



03 Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in Europe



Executive Summary

Background

1. In January 2005, at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 168 countries adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters as an ambitious programme of action to significantly reduce disaster risk¹.
2. Monitoring and reporting on progress is an essential feature of the HFA. Responsibility for monitoring and reporting is assigned mainly to governments, with specific requirements including the preparation of national baseline assessments, periodic summaries and reviews of progress, and reports on risk reduction progress in other policy frameworks such as Millennium Development Goals. Other requirements include contributing to regional assessments². Reporting responsibilities are also identified for regional organizations and institutions, international organizations and UNISDR and the ISDR system.
3. In line with the HFA monitoring and reporting process, reports were prepared for the first session of the Global Platform for disaster risk reduction, which took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in May 2007 and covered the period 2005-2006. The aim was to update all stakeholders on the progress made since the last major reporting exercise associated with the January 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction. The reports (available on the PreventionWeb website: <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/GP>) identified trends and patterns in disasters and global disaster risk, mainly gathered from recent global and regional reports, and progress made by countries and organizations to reduce risks and to implement the HFA.
4. To continue the HFA monitoring and reporting process UNISDR initiated a systematic process with a request on reporting issued in January 2007 to the nationally-nominated HFA focal points (and to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva), accompanied by guidelines for reporting on progress on the implementation of the HFA. As a follow-up,

¹ Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters: <http://www.unisdr.org/hfa>

² Reporting on Disaster Risks and Progress in Risk Reduction, UNISDR/GP/2007/2, <http://www.preventionweb.net/globalplatform>

in order to systematize existing data and assessments, and reviews of progress at the national level, an on-line monitoring and reviewing tool – the ‘HFA Monitor’ – was made available to countries.

5. Abstracts of those reports supported the preparation of the ‘Global Assessment Report’ (from September to December 2008). The report, coordinated by UNISDR, aims to address a major global stock-taking on trends in disaster occurrence and risks and progress on disaster risk reduction. It has been launched in May 2009.
6. It should be noted that many governments are already concerned about the burden of monitoring and reporting for the numerous international conventions and agreements to which they are party, while acknowledging that the process can assist countries to identify clearly gaps and challenges that need to be addressed. Current efforts to institute a systematic common reporting process on disaster risk reduction, with an annual cycle of reporting requests and accessible electronic databases of information, will help to simplify and reduce the demands. Nevertheless, further continued study and dialogue will be needed to ensure cost-effectiveness and sustainability of reporting at national, regional and international levels.³

Objectives

7. This is a summary of the report “*Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action in Europe: advances and challenges*”⁴ whose main objective is to provide an update on achievements, advances and key trends in the implementation of the HFA at national and regional levels in Europe from 2007-2009, as identified by the partners.
8. The following added values in the monitoring of progress have been identified⁵:
 - a) to monitor progress on achievements, build resilience to disasters, and identify gaps and necessary resources related to programmes and initiatives;
 - b) to foster closer collaboration and cooperation among national actors and among/with regional organizations;
 - c) to stimulate exchanges and activities with international entities;
 - d) to enhance visibility of countries within the global arena;
 - e) to share good practices/lessons learned among national actors and with other countries that might be undertaking similar initiatives; and
 - f) to access the ‘rolling’ possibility of the HFA Monitor on-line reporting tool.
9. Given that States have the primary responsibility for implementing measures to reduce disaster risk and for monitoring and reporting on their progress, the ISDR system and

3 Meeting of European National Platforms and HFA focal points for disaster risk reduction, 24/25 April 2008, <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/trainings-events/events/v.php?id=1896>

4 The full report is available at: <http://www.unisdr.org/europe/publications/v.php?id=9452>

5 Meeting of European National Platforms and HFA focal points for disaster risk reduction, 24/25 April 2008, <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/trainings-events/events/v.php?id=1896>

UNISDR are focusing on assisting national efforts towards these ends, in addition to the task of collating information for international purposes.

