayed and inefficient recovery processes where local actors tend to get sidelined. If not properly considered beforehand and backed up by regulations and standards the integration of risk reduction gets easily pushed aside in the aftermath of a disaster. Business continuity plans for key local government agencies and solid coordination structures for both response and recovery require more attention.

5.2 Reporting

The quality of overall reporting has improved from the first reporting cycle; however, a review of the submitted national reports reveals several challenges which need to be addressed. While some reports give good insights into selected core challenges in implementing the HFA at the national level, others are either too generic or list activities providing no or little analysis. Most reports are at least in places unclear about when specific progress was made i.e. whether or not it was achieved within the reporting period. Some countries tried to be very – one could argue too - comprehensive in highlighting the different organizational, institutional, legal and financial DRR mechanisms in place. A few countries have opted for a more minimalistic approach sharing little substantial information. Both approaches reflect a misunderstanding of the purpose of the reports.

Self-assessments are in places not sufficiently backed up by quantitative or qualitative evidence. They tend to be overly positive in some cases, in other cases too self-critical. Self-assessments also say little about the level of progress achieved during the reporting period. Countries that moved from level 1 “minor progress” to 3 “commitment achieved” will have made bigger breakthroughs than countries that report consistent level 5 “comprehensive” achievements from 2005/06 to 2007/08. There seems to be – particularly from a country perspective - too much concern with the absolute levels of achievement rather than with progress. This may be related to the formal character of the Global Platform events. Many countries do not want to look “bad” in comparison with their peers in such an international meeting. National Disaster Management Offices will also be concerned how low levels of achievement would reflect on them and their work at the national level.

Reporting on “cross cutting” issues is superficial which may partly reflect linguistic difficulties. Tracking DRR progress across sectors represents a particular challenge in most countries as this requires fairly advanced information management capabilities. Furthermore a large number of DRR initiatives are funded through grants and loans to national governments by bilateral and multi-lateral donors and /or through UN agencies and NGOs. Although these represent significant resources in some countries they are not always reported in National Reports.

The current reporting format includes redundancies between certain cross-cutting issues (“capacity strengthening”, “multi hazard approaches”, “social equity”) and preceding, closely related sections on HFA priorities. There are also redundancies between indicators under the five priority areas. Examples include: “policy and legal framework for DRR” under priority 1 and “strong policy, technical capacities for DRM” under priority 5; “National and local risk assessments” under priority 2 and “research methods and tools for risk assessment” under priority 3. A gap in the reporting format concerns priority 5 that does not treat the relationship between disaster planning, assessments and recovery. For sub-regional organizations with mostly coordinating mandates the reporting format is in places inadequate since such organizations will typically not become involved in sector-specific integration of DRR, for instance. In other words there is room for simplification of the reporting format and further improved guidelines.

The follow-up and monitoring of the HFA appear to be misinterpreted by some as a government mandate and participation of other sectors is misunderstood to be voluntary. Therefore the different perspectives of Civil Society actors such as academic institutions, NGOs, and local bodies are often not captured. UNISDR and UNDP assisted 8 countries with the HFA review process and reporting of which 6 have submitted national reports.

Upon average these reports reflect greater consideration of non-governmental partners.

Overall the sample provides an overview of key issues but is too small to reflect the full extent of challenges faced by the region in implementing the HFA. While the sub-regional progress reports do fill in some of the gaps, the limited number of national responses to the monitoring tool does raise the question how the reporting process may be further tailored to ease the burden of reporting and generate better coverage of the national, sub-regional and regional progress on reducing disaster risks. This includes further clarification and streamlining of the supportive role and operational responsibilities of regional and sub-regional organizations in the reporting process.

It is very hard to say whether the HFA reports are currently used for planning and programming. It is more likely that this would happen in countries that have undergone comprehensive and participatory HFA reviews. It is also more likely in countries that have already established the relationship and relevance of the HFA for national DRR priorities such as in National Plans of Action or other longer-term planning documents.

Recommendations to further improve reporting: The strengthening of sub-regional reporting or even peer reviews (within sub-regional or bi-lateral agreements) may provide alternatives to strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the overall reporting mechanism. In addition indicators should be “living” not static aids to measure progress. As more and more countries and sub-regional organizations develop national plans of action indicators should be adapted to reflect the specific priorities in these plans. This will avoid or at least minimize the work-load caused by the HFA reporting at the national level. Translating and generalizing the information provided in national reports into more general up-dates on progress could then be undertaken at sub-regional levels and should be an important support function.

