

Preparing for AMCDRR: A Strategic Agenda



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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue of Southasiadisasters.net is titled, 'Preparing for AMCDRR: A Strategic Agenda.' It highlights the importance of India in preparing itself for hosting the First Asian Ministerial Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction in November 2016 after the advent of the Sendai Framework.

The various aspects highlighted in this issue serve to depict the manner in which different countries, including India, have addressed and mitigated different disasters in the past and the lessons learned. The aim of this issue is to bring innovative ideas to AMCDRR in order to accelerate regional implementation and monitoring. By active hosting of AMCDRR India will renew its commitment to the Sendai Framework and pursue a resilient and sustainable future for all citizens. ■

- AIDMI Team

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Miyamoto's Role in Implementing SFDRR in Asia

Miyamoto International's team of earthquake structural engineers arrived in Nepal three days after the first devastating earthquake on April 25, 2015. In those first days of assisting the newly crippled nation, we also met a resilient and gracious people committed to recovery and *building back better*.

For every damaged building we assessed, we saw an opportunity to engage the private sector to adopt international standards for engineering and construction using the principles in SFDRR, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The shift from disaster management to disaster risk management that occurred when 25 heads of state, 187 United Nations member nations and more than 500 organizations adopted SFDRR in March 2015 is a major step toward saving lives and protecting economies; this is precisely the mission of Miyamoto International.

Elsewhere in Asia, Miyamoto was already engaged in the spirit of SFDRR through Miyamoto India. Miyamoto India's Sandeep Shah led successful efforts in India to educate the public on the importance of resiliency through changes in the law that require all major buildings prominently display the earthquake-resistance level of their buildings. The Supreme Court passed the law after Shah argued in court that many buildings in this high-seismic zone would not withstand large earthquakes and that the government and national disaster authorities had failed to educate the public.

In Nepal, our services most related to SFDRR include identifying safe and unsafe buildings, implementing international construction and

engineering standards, reconstructing and retrofitting schools and working with the government and international agencies. One of the things we are known for is knowledge transfer (capacity building), or "teaching a person to fish" rather than doing it for them.

As is the case in much of the world, unreinforced masonry construction with mud mortar performed poorly in the Nepal Earthquake. In rural settings – where traditional homes are made of stone, mud and wood – more than 600,000 homes were destroyed and, in some cases, whole villages are gone. Many of the newer high-rise buildings in Kathmandu also suffered crippling damage; Miyamoto International has assessed more than 30 of these to date and is retrofitting some of them. The long-period motion caused by the soft ancient lake bed beneath the city created destructive resonance in these tall structures. Schools also performed poorly as they often do, sadly, all over the world, but thankfully schools were closed when the earthquake struck on a Saturday. More than 32,000 classrooms were destroyed.

But we also saw some good news as we went about our assessments. Like some of its neighboring countries, Nepal has been instituting seismic standards for more than a decade – and it shows. One such example is a multi-story housing complex that was heavily damaged, but did not collapse, saving the lives of its many residents. At some building sites, I saw the use of "ductile details," a phrase that captures the correct way to secure rebar to concrete columns. Ductile details are a sacred thing. It's the difference between a building holding together or not.

Continuing to teach contractors and the building trades in Nepal and around the world why those details matter is key. What looks like a small thing actually prevents buildings from failing. Avoiding devastating outcomes requires education in innovative techniques to rebuild stronger than what was there before – to move toward earthquake-resilient communities rather than just responding to earthquake disaster. People in damaged areas appreciate when engineers are open and transparent about the conditions of their homes and buildings. We explain what needs to be done to fix things, and understand that their lives and investments are at stake. The responsibility is great, but as a profession, we can make a difference and save lives.

That said, even the best built buildings the Miyamoto International team has seen in Nepal are built to only minimum code standards, which is true in most of the world. What people don't realize is code protects life safety only – it does not ensure that buildings are resilient and will be repairable or operational after a large earthquake. For just a fraction more, building owners can use "high-performance engineering" techniques that strengthen buildings so they can be immediately occupied after large earthquakes.