Methodology

10. The present study is based on a review of reports provided by regional and national actors via the monitoring tool HFA Monitor, which was designed and coordinated by UNISDR and is hosted online at PreventionWeb. Other information and reports have also been consulted, made available via sources including the UNISDR website and from ISDR system partners and other actors⁶. In view of the fact that the information available covers only some countries in the Europe region, this report provides only a partial and hence indicative account of the progress being made.
11. Of the 34⁷ national authorities/HFA Focal Points included in the HFA Monitor tool for Europe, a total of 17 have reported, 16 of which used the on-line monitor facility. The countries which used the on-line monitor were: Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, FYR of Macedonia, France, Germany, Italy, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and United Kingdom. The seventeenth country to report, Hungary, responded using a different format. Several countries and partners agreed to provide reports at a later date.
12. Regional organizations and initiatives that provided information are: the Council of Europe (EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement), the European Commission, the Central European Disaster Prevention Forum (CEUDIP), Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE), the Regional Cooperation Council for South Eastern Europe (RCC SEE) and a European Network of National Platforms⁸.
13. The report provides key insights into how disaster risk reduction is currently conceived and practiced by national authorities implementing the HFA. It analyses the progress made in reducing disaster risk in Europe as reported by national authorities (or other entities agreed at national level) and identifies obstacles and challenges that need to be overcome.
14. The report is based on the three 'Strategic Goals' and five 'Priorities for Action' of the HFA and includes an identification of good practice and achievements, as well as an analysis of gaps and suggestions for ways forward, through an in-depth review of the experiences of the countries which responded.
15. Such assessments can reveal gaps in resource use and capacities and identify untapped potentials.

⁶ See Annex I for a full list of actors.

⁷ As of May 2009, 2 countries out of 34 were still pending official communication of their appointment as HFA Focal Points to UNISDR, but because in practice they exist and are operating they are considered in this report.

⁸ This network includes the following National Platforms and players: German Committee for Disaster Reduction (DKKV), l'Association Française pour la Prévention des Catastrophes Naturelles (AFPCN), Swiss National Platform for Natural Hazards (PLANAT) and the Czech Republic National Platform. The name of this network might be updated.

16. The levels of progress developed by UNISDR for the HFA Monitor, which are applied in all five HFA Priorities, enable a self-assessment of the extent to which policies, programmes and initiatives are sustainable in achieving the indicated risk reduction objectives. The levels of progress are:
- a) Minor progress with few signs of forward action in plans or policy.
 - b) Some progress but without systematic policy and/or institutional commitment.
 - c) Institutional commitment attained but achievements are neither comprehensive nor substantial.
 - d) Substantial achievement attained but with recognized limitations in capacities and resources.
 - e) Comprehensive achievement with sustained commitment and capacities at all levels.
17. Insights into progress made on key ‘cross-cutting’ issues, such as gender equity, social justice and governance, are highlighted where they have been mentioned in national or other reports.

Findings

18. The report finds that many governments and organizations have recognized the need to raise the priority of disaster risk reduction and are directly responding to the expectations and directions of the HFA. Evidence of this in Europe includes the fact that National Platforms for disaster risk reduction have been established in eleven countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, FYR of Macedonia, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland) and five other countries (Georgia, Monaco, Norway, Poland and Turkey) are on the point of establishing them. Furthermore, 34 countries have established official Hyogo Framework Focal Points⁹.
19. In terms of the specific indicators of progress, country reports show that a large majority of reporting countries have attained institutional commitment or substantial achievements in ensuring that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation, but with recognised limitation in capacities and resources.
20. In most countries disaster risk reduction is a cross-sectoral topic and therefore no sole law exists for its regulation. Rather, the elements of disaster risk reduction are integrated in national legislations at all levels.
21. A large majority of countries report substantial or comprehensive achievement in risk assessment, although national legislation defining responsibilities at all levels varies significantly.