Reviewing and reporting guidelines need to be further improved to address redundancies in the HFA reporting format and help countries determine levels of progress against clearer qualitative and quantitative indicators. The section “drivers of progress” requires specific guidelines to explain the meaning and relevance of some of the terminology that does not translate well into other languages. Revision of guidelines may include specifying roles of non government actors. Guidelines would be much more powerful if they were established together with national actors, maybe at a sub-regional level.

HFA progress reviews particularly in larger countries require more time and better planning.

Furthermore monitoring and reviewing progress in disaster risk reduction is not only a prerequisite for the HFA but for informed DRR planning and programming at the national level. As capacities tend to be weak in a number of countries generic strengthening and institutionalization of DRR monitoring and reporting (i.e. beyond HFA progress monitoring) may be considered at the national level. It is recommended to focus such efforts upon countries with a combination of high vulnerability, low capacity and high commitment to DRR.

5.3 Policy Recommendations

Overall there is need for **a smaller list of prioritized recommendations** and **more specific and time-bound commitments per country**. These can realistically only be generated at the national level.

The following five priority areas build upon the five HFA priorities but address core gaps and limitations as highlighted and analyzed in this report:

HFA Priority Area 1

Adapt risk reduction strategies and agree on national action plans that create a consensus amongst all key stakeholders on an **all of government risk reduction agenda covering national and local levels**

- o Ensure that risk reduction strategies and action plans involve a long-term capacity building plan matched by adequate budgets
- o Ensure plans and projects address not only preparedness and response but also underlying risk factors while prioritizing key sectors and high-risk areas (see next point)

- “Socialize” plans and initiate the development of follow-up risk reduction strategies and plans at sub-national level
- Promote adequate involvement of civil society and the private sector in the planning and implementation effort

HFA Priority Area 2

Continue to gradually strengthen **multi-hazard and risk monitoring capability** while emphasizing the creation of integrated, user-friendly information management systems that can inform the design and regular review of national and local risk reduction strategies and initiatives.

- Promote continuous multi-hazard risk assessment and monitoring activities at national, sub-national and local levels
- Intensify efforts to understand and assess the likely impacts of climate change in areas and sectors exposed to risk from climatic hazards
- Develop standardized tools and commonly accepted indicators for tracking progress in risk reduction and demonstrating the cost-benefit ratio of investment in this area
- Initiate the collection of disaggregated data on the gender-specific impact of disasters
- Promote assessment of local risk perception and processes that will help to capture and merge local knowledge of risk with “scientific” risk assessment information

HFA priority Area 3

Urge governments to create **comprehensive risk reduction programs in the educational sector**⁴⁵ through primary, secondary and higher education; informal education; as well as interventions to increase the structural resilience of (pre-) schools, colleges and universities.

- Promote flexible educational approaches that can incorporate local priorities, knowledge and that can build upon existing awareness and coping capacities
- Promote educational and public awareness activities that are followed up by action and evidence for the importance and relevance of risk reduction (i.e. drills, simulations, non-structural mitigation; strengthening the structural safety of key buildings etc.)
- Establish (continuous) training and skill development opportunities for risk reduction professionals
- Provide training and professional development opportunities for administrators and decision-makers at different levels
- Promote the inclusion of women in disaster related functions and/ or professions at all levels

HFA priority Area 4

- Initiate or accelerate the design of programs and initiatives to address underlying risk while prioritizing sector(s) and areas that are at high risk and/ or demonstrate particular interest in risk reduction and cooperation
 - Areas of particular interest for sectoral mainstreaming include poverty reduction and livelihood diversification; environmental and natural resource management; adaptation to local climate change impacts; infrastructure development; safe building and risk sensitive planning.
 - In particular analyze existing and emerging financial mechanisms for disaster reduction while identifying and developing the most adequate risk transfer and risk finance instruments

⁴⁵ Possibly as a sub-section of national action plans

- Generate public debate in different locations to test approaches and mechanisms and involve civil society and the private sector

HFA priority Area 5

- Ensure that **communities are at the centre of all aspects of preparedness, response and recovery strategies and planning**
 - Early Warning Systems in the region need to facilitate the dissemination of messages to the “last mile” as well as strengthen community preparedness to respond to messages
 - Establish a well-defined process and system for disaster and contingency planning that covers and reaches out to all administrative levels
 - Include recovery and reconstruction in local, sub-national and national contingency and disaster plans

Monitoring and Reporting on the HFA

- Develop **more specific benchmarks and indicators of progress at national levels** against national targets and **strengthen national and sub-regional monitoring and reporting capacity**



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