To help the country recover and continue to implement SFDRR, we recently opened a permanent office in Nepal with a local engineering partner while our nonprofit, Miyamoto Global Disaster Relief, is

forming partnerships to repair damaged village schools. Services available in the Kathmandu office include structural assessments, urban and rural reconstruction, retrofits, structural design for new construction and quality control and construction supervision.

We are a global earthquake and structural engineering company committed to saving lives and positively impacting economies. This is directly in line with SFDRR's seven goals to reduce risks of loss of life, livelihoods and critical infrastructure through enhanced national planning and international cooperation. ■

- Dr. H. Kit Miyamoto,

Structural Engineer, President & CEO,
Miyamoto International, Inc., USA

GENDER AND DRR

Women and Disaster

Odisha is a multi disaster prone state and expose to flood, cyclone, earthquake and droughts. The frequency and the severity of the disaster increased day to day. Any disaster impacts the women and men differently even it impact different sector differently. The women are very vulnerable in any disaster because of the social responsibility, vulnerabilities, capabilities and opportunities for adjustment unequal assets and power relation. Their physical abilities also make them vulnerable to be different situation.

So to overcome the devastating impact of disaster the real participation of women in all level like planning to implementation should be highly encouraged. The following lines are the voices of women of Odisha for a dignified life and a resilient community.

- Ensuring involvement of women in intensive participatory planning exercise (ippe - 2) at Gram Panchayat level.
- Women Institution building and strengthening.

- Planning for individual household to strengthen the livelihood with existing resources and innovation.
- Recovery human resources and reconstruction of natural resources within the Gram Panchayat and focusing on its productive uses through existing women federation.
- Micro entrepreneurship development at household level and group level for women and creation of opportunities for market access.
- Micro level assets insurance in each and every house hold.
- Interface of different stake holders with the women federation leader for planning the developmental activities.
- Mitigation and adoption plan of DRR should be included in every and each developmental programme of the government.
- Documentation of community level best practices of adoption and mitigation in order to upscale positive experiences and helping others.
- Need to adopt innovative system techniques and technology to strengthen disaster and development initiative.

- Blending the indigenous and traditional knowledge and modern technology for innovation and better acceptance with excellent benefit to the stakeholders.
- Information of any disaster at their door step.
- Special health care unit at every village level for women and adult cent girl.
- Separate care unit at flood shelter for women and children during the disaster.
- Supply of balance food during disaster focusing on pregnant women, lactating mother and old and differently able women.
- Complaint and grievance mechanism and its redressal measures for women issues and problems should be established and ensured.
- Better preparedness measures should be established at community and individual level in every and each village. (community and individual kitchen)
- Ensuring the regular presence of girl student in the school after any disaster to control the drop out. ■

- Binapani Mishra, Secretary, Odisha, India

Building Resilient Futures

The Sixth International Conference of the International Society for Integrated Disaster Risk Management (IDRIM) was co-hosted by the Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC, India) and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA, Austria) at the SCOPE Complex, New Delhi, October 28–30, 2015. More than 200 participants – researchers, academics, development practitioners, and government officers – from 20 plus countries enthusiastically participated in plenaries and parallel sessions on topics ranging from early warning and forecasting systems to the involvement of schools and key stakeholders in disaster risk reduction. Coming in the aftermath of the Nepal earthquakes in April and May 2015, and the tremors felt in Delhi by the October 26 earthquake in western Afghanistan, it was not surprising that the uppermost question in most people's mind was what have we learned from past disasters that have helped us mitigate risks and reduce the loss of lives and livelihoods? While there are no easy answers, it is clear that some countries, such as Bangladesh, have strengthened their disaster management plans and risk reduction strategies and this has certainly minimized the loss of lives in recent disasters.

So what has worked? Some key take away messages from the several learned people who spoke:

1. Investing in communities is critical and this means understanding the heterogeneity and complexity of terms such as community participation, looking deeper at social exclusion and gender inequality to ensure that vulnerable individuals and



households are the first charge in any community-level disaster risk mitigation plan or disaster management committee.

