

**SUMMARY OF MID-TERM REVIEW WORKSHOP:  
1ST MEETING OF THE ISDR ASIA PARTNERSHIP (IAP) 2010,  
BANGKOK, THAILAND**

Date: 24 March 2010

The ISDR Asia Partnership (IAP) Meeting was convened to address progress, shortcomings and potential improvements of the Hyogo Framework for Action as part of the Mid-Term Review coordinated by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The meeting, which took place at Amari Watergate Hotel in Bangkok on 24 March 2010, saw the presence of representatives from multiple national ministries, inter-governmental organizations, donor agencies, and other non-governmental organizations.

Overall the meeting sought new perspectives and insights through smaller group discussions with specific thematic focuses: participants were in fact divided into three groups and different sets of questions were assigned to them. The following is a summary of discussions of the three groups.

Summary of the Workshop Discussions

**Group 1** → *Question 1: In your experience has the HFA been instrumental over the past five years in reducing disaster losses in communities and countries in country X/region Y? Question 1.1: What are the three most important achievements that contributed to reducing losses through the HFA implementation in country X/region Y? Question 1.2: What are the three most important elements that prevented the HFA from achieving its intended outcome i.e. the reduction of disaster losses? Question 2: How has the HFA informed decision making or priority setting in country X/region Y? Question 3: What elements of the HFA have worked less well in reducing disaster risk in country X/region Y? Question 3.1: What were the three most critical factors that prevented effectiveness in those areas? Question 3.2: What are the specific constraints to start or increase investments in disaster risk reduction in country X/region Y?*

Participants agreed that the HFA had been instrumental in raising DRR awareness, and stressed that it triggered capacity building at the community level and therefore reduced disaster vulnerabilities in several countries. In addition, they also reported that the development of multi-hazard early warning systems had contributed to the reduction of damages and losses, and highlighted that the HFA had informed - through specific campaigns, national platforms, and monitoring processes - governments' decision making and priority setting mechanisms. On the negative side, some reiterated that disaster management approaches still tended to prevail over disaster risk reduction strategies; moreover, others stressed the necessity to move away from separate DRR programmes towards a more integrated and comprehensive approach to risk sensitive development. In this context, participants identified the development of national platforms as an important mechanism to favour HFA implementation and the integration of DRR practices.

Overall, the discussion highlighted that progress in HFA implementation was visible at the national level, but not so much at the local level. It was stressed that the strategies, policies and laws developed in the former context often did not impact on the latter, as sensitive communities still displayed multiple implementation gaps. As such, some pointed out that the inability to accurately measure the impact and effectiveness of the HFA in promoting DRR affected cost-benefit analysis, and therefore advocated for increased research on the topic. On another note, some comments reiterated the need to streamline DRR into socio-economic development, in order to favor resources allocation for the implementation of the HFA. Participants in fact identified general lack of resources as a major barrier militating against the success of the HFA, and therefore advocated for the integration of DRR into the national planning and budgetary processes. In this context, it

was stressed that DRR had to be considered as investment and not as expenditure. At last, some emphasized the importance of improving information-sharing mechanisms in order to improve the technical capacities of different countries, and highlighted that international organizations had to play a pivotal role in such process.

**Group 2** → *Question 4: In your experience, does the HFA sufficiently encourage community participation and the utilization of local knowledge to reduce disaster risk? I.e. in country X/region Y, have communities and local authorities been empowered and is local knowledge and community action being useful/tapped into to manage and reduce disaster risk? If so, how? If not, why not? Question 5: In your experience is there in country X/region Y a culture of safety and resilience at the level of the general public? Do people in country X/region Y seek information about land safety, building structures, etc. prior to building or purchasing properties? Do they expect politicians to have national and local disaster risk reduction plans in place? Do they acquire, or are required by law to acquire, insurance for their properties, crops and livelihoods if they live in disaster prone areas? Are they fully informed, trained if necessary, and equipped about what needs to be done in case of a disaster? Question 6: How can implementation of HFA Priority Action 4, reducing the underlying risk factors, be strengthened?*

Participants started the discussion by highlighting that the HFA had strongly encouraged the use of indigenous knowledge and practices to reduce disaster risk. In particular, they reiterated that multi-stakeholders platforms allowed for local knowledge to be shared and put to use; nevertheless, some stressed that it was necessary to increase the presence of focal points within communities so to increase participation at the local level. On another note, participants agreed that different geographical locations displayed different cultures of safety, yet as a whole stressed the importance of ensuring that the “lessons from the past” were not forgotten. As such, they reiterated the importance of promoting initiatives such as remembrance days for catastrophic events. Indeed, some stated that well too often awareness and a culture of safety was promoted too late, merely in response to disasters rather than a-priori as part of an efficient DRR strategy.

Furthermore, some comments highlighted that in order to strengthen the implementation of HFA Priority Action 4 (reducing the underlying risk factors) it was necessary to promote cost-benefit analysis to address more appropriately long-term risk factors. Similarly, others stressed the need for greater research on best practices and technologies so to support policy-makers with better information. At last, the group reiterated the need to create platforms to encourage collaboration between governments and civil societies, and overall to promote clear methodological guidance at the international level.

**Group 3** → *Question 7: What are the three most important things now that country X/region Y would benefit from, from the international community, in furthering the implementation of the HFA at the national and local level? Question 7.1: What adjustments, if any, would be helpful in the international structures of disaster risk reduction to help accelerate the implementation of the HFA? Question 7.2: What kind of financial instruments, as well as monitoring mechanisms, would be helpful in support of DRR action at the national, local and community level?*

Again, participants reported that different regions and countries were at various stages of development with respect to DRR arrangements. They recommended for example to continue raising DRR awareness to promote the effective use of available resources. Moreover, national platforms were identified as important mechanisms supporting HFA implementation and collaboration between countries and the wider international community; nevertheless, it was stressed that newly established platforms required enhanced assistance to fulfil such functions. On another note, some stated that funding was required at the national level in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of DRR interventions, move away from separate DRR programmes towards a more integrated approach to risk sensitive development, and also develop tools and technologies. Participants also stressed to promote community level implementation it was

necessary to support the mapping of local dimensions of risks, establish effective two-way communication channels between the local and national level, build the capacity of local authorities, communities and civil societies, and strengthen participatory planning approaches.

Moreover, some reiterated that the UN had played an important role in helping to overcome existing bottlenecks in HFA implementation, but also highlighted that it needed to advocate more strongly for an integrated approach to policies and programmes related to DRR, MDG and CCA, as this would enable pooling of resources at the country level. In conclusion, the group identified a number of useful tools and instruments which needed to be further promoted to increase investments in DRR. These included the integration of DRR into national planning and budgetary processes, the pursuit of a 'no regrets' approach limiting the disaster risk of key development investments rather than promoting separate DRR initiatives/programmes, as well as the conduct of disaster impact assessments for all donor-supported and government-supported development programmes.

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