



Quarterly Newsletter of
SAARC
Disaster Management Centre
New Delhi

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Natural vs Man-made Disasters

The second quarter of 2010 witnessed a spurt of manmade disasters in South Asia which far outnumbered the natural disasters both in events as well as in deaths and injuries. Some of the major manmade disasters – aviation and railway disasters, fire and building collapse - that made headlines have been covered in this issue, but numerous others went unreported and many of these are not even captured in national or international data bases on disasters. There is hardly any national government that can boast of a robust disaster statistical system that captures every incident of disaster. EM-DAT or international disaster database does not even list a disaster that has caused less than ten deaths or hundred injuries. It is these small scale disasters that are large in numbers and cumulative impact of such disasters could offset much conventional analysis of disasters. Most of these are manmade disasters.

In South Asia average number of deaths in a year due to natural disasters is less than seven thousand whereas deaths due to road accidents alone would be nearly hundred and fifty thousand. Again average deaths due to epidemic in the region is less than one thousand in a year, but daily maternal and infant mortality during child births is nearly two thousand!

Many experts have pointed out that the term ‘natural disaster’ is a misnomer and should not at all be used as nature by itself does not cause any disaster. Nature only creates hazards, but it is our failure to understand nature and live in harmony with nature that causes disaster. For example, earthquake does not kill people, it is the collapse of unsafe buildings that does. Therefore if buildings are constructed or retrofitted as per earthquake resistant designs and technology disasters even in high seismic zones can be avoided.

It is the manmade vulnerabilities, much more than natural hazards, created by our living conditions and unjust social and economic systems that expose millions of people and their assets to the risks of disasters. Settlements of people in low lying areas have made them vulnerable to flood. Poor maintenance of river embankments had caused breaches threatening lives and livelihoods of people. Destruction of mangroves has removed bio shields that nature provided to protect coastal areas. Large scale consumption of fossil fuels is changing the climate of the globe threatening plants, animals and humans on the earth.

As Mahatma Gandhi said nature has provided enough for everyone to live according to his need but not greed. Therefore nature does not create disasters, it is human follies and greed that does.

SAARC Workshop on Landslide Risk Management in South Asia

Thimphu, 11-12 May 2010



A two day workshop on 'Landslide Risk Management in South Asia' was organized by SDMC in collaboration with the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan on 11-12 May at Thimphu, Bhutan. The objective of the workshop was to deliberate on the current status of landslide risk management in the member states, review the progress made in the region, analyze the constraint and challenges, identify the main issues of regional cooperation and develop a road map for future regional cooperation. The workshop was represented by senior policy makers and experts from the SAARC countries.

The chief guest for the inaugural session of the workshop, Mr. Lyonpo Yeshey Zimba, Hon'ble Minister for Works and Human Settlement, Royal Government of Bhutan addressed the participants and emphasized on the issues of regional collaboration for landslide risk management. In his address Mr. P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti, Director SDMC elaborated on the activities of SDMC and touched upon the key areas which need special attention for landslide risk management. A workshop volume containing technical papers contributed by the experts in the related field was released during the inaugural session.

Key experts from the region made presentations on technical aspects of landslide risk and the status of

landslide studies in respective countries. Dr. R. K. Bhandari presented the background paper for the workshop and presented the broad issues of regional cooperation in landslide risk management in South Asia. In his presentation Mr. Md. Abdus Salam from Bangladesh focused on Early Warning of Landslides. Dr. Karma Kuenza and Tashi Wangdi from Bhutan made presentations on Landslide Risk Management in Bhutan and Sustainable Land Management Programme in Bhutan. Dr. Deepak Chamlagain of SDMC presented An Overview of Landslide Hazard in Nepal Himalayas. Dr. Joyesh Bagchi of India presented paper on Landslide Hazard Assessment and Risk Mitigation. Mr. M. Naseer Mughal from Pakistan highlighted the Current Status of Landslide Risk Management in Pakistan.



Based on the deliberations of the workshop a regional Road Map on landslide Risk Management in South Asia was developed as the outcome document of the workshop. The road map identified six key areas of regional cooperation:

1. Landslide Risk Assessment
2. Documentation of Landslides
3. Early Warning of landslides
4. Landslide Risk Mitigation
5. Training and Capacity Building
6. South Asia Landslide Forum

South Asia Launch of Global Campaign Making Cities Resilient – My City is Getting Ready, New Delhi, 8-9 June 2010