2. Given the politics behind building codes, implementing simple technical innovations such as structural reinforcements in buildings over six storeys, should be non-negotiable.
3. Investing in interdisciplinary research to better understand the epidemiology of disasters and extreme events—the how and why of what happened, lessons learned and best practices for the future. Building institutional collaboration particularly across borders and geographies is as important as interdisciplinary, good data, and sound methodologies.
4. Investing in women, bringing a stronger gender equity lens to disaster risk management cannot but be overstated—yet it remains marginalised to scientific discourse and practice. Mainstreaming sexual and reproductive health needs in emergency and humanitarian responses, particularly crucial when disasters overlay ongoing

conflicts, is challenging. Cultural sensitivity, working with youth and male elders, providing access to basic services (e.g. sanitation) and safe spaces for women to articulate voice are all critical to reducing the risk of sexual violence and trafficking.

5. Effective, functioning local institutions whether elected, formal or informal, community based organisations play a key role in ensuring accountability, transparency and good governance. Strong leaders, women and men need to be nurtured and to have access to resources, timely information and skills to build capacities across the board and not just for themselves.
6. Given the high and escalating costs of disaster risks—\$314 billion annually—investing in risk reduction is not only critical, it requires the engagement of the private sector, whether in insurance, resilient infrastructure, communications and information technologies or other areas. ■

– Sara Ahmed,

Member, TIFAC-IDRIM 2015
Organising Committee, India

Disaster Risk Reduction and Horticulture in Uzbekistan

Agriculture in Central Asia is concentrated on cultivation of cotton, cereals, rice, potatoes, vegetables, fruits, grapes, silk cocoons, caraculs and wool.

During the USSR time, Uzbekistan was the dominant cotton producer in from all the 15 USSR member states. Since then, water and land resources have been used excessively which caused several problems.

The impacts of cotton production on the environment are easily visible and have different faces. On the one hand there are effects of water depletion, on the other hand the effects on water quality. The Aral Sea is an example of the effects of water abstractions for irrigation from the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, the rivers which feed the Aral Sea, to grow cotton in the desert.

Cotton production has resulted in three main negative effects:

- Consumes large amounts of water in furrow irrigation structure requires more labor force due to the lack of the financial capacity of farmers pollutes water and the environment because of mixing used field water full with chemicals and fertilizers with river or drinkable underground water.
- A backdrop to this swiftly deteriorating ecosystem is the struggle to retain the once ample supply of vegetation being grown in the region. The thirstiest of the crops are predictably cotton and rice. The first of which, cotton, still puts Uzbekistan as second cotton exporter in the world.

- After the independence, for a decade cotton and wheat have been the main cash crops for Uzbekistan.

In addition to cotton, fruit and vegetable from Uzbekistan were quite popular among the former USSR member states.

I believe our country started to realize that we can't keep torturing our land and water resources with cotton production. About 5 years ago, there has been diversification of agrarian sector to reduce the cotton fields and support the expansion of horticulture sector development.

Just during the past 4-5 years, more than 1000 hectare new high density orchards have been planted. About 60% of these orchards are apple orchards.

Uzbekistan now supporting and implanting different water saving technologies such as drip irrigation system that help to reduce the amount of water consumed and wasted.

Shifting the cash crops from cotton and wheat to fruit and vegetable sector already showing its results.

Our company GIZ also made its contribution to the horticulture development in Uzbekistan, as part of the program "Support to sustainable economic development in selected regions of Uzbekistan". ■

- Umidjon Sayfudinov,

Horticulture Specialist, Project Support to sustainable economic development in selected regions of Uzbekistan, Deutsche Gesellschaft für International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Uzbekistan



Demonstrate how to successfully establish intensive orchards. Photo: GIZ.

GBV and Disasters – South Asia Context

Humanitarian workers, like health and other development practitioners continue to face a difficult challenge in addressing gender based violence (GBV). Gender based violence takes many forms – domestic violence, early marriage, trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and many other localised forms of GBV – and is surrounded by taboos and personal opinions that keep this humanitarian challenge Unseen and Unheard.