⁹ <http://www.UNISDR.org/europe/eu-nplatform/np-guidelines.html>

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22. While substantial achievement has been attained in developing and putting in place systems to monitor, archive and disseminate data on key hazards and vulnerabilities, there are recognized limitations in capacities and resources. The main obstacle in this area is scarce financial resources. These systems are costly, which is a limiting factor.
 23. Often the supply of data is still heterogeneous as different institutions participate with their own methods, while there is still plenty of room for standardization of data and improvements in coordination of data sharing.
 24. Reports indicate that there is substantial or comprehensive achievement towards building a culture of safety and resilience through the collection, compilation and dissemination of relevant knowledge and information on hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities. A large amount of information is available through websites and publications. On-line tools and databases have been created to record past events and hazard and risk assessments are being used at all levels (national through municipal). Events are analyzed in detail and the results are used for adapting priorities for action.
 25. However, the extent to which school curricula, education materials and relevant training include disaster risk reduction and recovery concepts and practices varies significantly among countries, which leads to the conclusion that there is much still to be done in this area.
 26. In almost half of the countries institutional commitment has been attained in the way in which sector development planning and programmes address disaster risks related to changing social, economic and environmental conditions and land use, and the impact of hazards associated with geological events, weather, water, climate variability and climate change. However, it is stressed that achievements are neither comprehensive nor substantial. Furthermore, there is significant difference in the way social development policies and plans are being implemented to reduce the vulnerability of populations most at risk. Implementation seems to vary according to the level of national development.
 27. Knowledge on the environment and sustainable development is high among politicians, authorities, organizations and the public, but natural hazard knowledge and awareness is still much lower, especially among the public.
 28. Procedures to assess the disaster risk impacts of major development projects, especially infrastructure, are only partly in place.
 29. Reports indicate that preparedness mechanisms and capacity-building measures at national, regional and international level have been strengthened in comparison with previous years, although the extent to which the disaster risk reduction perspectives are integrated is not yet clear.
 30. Insurance is identified as an important tool to establish financial reserves and reconstruction mechanisms. The evaluation of risk accumulation and the establishment of reserves are the most important duties of insurance companies and enterprises. Yet, many countries are of the opinion that much work needs to be done in this sector to attain satisfactory levels.

31. On a regional level, EU Member States in their development cooperation programmes and projects are pursuing a coherent and complementary approach to disaster risk reduction at all levels. This includes the creation of basic conditions and the capacity building necessary for the respective levels to meet their appropriate responsibilities.
32. Nevertheless, it emerges that there is a need to cooperate regionally and internationally to assess and monitor regional and trans-boundary risks, exchange standardized information and accessible standardized data on regional disaster risks, impacts and losses, and provide early warnings. This need, in addition to bilateral agreements between countries, has led to the establishment of several regional organizations and networks in Europe, including DPPI SEE, RCC SEE, CEUDIP and CMEPC.
33. The majority of countries report improved cooperation with neighbouring countries and relatively well established regional and trans-boundary cooperation, with substantial or comprehensive achievement attained over the last few years.

Conclusions

34. Although the general recognition of the importance of disaster risk reduction at policy level is undisputable, there nevertheless remains a lack of understanding of the concept when it comes to specific issues such as the implementation of legal frameworks and the updating of existing legislation with new concepts. The cross-cutting nature of disaster risk reduction makes coordination at national and other levels a challenge.
35. Concrete and active strategies for disaster risk reduction rely on different institutions, each with its own legal framework, and this necessitates the establishment of specific sectoral strategies to be coherently implemented and coordinated at national level. In this context the development of National Platforms facilitates a more efficient application of disaster risk reduction, although despite the recognition and priority given to the establishment and/or development of National Platforms, there will need to be more commitment from governments to achieve this.
36. The way National Platforms are linked or integrated into national governmental systems determines the way they can influence national decision-making processes. National Platforms which are governmental based with a high level of coordination have a direct influence on these processes, whereas civil society structures have to focus on advocacy and lobbying activities to create the necessary momentum.
37. Governments often entrust the task of facilitating the establishment of National Platforms to HFA Focal Points. In many cases the Focal Points are the civil protection organizations, which traditionally have a more focused mandate on preparedness and response. An understanding of the multi-sectoral dimension of disaster risk reduction is essential to provide the HFA Focal Points with the necessary knowledge to ensure the successful development of the National Platforms' structures and activities.

