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

(Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda)

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

*Background information note*

**SUMMARY**

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

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

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

1. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities emphasizes the need to monitor and review progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR), not only to document the gradual implementation of the framework, but to feed into informed DRR planning and programming at national, sub-regional and regional levels. Responsibilities for monitoring the HFA are assigned mainly to States but are also identified for regional organizations and institutions, international organizations and ISDR system partners and the secretariat<sup>2</sup>. It is expected that the national and regional reviews generated will help identify gaps and challenges in implementation and inform policy recommendations for Asia and Pacific.

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

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

### B. Methodology and Structure

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

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

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

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

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<sup>2</sup> Paragraph 30, 31, 32, 33 of the HFA.

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

8. The interim regional synthesis report uses the HFA as the main frame of analysis while also considering the Delhi Declaration on Disaster Reduction in Asia 2007. The structure of the interim report reflects the subsections and indicators of the UN/ISDR online Monitoring Tool enriched by the Regional HFA Progress Review Framework for Asia and Pacific 2008/2009. The report is primarily based upon information presented in the thirteen<sup>3</sup> National HFA Progress Reports, as well as the advance draft reports from two sub-regions, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and two regional thematic reports. The Report "DRR in Asia and Pacific: Overview at the Start of the HFA Implementation Decade and Progress Made 2005 – 2007" provides an overall context for this information. Additional information on risk profiles and progress on DRR and HFA emanating from national and regional disaster risk reduction agencies, as well as research institutions, has been taken into account. While referring to selected country examples for the purpose of illustration this report seeks to identify common themes and challenges across the Asia and Pacific region. Against a backdrop of limited national reporting these issues are, however, indicative rather than comprehensive.

### **C. Recent Disaster Trends in Asia and Pacific**

9. In 2007, the Pacific region was mainly affected by meteorological and hydrological disasters, which is typical for the region. Cyclone Gupta which hit Papua New Guinea in November 2007, affected the biggest number of people with over 162,000<sup>4</sup>. A flash flood caused over 1.7 billion USD of damage in Australia. Asia remained the region most affected by natural disasters in 2007. 37% of natural disasters recorded by the EM-DAT data-base occurred in Asia, accounting for 90% of all the reported victims and 46% of economic damage<sup>5</sup>. Asia was particularly affected by monsoon-related events with India, China and Bangladesh hardest hit. With two disasters of historical proportion - Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the Sichuan earthquake in China - the first half of 2008 reconfirmed the particular vulnerability of Asia and the continued if not growing importance to implement strategic risk reduction measures. At the current pace of urbanization, environmental degradation and climate change, the vulnerability of major Asian cities in floodplains and coastal areas is growing rapidly<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, it is paramount that risk reduction becomes part and parcel of urban planning and strategies are devised to manage and reverse urban vulnerability trends.

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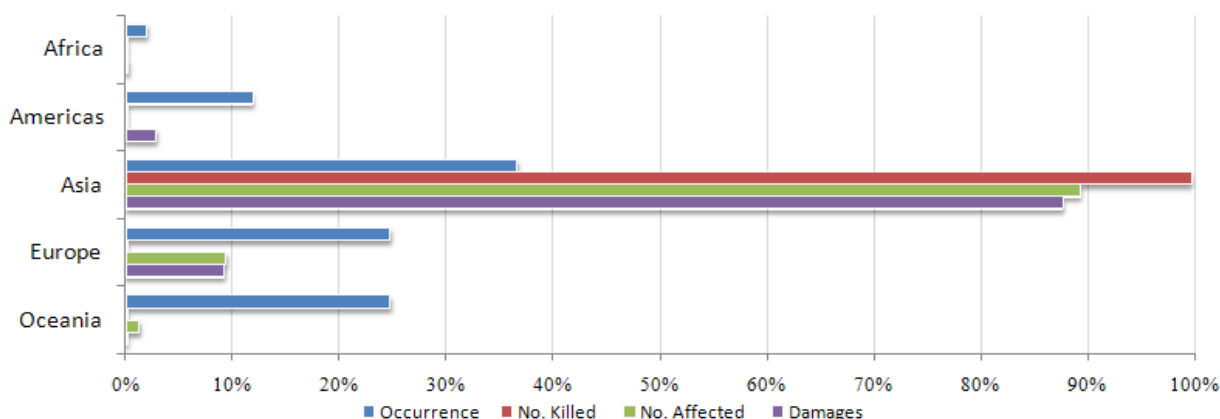
<sup>3</sup> 2Australia, Bangladesh; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Islamic Republic of Iran; Lao PDR; Republic of Korea; Marshall Islands; Nepal, New Zealand; Philippines; Sri Lanka and Vanuatu. These are advanced draft reports. In addition 6 less advanced drafts from Bhutan, India, Maldives, Samoa, Singapore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