The World Health Organisation, for example, has called gender based violence one of the most pressing and prevalent public health concerns of our age. Health organisations have shown that around the world GBV is the leading cause of premature death and of acquired disability for women aged 18–40. Every 10 minutes an adolescent girl is killed because of it. And yet, humanitarian workers and development practitioners continue to face obstacles such as: it is not my agency's mandate, we do

not have enough specialisation or resources, or it is too hard to deal with in the hurry of an emergency. These myths though are addressed by new and mounting evidence that *global rates of GBV are a humanitarian emergency of themselves*, and also that all humanitarian actors have international and local obligations to uphold international protection principles. More evidence still shows that it is not burdensome (in time or resources) to factor in prevention, or to factor referral and support for survivors of GBV into responses. More evidence still, shows that the prevalence and risk GBV actually increases in times of emergency, and in their aftermath. This begs the question of how to most appropriately mitigate these risks and uphold Do No Harm norms.

Perhaps a reason for some disbelief at the shocking connections between disasters and GBV is the fact that the study of gender-based violence (GBV) has been a major feature of

conflict focused humanitarian relief. In contrast, there has been significantly less discussion about the extent to which it occurs in the context of disasters.

In South Asia, one in every two women experience violence in her daily life. 60% of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) in Bangladesh had been physically and sexually abused in their life times (ICDDR,B), 2/3rd of the women never talked about their experience or sought formal services (ICDDR,B). In Pakistan, 80% of women experience violence within their homes. It is estimated more than 15,000 women in India suffer from dowry related violence every year (*Towards Ending Violence against Women in South Asia*, OXFAM). While violence against women varies in its nature and manifestation, the challenges to change existing social and individual attitudes that accept gender based violence as 'normal' needs to be addressed. There needs to be greater coherence to bring together the diverse local, national, regional and international efforts working towards ending violence against women.

In 2015, the International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) conducted 9 country studies to fill this gap in knowledge called Unseen Unheard. One country of focus for this study is Bangladesh, and looked into three questions: the characteristics of GBV in recent disasters in the country, whether and how policy frameworks can be adapted to address GBV in disaster risk management, and lastly what role local actors played or could play in addressing GBV in disasters and what support they need. The



Women Firefighters, Myanmar Red Cross. (C) Mandy George, IFRC.

Bangladesh country report will be released in 2016 and found that people affected by small scale and large scale disasters in Bangladesh experienced continued and some new forms of GBV after disasters therefore showing a correlation between a disaster and exacerbating gender equalities (for it is gender in equality that is recognised as the root cause of gender based violence). The research further demonstrates important areas for disaster risk reduction and community engagement as part of risk management (as well as for responders) such as: displacement can increase incidences of GBV, both in initial temporary shelters and later when displacement becomes protracted; Disasters cause impoverishment which may lead people to adopt negative coping mechanisms, including early marriage; little data on trafficking was found although anecdotal reports were made.

More deeply and for cooperation and joint work, the research finds that in Bangladesh, given the stigma and shame associated with GBV, statistics on its incidence are always

problematic and this seems to hold in disaster situations as well. But in addition, those responding to disasters are not aware of the possible occurrence of GBV in disasters and are neither looking for it nor preparing for it. At the same time the lack of concrete data on its prevalence contributes to a lack of awareness.

This important new research has implications for us as practitioners: we need to consistently uphold protection principles and be aware of GBV risks, we need to work with government agencies that are responsible for upholding both national disaster management frameworks and the national GBV legislations at the same time to ensure that there are continued legal, health and support services available in disasters, and lastly we must always prioritise holistic care for the survivors of such violence as humanitarians, based solely on prevalence evidence and our humanitarian principles.