38. The contradictory interests between different groups and organizations, together with scarce financial resources at the local or regional level, are hindering some urgent risk reduction measures. Furthermore, the rapid migration from rural to urban areas and the concentration of populations are increasing the vulnerability of certain societies, while available resources often do not follow the same trends.
39. Due to limited resources and the low priority frequently given to the management of natural hazards, existing knowledge of risks is often not used at local level and risk analysis, such as through the use of stability or flood maps, is often not visible in municipal programmes. To achieve the appropriate level of attention for natural hazards and disaster risk reduction in 'competition' with the many other urgent and important tasks represents a significant challenge.
40. Moreover, although there is a large amount of risk reduction information available, the task remains to promote a common understanding and an awareness of responsibilities, probabilities and possibilities among potential actors.
41. Increasing the awareness of school children is one way to facilitate the creation of disaster resilient communities for the future. The lack of integration of the disaster risk reduction concept into school curricula is a major deficiency, and the slow rate of progress of incorporating this message is of particular concern.
42. Despite a reduction in economic vulnerability in recent years among many European countries, challenges remain due to the frequently complex interdependency of cross-border activities, especially in the energy sector. Significant differences in levels of economic development in Europe and neighbouring countries can intensify this pressure. It should be noted that economic considerations often overrule safety and security parameters.
43. At the operational level the main constraints on the effectiveness of disaster preparedness are the shortage of financial and technical capacities, particularly communication systems, and the need for adequately-trained personnel. This situation is often compounded by the general decline in the numbers of volunteers, due to demographic changes, in those countries which have significant voluntary sectors.

Recommendations

44. Based on the experiences reported by the national, sub-regional and regional actors via the HFA Monitor tool, and with reference to other information made available through UNISDR and ISDR partners and other actors, the report makes the following recommendations:

A. National level

- i. The implementation of disaster risk reduction related legal provisions and national policies as an inter-disciplinary approach should be further pursued.

- ii. National policies for disaster risk reduction and management should not only be in place but also appropriately implemented and sufficiently integrated into sectoral policies and national development plans.
- iii. Cooperation at all levels, both horizontally and vertically, and between research programmes and projects should be further promoted. Links between natural, societal and economic research with actors and institutions in disaster risk reduction are essential. Currently, climate change is the main focus of many activities while other areas must be further developed and integrated in all sectors.
- iv. Capacity building at local level: to raise awareness among and empower local- and community-level organizations, volunteer groups and other active members of civil society to participate in disaster risk reduction decision-making, planning and implementation and to improve vertical coordination is of the utmost importance. Studies and reports to highlight the economic impact of disaster risk reduction at municipal level would mobilize interest groups and other concerned people to put peer pressure on local governments.
- v. To harness the potential of National Platforms in Europe to advance disaster risk reduction it is important that governments increase their appreciation and support for the establishment and enhanced performance of National Platforms. Furthermore, within the context of a network of National Platforms, efforts and exchanges should be consolidated to facilitate the establishment of a regional platform on disaster risk reduction to further stimulate a high-level political debate.
- vi. Improved access to information on disaster risk assessment and reduction measures and implementation of initiated inter-disciplinary research linking science and practice are key to further development.
- vii. The private sector should be encouraged to practice and contribute to risk reduction and strengthen public-private sector partnerships.
- viii. Better coordination of the information flow in warnings related to disasters among various ministers and government offices at national levels and further efforts towards the clarification of terms and definitions, roles and responsibilities are required. Archive systems may also be used as a good platform for sharing disaster-related documents (lessons learned). They can be used as knowledge portals including a full spectrum of educational materials and become a one-stop-shop for users from academic institutions, practitioners and the private sector.
- ix. A more intensive promotion of disaster risk-related themes is necessary at the level of school education. An update of existing programmes with new developments, such as climate change, is required.
- x. Upgrading of emergency management systems with integrated information systems and geographical information analysis should be promoted with local governments, despite the frequently insufficient financial resources and shortage of experts at local level.

B. Regional level

- i. In the sub-regional and regional arrangements partners should encourage disaster risk reduction to be put high on all agendas.
 - ii. Development cooperation programmes and projects abroad are still financed mainly through emergency aid, which is not sufficient for a comprehensive integration of disaster risk reduction. Consequently, the inclusion of independent disaster risk reduction funds within technical cooperation projects would be a major achievement.
 - iii. Standardization of data gathering and usage is an important factor and should be promoted at all levels along with enhanced approaches for multi-risk analyses (including cost-benefit analyses) through enhanced research at all levels. Climate change risks should be integrated into risk analyses.
 - iv. Continued integration of disaster risk reduction in the respective sector strategies at national and international level, and in particular in developing countries with international donor support, is crucial. Public aid mechanisms and regulations, in particular policy relevant to insurance, to facilitate relocations to safer areas would be useful. More disaster risk reduction standards have to be considered in the case of recovery.
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