

SAARC Roadmap for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in Development

With more than 23 per cent of global population but less than 2 per cent of global income, South Asia continues to remain one of the underdeveloped regions of the world. The poor social and economic conditions of a large number of people of South Asia make them highly vulnerable to natural and human induced disasters. Large scale loss of life and property in disasters, on the other hand, erode the hard earned gains of development over the years. Scarce resource have to be diverted from development to relief and rehabilitation, which create further set back to development.

Most of the countries of South Asia are also witnessing high economic growth in the recent years, which provides opportunities for reducing the vulnerabilities of the people. But unplanned development sometimes creates new risks and precipitates existing vulnerabilities, which enhances the threats of disasters.

The countries of the region have appreciated the close link of disaster and development and committed to mainstream disaster risk reduction all developmental activities. They have endorsed the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* which envisages “integrating risk reduction into development policies and plans at all levels of Government including poverty reduction strategies and multi-sectoral policies and plans”. They have adopted the *SAARC Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management* which identifies “mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into the development policies and practices of the government at all levels” as one of the key priority areas for developing resilience to disasters in SAARC region. They have also developed national disaster management frameworks which commit mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in development. All these are significant steps forward, but there are lots which remain to be done to translate these commitments into action.

In this context, the SAARC Disaster Management Centre in collaboration with Disaster Management Centre, Govt. of Sri Lanka, organized the SAARC Workshop on Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in Development in Colombo on 14-15 November 2008. The Workshop recommended the following Roadmap for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in Development (MDRRD).

1. **Primary Role of National Governments:** The national governments have the primary responsibility for MDRRD in their respective countries. Governments can promote and facilitate the process of MDRRD by laying down general policy guidelines, developing sector specific tools and methodologies and creating legal and institutional frameworks for mainstreaming.

2. **General Policy Guidelines on MDRRD: Nodal agencies responsible for national development planning such as** National Planning Commissions are the most appropriate institution to develop general and specific guidelines on MDRRD, as they have the mandate to approve development schemes and allocate funds for existing and new schemes. The guidelines should cover both the ongoing and new development schemes across sectors. Such guidelines should be developed in consultation with national focal points on disaster management, such as the National Disaster Management Authority etc.

3. **Integration of MDRRD in Poverty Reduction Strategies:** Poverty reduction is the best entry point for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in development as all the countries of the region are already implementing a varieties of programmes targeted to people living below poverty line who are always the worst sufferers in disasters. There is a need to revisit these programmes to incorporate features that would protect post-ante the interests of the poor people affected by disasters and also reduce pre-ante the risks of disasters by innovative mechanisms such as skill development for alternative livelihoods, micro-finance and insurance etc

4. **Promotion of MDRRD in Key Sectors:** While MDRRD should penetrate into all sectors of development, the national governments should identify key sectors that should receive priorities in respective countries. Some of the key sectors, along with some illustrative activities under each sector may be as under:

Agriculture and livelihood:

- Crop insurance
- Crop varieties developed which are resistant to drought, withstand flood and saline conditions
- Rural employment opportunity including non-farm activities

Education:

- School Safety
- Inclusion of DRR in school curricula
- Simulation drills and awareness raising activities at school level
- Initiatives to develop school level DM Plan, small scale mitigation activities, First Aid training for students, teachers and parents

Environment:

- Integrating Guidelines for Disaster Impact Assessment (DIA) in Environment Impact assessment (EIA)
- Ecosystem conservation in all developmental activities particularly in environmentally sensitive areas such as coastal and hill areas etc
- Integrate Disaster Risk Reduction in Climate Change Adaptation Programmes

Housing:

- Develop and Enforce Land Use Plans and Building Codes

Health:

- Hospital safety initiatives
- Hospital Emergency Preparedness Plan

Risk Transfer and Risk Insurance:

- Promote Social/Public funded Insurance Programmes
- Development micro-insurance services and products

Infrastructure – Energy, Communication etc

Development of tools and Methodologies for MDRRD

Disaster Impact Assessment:

Governance

Evaluation and Monitoring

5. Activities for Regional Cooperation on MDRRD: The following activities may be taken up by SAARC Disaster Management Centre to promote MDRRD in the region:

(a) Development of Toolkits and Methodology for MDRRD

- Based on the best practices in the region, it is envisaged developing 'tool kits' involving innovative tools and methodologies for mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction;
- Tool kits, tailored for adaptation in South Asian Countries, shall take into account the local needs, capacities and resources and to be applied in a systematic and sustainable manner through a participatory process.

(b) Preparation of Guidelines for the Member States on Sector-specific Mainstreaming

- Note shall spell out multi-hazard specific entry-point activities in the areas such as education, health, environment (climate change aspects also included), governance, employment & livelihood including informal sectors, agriculture, gender, ICT applications etc;
- Note shall bring out the specific steps & strategies on mainstreaming in the critical sectors such as social, financial, environmental and infrastructure.

(c) Training and Technical Support

- The emphasis shall be placed on emerging areas such as disaster/risk auditing, public-private partnership, project management with focus on mainstreaming in the newer developmental activities, cross-sectoral risk analysis, areas specific mainstreaming activities viz., coastal zone management, Hill Area Development, Flood-plain, Dryland & Desert Development and R&D;
- Development of training modules and conducting training for the key functionaries on mainstreaming.

(d) Networking and Technical Documentation

- Specific focus is to be laid on networking of training and knowledge institutions under South Asia Disaster Knowledge Network (SADKN) to promote mainstreaming activities in South Asia;
- Documentation and dissemination of best practices in general and specific sectors of development planning and practices.

(e) DIA of Trans-boarder Development Project