At the National Conference: Role of Bangladesh Red Crescent in Disaster Management (30 November - 1

December 2015) both the Bangladesh Ministry of Disaster Management and Response and Bangladesh Red Crescent issued a Dhaka Declaration collectively agreed to "*Enhance collaboration between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and other key local stakeholders, including women's networks, on gender based violence and disasters, including through working together to ensure effective local implementation (at the community level) of legal frameworks and/or other mechanisms on prevention and response on sexual and gender based violence in disasters, including through educational institutions, youth networks and health services.*"

We look forward to working with all agencies to achieve these outcomes. ■

- **May Maloney and Sayeeda Farhana, IFRC**

Weblinks:

- Unseen Unheard: Gender Based Violence in Disasters - Global Study (IFRC, 2015)
- Dhaka Declaration
- Sexual and Gender Based Violence: Joint Action for Prevention and Response, Resolution of the 31st IFRC, 8-10 December 2015.

DISASTER RISK GOVERNANCE

Why the Start Network Matters Now to Asia

Introduction

Disaster-affected communities are faced with both an unprecedented opportunity and challenge in the form of the World Humanitarian Summit this year. There are clearly inherent opportunities through the potential for greater funding and the ability to influence the humanitarian machinery led by the UN bodies to be more agile and locally-led. Nevertheless, this is also a political event that is faced with competing

messages. On the one hand the UN is advocating for greater funding to be channeled through their systems for greater consolidation while calls from NGOs, INGOs and national governments from the Global South emphasise the need for greater national and sub-national autonomy in decision-making on finances and operations for humanitarian relief. Within these competing messages sits the Start Network.



As a global experiment that demonstrates how humanitarian relief can draw on the experience of traditional (NGOs, INGOs, CBOs, Governments, IGOs etc.) and non-traditional (Multinationals, Insurance

market, venture capital, etc.) actors to more effectively respond to the needs of crisis-affected communities, the Start Network offers as unprecedented an opportunity as the Summit right now in re-energising the whole humanitarian framework. This article highlights the approaches that the Start Network is taking to demonstrate - not theorise - how humanitarian relief can have greater impact if we think of transformation rather than incremental change. These approaches are significantly pertinent to humanitarian actors in Asia as they offer practical insight into how systems and processes can respond to the needs of affected communities where local, sub-national, national and international all have their roles to play with equal influence on the system.

Local action in practice, not only theory: Humanitarian Finance and Preparedness

Mihir R. Bhatt of the AIDMI asked in an open letter to the Start Network: *How often does the international humanitarian system invite and allow local NGOs to contribute to global debates on how to develop and implement new strategies?*¹ The Start Network has some answers. The Start Fund - a wholly NGO/INGO-owned multi-donor pooled fund - has been actively supporting local decision-making in its governance processes, which influences fund-allocation and project-selection. We have seen remarkable changes in the quality of projects (reaching a larger number of communities than initially planned through critical, peer feedback) and the speed of decision-making as a result of early efforts in Nigeria, in 2015. This model of decentralised decision-making is being actively rolled out in Latin America, Africa

and Asia - demonstrating how local actors are not only invited to sit at the table but are given power to make decisions that affect the lives of those they support. This is not the whole picture for Start. Just as importantly, through the Start Engage programme, we work with actors from different levels in the humanitarian system to support their needs in order to make decisions by offering appropriate tools and systems (for example the ALERT project supports a range of actors, including national NGOs on preparedness) and opportunities to collaborate to learn from each other - to be prepared to respond. The approach taken by Start Engage directly engages with the reality that "disasters are usually local phenomena, and the local governments along with the communities are the first responders. However, large-scale disasters require national or international efforts [and] it is important to have a specific link in terms of policy, plan, and action at the national, [international] and local level" (ADB, 2015, pp 15).² In Asia, the above experience is clear and the Start

Start Network is trying to demonstrate – not theorise – how humanitarian relief can have greater impact if we think of transformation rather than incremental change.

Network actively recognises and responds to this reality.

