

# *Chapter 1*

## *Introduction*

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## 1.1 Context

A series of extraordinary catastrophes, triggered by natural hazards between 2003 and 2005, highlighted and reminded the world the degree to which disaster risk now underlies and threatens development. The Bam earthquake of December 2003 in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the heat wave that affected Western Europe in 2003, the devastation caused by Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne in Grenada and other Caribbean countries in September 2004, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami in December 2004, Hurricane Katrina in the United States of America in August 2005 and the Kashmir earthquake of October 2005, accounted for more than 350,000 deaths and USD 194 billion of economic damage<sup>9</sup>. However, these catastrophes were only the most visible manifestations of the ongoing unfolding of disaster risk.

Changes in disaster risk are influenced by underlying development factors such as urbanization, coupled with migration and increasing population densities, environmental change, globalization and poverty trends. Simultaneously, evidence continues to mount that global climate change is already modifying patterns of climatic hazards such as cyclone, drought and flood, with drastic implications on unfolding disaster risk.

The report on the economics of climate change produced by Nicholas Stern<sup>10</sup> in 2007, recent evidence presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)<sup>11</sup>, the United Nations Security Council's first ever debate on the impact of climate change on peace and human security, the G-8 summit of June 2007 which recognized inextricable links between poverty reduction and climate risks, and the upcoming 2007 Human Development Report on "Environment, Energy and Climate Change" together with the increasing number of climate anomalies documented by the media, have converged to focus political interest on the prevention of further climate

change and on the mitigation of its consequences, including increased disaster risk.

The January 2005 Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR II)<sup>12</sup> held in Kobe, Japan, a few weeks after the Indian Ocean tsunami, created a strong political impetus. 168 Member States adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (HFA). It calls for the pursuit of three strategic goals for the substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and impacts on the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries within the next 10 years, in conformity with the MDGs.

In view of the increasing political momentum, measures have been designed to build on existing mechanisms to strengthen the ISDR as a system of partnerships composed of Governments, the United Nations System, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international financial institutions, scientific and technical bodies, civil society and the private sector, to implement the Hyogo Framework.

Since 2005, many countries and organizations have already realigned their policies and strategies to directly respond to the expectations and directions of the Hyogo Framework. For example: Hyogo Framework focal points have been established in 111 Member States and five territories; national platforms for disaster reduction have been initiated in 39 countries<sup>13</sup>; ministerial-level regional agreements and strategies have been agreed, or are being developed in many regions and sub-regions, and specific risk reduction strategies or initiatives have been developed by international agencies, including the UNDP, World Bank, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO). International commitment of

<sup>9</sup> EM-DAT (Emergency Events Database): The OFDA/CRED (USAID Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance/ Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters) International Disaster Database - [www.em-dat.net](http://www.em-dat.net) - Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Catholic University of Louvain, Brussels, Belgium

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Stern, (2006), "The Economics of Climate Change", The Stern Review.

<sup>11</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 4th Assessment Report, (2007). <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

<sup>12</sup> World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 2005: <http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr/>

<sup>13</sup> Until July 2007, 39 national platforms for disaster risk reduction have been registered with the ISDR secretariat: Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, the Philippines, Russian Federation, Senegal, Seychelles, Spain, Switzerland, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, United States of America, Venezuela, Zambia. For further information on national platforms, see: <http://www.unisdr.org/guidelines-np-eng>



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development institutions is exemplified by the launch of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)<sup>14</sup> by the World Bank in 2006.

The ISDR System aims to identify clear roles and responsibilities, and improve interaction among the various entities of the strengthened system. The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which met in Geneva for the first time on 5-7 June 2007, will be the principal global forum of the strengthened ISDR System with functions that include sharing of experiences in risk reduction practices, advocacy, reporting progress, and identifying gaps and challenges for the ISDR System. As the strengthening of the ISDR System progresses, regional platforms will fulfil similar functions at regional and sub-regional levels. National platforms will assist in bringing together relevant partners in risk prone countries, while thematic platforms will compile global knowledge and “good practices” to ensure effective support to countries and regions. The ISDR

secretariat will service the ISDR System in areas of policy coordination, advocacy, knowledge and information exchange, and joint work planning.

It is in this context of increasing political commitment to disaster risk reduction that the ISDR secretariat has prepared the *Disaster Risk Reduction: 2007 Global Review*. This short review provides an indicative statement on current trends and patterns in global disaster risk and on the progress being made by countries to reduce risk. It is meant to provide a bridge between the deliberations of WCDR II and the launch of the ISDR System’s first biennial global assessment report on disaster risk reduction in 2009.

The 2007 Global Review contains two principal sections. The first section – through Chapter 2, presents an interpretation of contemporary patterns and trends in global disaster risk derived from analysis of data and information in recent global and regional reports<sup>15</sup> produced by partners of the Global

<sup>14</sup> For more information on the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery: <http://www.worldbank.org/hazards/gfdr>

<sup>15</sup> UNDP, World Bank, IDB, CRED, UNEP/GRID-Europe; UN/ISDR, op. cit.