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

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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

Figure 1. First semester 2008 natural disaster occurrence and impacts: regional comparison<sup>7</sup>



## II. PROGRESS IN REDUCING RISK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

19. The integration of DRR into school curricula and public awareness has been high on the agenda of multi-, regional, bilateral and national governmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Three years, however, seem too short to reach considerable progress. While an outperforming group of four<sup>9</sup> countries report comprehensive or substantial achievements, two have reached institutional commitment and a majority of countries (seven) have not yet made significant progress. Several national reports reflect a certain degree of skepticism regarding the effectiveness of current public awareness activities and describe the absence of clear national strategies, of solid monitoring and evaluation systems and a top-down approach that takes insufficient notice of cultural and linguistic differences within countries. The New Zealand report highlights the need for a sustained, long-term approach: *“The major challenge is changing*

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

<sup>9</sup> 5 for public awareness

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

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

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

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

22. In general most countries report some initiatives on environmental and natural resource management policies and standards though it is not always very clear to what degree these really include DRR objectives. Some reports seem to reflect an assumption that environmental and DRR objectives largely overlap. Others are more skeptical, the Philippines report for instance remarks "***While environmental and natural resource laws do provide a framework, their interpretation does not easily translate into instruments for DRR and DRM.***"<sup>11</sup> Work on climate change as re-emphasized in the Delhi Declaration is underway; South 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 other countries the linkages between work on DRR and climate change focus on the preparation of climate adaptation plans and programmes or remain unexplored.

23. There are few countries that base their work on an explicit social inclusion agenda though there is common recognition of the need to address the social vulnerability dimension of risk. In several countries social policies and frameworks recognize the impact of disasters on the poor; however instruments to address vulnerability remain often restricted to conventional programmes such as food aid.

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<sup>10</sup> New Zealand Progress Report 2008, page 8.

<sup>11</sup> Philippines National Report 2008, page 12

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. A growing diversification of social safety net programmes with a very active role of NGOs is also reported from Bangladesh. Yet there is a feeling that these initiatives require detailed evaluations to identify the exact benefits for communities and to better understand the inter-relation between microfinance and risk reduction.

24. 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. 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 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.*”<sup>12</sup> Climate change has added to a renewed interest in agriculture and one country 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.

25. The regional record regarding spatial planning and land use control is equally diverse with very limited progress in seven, some institutional commitment in three and considerable achievements in three 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 settlement development that emphasizes accountability of those involved in settlement 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.

26. The record regarding procedures for the integration of risk reduction into major development projects is a little better as 4 countries report comprehensive achievements, 6 institutional commitments and only three modest progress. One country has initiated the development of an overall policy, another progressed to a disaster mitigation impact regulation for development planning and three countries have decided to focus upon priority sectors such as transport, health and education or a densely populated urban area. An increasing commitment to addressing risk in development projects seems related to a realization of the cost-benefit ratio of investing in risk reduction.

27. Particularly in those countries that were recently affected by significant disasters there is institutional commitment to integrate DRR into recovery and reconstruction strategies (also an action point of the Delhi Declaration). However, experience has shown that translating these resolves into reality is easier said than

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<sup>12</sup> National Report Indonesia, page 13

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.