Conceiving of a wider set of Actors: the Private Sector

In Asia, Private Capital Markets and Insurance Markets have been under-utilised to financially cope with, sudden and protracted crises. The Start Network is not only launching Insurance Products for Humanitarian actors (the first parametric insurance product will be launched in May 2016) but is also actively exploring opportunities with a multitude of non-traditional actors that have interest in and value to add to humanitarian financing and relief operations. This approach is, once again, unprecedented in its aspiration and practical design, offering, therefore, opportunities to explore more tailored markets for Asia in the humanitarian sector by learning together in these markets.

Conclusions

While there has been increasing global awareness of local needs and experience over the past two decades, this recognition has filtered through only in pockets of good practice. The Start Network offers a unique, collaborative platform that actively explores what this means in practice - moving from rhetoric to reality. This means that through a global network that aspires to *connecting people in crisis to the best possible solution*,³ humanitarian actors in Asia have a unique opportunity to influence how change happens in the system, with a clear mandate for empowered local decision-making. It is an opportunity that comes infrequently and we, together, must capitalise on it. ■

- Dr Deepti Sastry,

Head of Evidence, Start Network, U.K.

1 Bhatt, M. (2015), *An open letter from to Sean Lowrie from Mihir Bhatt*, Available at: <http://www.startnetwork.org/content/open-letter-sean-lowrie-mihir-bhatt>.

2 ADB; ADB Institute (2013), *Disaster Risk Management in Asia and the Pacific: Issues Paper*, April 2013, Available from: <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/157232/adbi-rp75.pdf>.

World Humanitarian Summit, Climate Change and Interventions to Address Slow Onset Events

The Secretary-General announced the first World Humanitarian Summit will be held in early 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey with the purpose of setting a forward-looking agenda for humanitarian action to collectively address future humanitarian challenges. In addressing the issues which call for humanitarian intervention, climate change impacts and those specifically of loss and slow onset events will play an important role.

What are Slow-onset Events?

Loss and damage impacts could be categorised into two: extreme events such as storm surges, cyclones, floods, heat waves and low-onset weather processes such as salinization, drought, ocean acidification, glacial melt. Slow onset events take time to be felt as they evolve gradually from incremental changes occurring over many years or from an increased frequency or intensity of recurring events (Siegele, 2011). These events are of great impact to due to the grave implications they have on water and food security, livelihoods structures, property rights and cultural heritage. This article will prioritise on two slow events: sea level rise, glacial melting, and what needs to be highlighted at the Summit to address them.

Sea Level Rise

Global estimates on sea level rise provides it to be from a modest 1-3 metre rise in the next century to a, worst case scenario of 5-6 metres (Dasgupta et al., 2007). This in turn will have grave impacts on low lying countries in South Asia, bringing devastating results on vulnerable communities. In addition to communities losing their habitat, and becoming displaced, creating climate

induced migration, inland movement of salt-water causing a reduction or in some cases a complete extinction of estuaries that have habitats and ecosystems associated to them will lead to serious concerns for livelihoods, and sustenance of the coastal population that depend on the waters for fishing, agriculture and other biodiversity that live off this ecosystems.

Glacial Melting

Glacial melt is one of the most significant loss and damage impacts facing South Asian countries (namely Nepal and India) owing to its impacts on water supplies, aquaculture, hydropower and trade. Specifically, the Himalayas are a unique but fragile ecosystem hosting one of the largest concentration of glaciers outside the polar regions (Ganjoo et al., 2014). In addition to the 200 million inhabitants in the mountains and surrounding valleys in the Hind Kush-Himalayan region, an estimated 3 billion people benefit from the water and other goods that the mountains and glaciers provide (ICIMOD, 2011).

Glacial lake outbursts floods caused by the bursting of a lake in or at the margins of a glacier, are expected to occur increasingly in the Himalayas with devastating consequences for people and ecosystems in India and Nepal (ICIMOD, 2011; Hasemann et al. 2014). This will also create trans-boundary effects that have potential to lead to conflicts, which in turn could lead to loss of lives, as well as the destruction of infrastructure which makes it extremely important that we address this issue with great sensibility, and effective actions which are regional and not limited to national level.