Risk Identification Programme (GRIP)<sup>16</sup> and from previous reviews and analyses<sup>17</sup>. A number of broad risk scenarios are identified and discussed, including:

- The risk of catastrophic disasters in intensive risk hotspots, where people and economic activities are heavily concentrated in areas exposed to occasional or frequent large-scale climatic<sup>18</sup> and geological hazard events with chronic/pervasive impacts; and
- The risk of low-intensity asset loss and livelihood disruption over extensive areas, where people and economic activities are exposed to episodic and highly localized, principally climatic hazard events.

While recognizing the importance of environmental degradation, urbanization patterns, poverty spirals, increasing population densities and economic globalization as key 'drivers' of disaster risk, the section goes on to examine some of the implications of global climate change on disaster risk, drawing upon the findings of recent international reports.<sup>19</sup> The review also briefly draws attention to potential impacts of such emerging risk trends on human well-being, and poverty indicators as determined by the MDGs. The 2009 biennial global assessment report will examine this disaster-poverty interface in more detail, with a particular emphasis on changing livelihood options that many vulnerable communities across the world will have to cope with over the next decade.

The second section – through Chapter 3, presents evidence of global risk reduction trends and national

and regional progress on reducing disaster risk. It is an analysis based on reports of progress in implementing the Hyogo Framework prepared by Member States<sup>20</sup> and on recent regional reviews carried out by the ISDR secretariat in cooperation with the World Bank and regional partners in the Pacific, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Europe and Middle East and North Africa<sup>21</sup>. This section examines the key areas of focus in reducing risks as reported by national authorities. The trends captured, point us to interesting conclusions about where progress still needs to be made in contribution to the strategic goals of the Hyogo Framework.

Chapter 4 – as the concluding chapter, summarises each of the broad disaster risk scenarios identified and characterized in the previous chapters, complemented by analysis of national progress made in HFA implementation, and challenges encountered in the process. The conclusion also provides additional analysis on some key cross-cutting themes which were not explicitly reported by national authorities. Such themes include gender, capacity development, mainstreaming risk reduction, human security and a social equity approach in post-disaster recovery — framed within the context of achieving the MDGs. In particular, the imperative to address disaster risks in relation to livelihood strategies and poverty trends is presented as an important point for further analysis and implementation in risk reduction strategies.

<sup>16</sup> Global Risk Identification Programme (GRIP): [www.grip.net](http://www.grip.net)

<sup>17</sup> UNDP/BCPR, Disaster Reduction Unit, (2004), *Visions of Risk: A Review of International Indicators of Disaster Risk and its Management*; A Report for the ISDR Inter-Agency Task force on Disaster Reduction Working Group 3: Risk, Vulnerability and Disaster Impact Assessment, Ed. Mark Pelling.

<sup>18</sup> In the context of this Review, the terms 'climatic' and 'geological' have been used to denominate two broad categories of hazard and are not meant to represent strict scientific categories. All weather-related events such as floods, cyclones, storms, wild-fires, etc., have been grouped as 'climatic' hazard, together with drought, which is a climatic phenomenon. Earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions have similarly been grouped as 'geological'. Landslides, avalanches, mudslides, etc., are often associated with a mix of geological and weather-related factors, but for the purposes of this report have been included within 'climatic' hazards.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Stern, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> See Annex 5 (List of Reports Received) for list of country reports

<sup>21</sup> SOPAC; UN/ISDR Africa Regional Unit, World Bank; UN/ISDR Latin America and Caribbean; UN/ISDR, ADPC, ADRC; UN/ISDR, DKKV; UN/ISDR, World Bank, *op. cit.*



## 1.2 Methodological Challenges and Gaps

It is important to state from the outset that the first section of the Review contains an interpretation of global disaster risk trends which is indicative rather than comprehensive. The Review focuses only on observable trends and patterns from already published reports; it does not offer new data on hazards, vulnerabilities and emerging risks, or necessarily reflect the large number of risk identification studies and projects carried out by ISDR System partners at regional, national and local levels. Given the global scale of the analysis, it does not provide guidance on the characteristics of disaster risk in specific countries, localities or sectors.

The second section of the review specifically analyses the progress reported by national authorities across countries. Due to time constraints, a system-wide reporting mechanism on progress made in reducing disaster risk could not be organized. To which extent, the Review does not fully reflect the considerable efforts or different perspectives of other ISDR System partners, especially NGOs, academic institutions, and regional and local bodies, except where these are reported by national authorities. Insights into progress made on key 'cross-cutting' issues, such as gender equity, social justice and governance are highlighted

where these have been mentioned in national reports. Overall, such issues are however not prominently featured in the national reporting. Similarly, while the Review notes the conclusions of thematic reports submitted on early warning, El Niño, climate change, wildland fire, recovery and knowledge and education by six ISDR System partners<sup>22</sup>, it does not overview global progress in any of these themes.

These methodological limitations can be viewed as an opportunity for honest reflection. The Review provides key insights into how disaster risk reduction is currently conceived and practiced by national authorities undertaking implementation of the Hyogo Framework's priorities. Understanding the current status of national disaster reduction practice is an essential preliminary to realigning system-wide efforts to achieve the Hyogo Framework strategic goals.

In acknowledging the reporting challenges and gaps encountered by this review process, upcoming biennial global assessment reports will systematize reporting on Hyogo Framework outcomes with a view to providing sound coverage of national, regional and global realities on progress made with reducing disaster risks by ISDR System-wide partners.



<sup>22</sup> See Annex 5 (List of Reports Received)