**E. Priority for Action 5 “Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels”**

28. 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. While four countries report substantial achievements, three countries report only minor to modest progress and the remaining six have achieved institutional commitment but not reached 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 assessment). The reports also suggests that while policy development<sup>13</sup>, institutional development at the national level and planning have been stronger, the areas of financial resources and mechanisms for information exchange and management and local level preparedness capacities are lagging behind .

29. 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 two countries together with standardized information management systems. Other countries have been exposed to the concept by training events.

30. Except for the four outperforming countries availability of funding for preparedness, particularly at the local level seems another important issue. 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- programmes raising questions of sustainability. Two countries 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.

31. Most countries have been successful or are currently engaged in developing disaster and contingency plans.<sup>14</sup> 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. Some 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.

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<sup>13</sup> Already highlighted under priority 1.

<sup>14</sup> Only one country emphasizes that it does not have a contingency plan at any level.

### III. DRIVERS OF PROGRESS

#### A. Multi-hazard approach

32. 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). Three countries have not undertaken integrated multi-hazard analyses, though the scope of the studies undertaken in the remaining ten countries can be comprehensive (4 countries) or limited to a sector or a smaller number of locations and eventually dependent upon external aid (six countries). 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 taking place in five countries and institutionalized in four.

#### B. Gender

33. Only one 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 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 (six 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 [...]”*<sup>15</sup> 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.

#### C. Capacity strengthening

34. Capacity building, particularly at the local and community level is a subject that all country reports reflect upon in all sections as a central requirement for the implementation of the HFA. Three countries report dedicated budgets and systematic national and local initiatives to build DRR capacity on an ongoing basis. In other countries, efforts can be more sporadic and centre on the national level. In several of these countries, local level efforts can be dependent upon external funding and (I)NGOs that work through Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and link residents to resources. It is important that local governments are sufficiently involved in these initiatives. Capacity strengthening in line ministries and sectors is also referred to as a necessity that can be difficult to obtain funding for.

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<sup>15</sup> National Report Vanuatu, page 18.

#### **D. Human security and social equity**

35. 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 three countries report a systematic integration of social equity approaches into DRR and recovery activities. While three more countries signal the inclusion of social equity perspectives into policy frameworks and legislation implementation is 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.

#### **E. Engagement with non-governmental actors**

36. Even though almost all twelve countries report considerable involvement of non-governmental organizations in DRR activities and a couple identify long traditions of working with civil society actors and CSOs only five countries have dedicated legislation, formal agreements and MoUs with non-governmental actors or describe their inclusion in formal coordination structures (2). Several countries highlight the lack of a common vision and understanding of DRR and mutual roles between governmental and non-governmental agencies and the need to develop well-defined quality partnerships that depend upon capacity and engagement. The engagement with non-governmental actors in Indonesia has gained considerable momentum and will be formalized by the creation of a National Platform. Other countries do not reflect upon the role of the National Platform in helping to engage with non-governmental actors. This may be related to the fact that different countries are at different levels of their national platform development (as already highlighted under section I).

37. 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.

### **IV. OUTLOOK**

#### **A. Key Challenges and Gaps against HFA strategic goals**

38. 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.

#### **B. 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**

39. 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 years<sup>16</sup>. 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.

**C. 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**

40. 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 programmes 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 programmes<sup>17</sup> 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.

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<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> Some because most CBDRR programmes tend to focus upon preparedness and response.

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

41. 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 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 programmes 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 parallel efforts at local levels. Budgets for local planning and preparedness are highly inadequate in a majority of countries.

42. There is a need to explore 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 side-lined. If not properly considered beforehand and backs 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.

**V. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

43. It is important to acknowledge that the respondents to the on-line monitoring tool represent a self-selected sub-group of countries with above average interest and to some degree capacity in risk reduction and the HFA. The distribution of this small sample against income indicators (Gross National Income)<sup>18</sup> may illustrate this point: four belong to high income countries, six to low middle income countries and three to low-income countries. There is a consistent correlation between high income countries and high levels of achievement against indicators; this correlation is not as consistent between middle and low income countries i.e. one middle income country reports high achievements (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Bangladesh a low income country is significantly more advanced than the two other low income countries.

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<sup>18</sup> See World Bank Atlas Method, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/>