WHS & Interventions

At the World Humanitarian Summit it is important that the issue of loss and damage plays a key role, and the impacts of climate change impacts and slow onset events be recognised. The is need to focus on how to incorporate climate change education which will help increase resilience of communities in knowing how to address the impacts of climate change.

In addition to this, the discussions need to focus on the role of multi-stakeholders and their active participation on what they will be contributing to in terms of how to address issues such as droughts, sea level rise and glacial melts that will impact communities and would create displacement. Thus, it is needed that key stakeholders map out their role and the interventions needed at the national, regional and the global level to make humanitarian interventions needed.

Further the need for introducing, facilitating the formulation and implementation of policies that reflect the current climate science and the needs that arise due to impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities. This also need to take into consider trans-boundary impacts which needs regional cooperation among countries, and also create space for cross-border research and development, knowledge sharing and cooperation in the fields of disaster risk reduction and loss and damage related to climate change. Review migration and development policies taking into account natural hazards, climate change. ■

- Vositha Wijenayake, Policy & Advocacy Coordinator, Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA)

Making National Museums Safe from Disasters

The South Asian region is faced with the increasing frequency and intensity of both natural and manmade disasters causing widespread loss of life and property as well as cultural heritage in its tangible and intangible, movable and immovable manifestations. The damage caused by the recent Nepal Earthquake in April and May 2015 and City Palace Museum fire in Jaipur in 2014 is still very fresh in our mind.

National Museums are invaluable repository of our cultural past and with the rapid development and modernization, their relevance is increasing by day. However, natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, cyclones and the tsunami put them at high risk, besides slow and progressive factors such as inadequate environmental controls, pollution, weathering as well as inappropriate display and storage increase the vulnerability of museum collections to such catastrophic events.

Unfortunately, most of the museums in South Asia do not have comprehensive disaster risk management plans that take into consideration multiple hazards to which they are exposed. One of the critical challenges is lack of education and training of museum staff as well as disaster management agencies on the ways and means of protecting museums from disasters and addressing their special needs during response and recovery phases. Moreover, national disaster management policies in the region do not consider cultural heritage.

Collections are indeed the focus of museums since these are primarily what they are meant for. However, one cannot overlook other dimensions that make the museum as an integrated whole. These include



Damage to Hanuman Dhoka Palace Museum due to 2015 Nepal Earthquakes.

the building(s) in which these collections are housed, the people, including staff, visitors and local community as well as the immediate setting in which the museum is located. This approach becomes all the more important in those cases, where collections are housed in the religious/historic structures located in culturally significant settings, which may also have "living" association with the local community because of their role/meaning in their cultural practices.

There are complex factors, which puts a museum at risk in a particular context. These risks may emanate from within the museum or from its surrounding context. This factor is significant in case of those museums, which are located in dense urban fabric, which puts tremendous challenges for emergency evacuation and response. On one hand, these risks may emanate from the inherent and / or external problems in the building housing the collections that may result from its location, material and construction system or simply due to lack of maintenance and monitoring. On the other hand, these may be the result of inherent nature of collections and the internal environment of the galleries and storage (temperature, humidity as

well as light conditions), which in many cases are also determined by the design and location of the building.

Therefore, museum emergency management is not a simplistic proposition that can be merely reduced to taking some measures for expected emergency situations. Rather, addressing this subject requires consideration of the multiple sources of momentary as well as slow and progressive risks to the collections and their impact on each other, which create vulnerability conditions for the disaster. This would demand a much deeper thinking both for the underlying causes, which put the museum at risk and their long-term implications. Museums should undertake comprehensive risk assessment and accordingly prioritize mitigation actions for their staff, visitors as well as collections in display as well as storage areas. Moreover, adequate evacuation plans and procedures for people as well as collections should be developed and regularly practiced through disaster drills. ■

- Dr. Rohit Jigyasu, UNESCO Chairholder Professor, Institute of Disaster Mitigation for Urban Cultural Heritage, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan; Senior Advisor, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bangalore

Key Agenda for Gender and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

Protection, Participation and Partnership

Asia Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world. Each year, the region experiences a full range of disasters, from earthquakes and volcanic eruptions to extreme weather events such as typhoons, floods and drought. Between 2004 and 2013, 1,690 or 41.2% of the world's reported incidences occurred in the Asia-Pacific. Indonesia and the Philippines were among the countries hardest hit, with natural disasters killing more than 350,000 people.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) recognises that in the coming years, as a result of climate change, disasters will increase in duration and intensity. In this respect, humanitarian needs are only going to grow - and therefore it is imperative that we harness the capacities of the communities we work for to reduce vulnerabilities by building their resilience in the face of these increasing risks.

Protection

Central to IFRC's humanitarian mandate and in line with the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the IFRC is committed to ensure that all women, men, girls and boys, irrespective of age, disability, health status, social, religious, migrant or ethnic group are protected. We recognise that this can only be achieved through commitment at all levels of the IFRC and through the work of the Red Cross Red Crescent staff and its extensive and motivated volunteer networks.

IFRC's attention remains on the most vulnerable and those most disproportionately affected by disasters. To achieve this, IFRC is introducing gender and diversity sensitive policies, plans, tools and programmes across its disaster risk reduction activities. Guiding our approach on a strategic level is the **IFRC Strategic Framework on gender and diversity issues 2013-2020** which is complemented on an operational level with the **IFRC Minimum Standard Commitments to gender and diversity in emergency programming**. Through these we ensure our disaster risk reduction and humanitarian programmes and services are conducted in a non-discriminatory way, promoting gender equality, inclusion, and respect for diversity.

Participation

In line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction's Priorities for Action, IFRC works with National Societies on a people-centred approach. This ensures our

work is relevant and effective within the local context. To achieve this, the focus needs to be on participation: engaging women, men and diverse groups through gender and diversity-sensitive risk assessments, and ensuring full participation in the design and implementation of programmes. With this, we have already seen success.

For example, since 2005, the Thai Red Cross Society has successfully lead an inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction programme. The programme emphasises the inclusion of the elderly, with senior citizens playing key roles in early warning, evacuation, security, first aid and rescue. Women and men also have equal opportunities to participate which results in early warning and disaster risk information being accessible and inclusive for all members of the community. Meanwhile in neighbouring Myanmar, Myanmar Red Cross Society has been promoting women's participation by



Thai Red Cross simulation.

training women in fire fighting, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to respond to a fire emergency.

Partnerships

In line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction's commitment to an 'all-of-society engagement and partnership approach', the IFRC holds partnerships as fundamental in achieving both participation and protection of communities to disaster risk.

Regional and sub-regional gender and diversity networks have been established in Asia Pacific, with focal points

positioned in Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies. These networks facilitate collaborative peer-to-peer learning to build capacity in the region and translate this into local-level actions. Through the National Societies' role as auxiliary to public authorities we work to raise awareness of decision makers and leaders in government on the importance of targeted and mainstreamed gender and diversity



Thai Red Cross (TRC) simulation evacuation exercise.

approaches to disaster risk reduction. Further, we are strengthening co-operation with local partners, civil society organisations and the United Nations to ensure we work towards a common agenda.

At the regional level, IFRC is working with bodies such as the ASEAN Secretariat and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. IFRC will continue to

engage in regional platforms, such as the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), as well as aligning with global commitments such as Sustainable Development Goal 5 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.'

To further affirm our commitment to ensuring gender equality and an inclusive approach to risk reduction, IFRC through its 'One Billion Coalition' initiative will ensure that from the local to global level, resilience of all women, men,

girls and boys in our communities remains our priority. We invite all partners and DRR agencies to join the One Billion Coalition and combine our global efforts to build resilience. ■

- Christina Haneef,

IFRC, Regional Gender and Diversity Officer, South East Asia (Bangkok)

To access the IFRC South East Asia "Gender and Diversity for Resilience" Resource Library: <https://sites.google.com/site/drrtoolsinsoutheastasia/gender-and-diversity/gender-and-diversity-for-resilience-toolkit>

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