A two day international conference was organized by the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India and National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) in collaboration with United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) on 8-9 June on the eve of the launch of Global Campaign on Making Cities Resilient- My City is Getting Ready. SAARC Disaster Management Centre actively participated in the Conference. The dignitaries present in the inaugural session included Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy, Minister for Urban Development Government of India, Gen. N. C. Vij, Vice Chairman, NDMA, Mr. M. Ramachandran, Minister of State Home Affairs, Government of India, Mr. P. R. Sawhney, Mayor of Delhi and Ms. Helena Molin Valdes from UN ISDR., Mr. P .G. Dhar Chakrabarti, Executive Director NIDM and Director of SDMC welcomed the delegates and explained the objectives and expected outcome of the conference. Ms. Helena Molin Valdes explained the objectives of the Global Campaign on Resilient Cities. Mayor of Delhi outlined the measures taken for managing the risks of disasters in Delhi. Minister of State for Home highlighted the challenges of emerging urban risks, while Gen. N. C. Vij explained the initiatives taken by the NDMA for holistic management of disasters in the country. In his inaugural address Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy made an incisive presentation on the emerging hazards and vulnerabilities in urban India and various measures

taken by the national, state and local governments to deal with these risks. He elaborated on the objectives of the National Urban Renewal Mission and highlighted the features of the Mission that can significantly contribute to reducing the risks of disasters.

Mayors of several cities of South Asia including the cities of Mumbai, Dhaka, Karachi, Kathmandu, Kabul, Colombo, Thimphu, Male etc made presentations on respective country and cities. 30 city Mayors signed their commitments with UNISDR to implement 10-Point programme for Making Cities Resilient to Disasters. The delegates were taken for a field visit to Delhi Metro Rail project for demonstration of the mechanisms of safety and protection of urban railway network from natural disasters. They were also taken to Indira Gandhi Stadium for a preview of the preparations and construction practices like retrofitting for the upcoming Common Wealth Games 2010. Group discussions were organized on four themes - Protecting Urban Infrastructure from the Hazards of Nature, Building and Zoning Regulations and their Enforcement, Climate Change and Urban Flooding and Community Based Urban Disaster Risk Management. These were attended by eminent experts. Respective group made their presentations in the plenary session.

A South Asia Regional Road Map on Urban Risk Mitigation was adopted during in the Conference. Director of the SDMC presented the Road Map during the Valedictory Session of the Conference. The Session was addressed by Mr. G.K. Pillai Union Home Secretary and Dr. M Ramachandran Secretary Ministry of Urban Development Government of India. While Dr. Ramachandran highlighted the various steps taken by the Government of India for mitigating the risks of urban disasters, Mr. Pillai emphasized the importance of practical steps that can be taken based on past experiences for better management of disasters without significant additional costs.

SAARC Workshop on Mid Term Review of HFA, New Delhi, 10 June 2010



A workshop on Mid Term Review of HFA in South Asia was organized by the SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi on 10th June 2010. Senior policy makers and civil society leaders working on disaster risk reduction in different countries of the region attended the workshop.

The workshop opened with a warm welcome to all participants by Mr P.G Dhar Chakrabarti, Director SAARC Disaster Management Centre. It was followed by his presentation on the mid-term review, wherein he explained the results of the First Biennial HFA Review 2007-09 which indicated that significant progress on HFA priority actions 1 and 5, consistent progress on priority action 2 but weak progress on priority actions 3 and 4.

Ms Letizia Rossano, Senior Coordinator for the Mid-Term Review of the Hyogo Framework for Action, ISDR, in her presentation underlined the rationale and methodology to be followed in this review. She emphasized that this exercise was a review and not an evaluation, which is broad and strategic in nature to see whether the HFA implementations are on the right track or not.

Responses to these presentations underscored the need for specialized funding for DRR, not only from developed to developing countries but also from national to the local level where most of the action needs to be focused.

In the following sessions country presentations on Mid-Term Review of HFA from Afghanistan, Bangladesh,

Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were made. The subsequent session had thematic discussions in two groups. While Group 1 discussed questions focused mainly on Intra-Governmental coordination and monitoring across countries, Group 2 focused on the local level implementation of HFA.

An open discussion session followed wherein all such issues that had not been discussed in the plenary and working groups were discussed and views and comments were invited from participants. The Workshop recommended a set of measures for a more structured participatory and analytical review of the HFA in its mid-term.

Delegation of Women Journalists visits SDMC



A delegation of Women Journalists from the SAARC countries visited SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) on 20 April 2010. The delegation included senior women journalists from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Mr.P.G.Dhar Chakrabarti, Director SDMC welcomed the delegation and explained the role and functions of SDMC and the burning issues of regional cooperation. The important role played by the media in reporting of natural disasters was discussed at length.

This was followed by an interesting interaction which encompassed a wide ranging array of issues including disaster response, planning, relief and rehabilitation work and constraints of disaster reporting.

Air Crash in Mangalore, India



The coastal town of Mangalore, India witnessed a major air tragedy on 22 May 2010 when an Air India Express airliner crashed outside Mangalore airport in Karnataka, killing 158 people when it burst into flames after overshooting a table-top runway and plunging into forest below. There were 8 survivors after the ill fated Boeing 737-800, which had come from Dubai with 166 people on board including 6 crew members, skid off the runway. According to one of the survivors of the tragedy: "The plane broke into two and we jumped off the plane. As soon as the plane landed, within seconds it happened".

With 158 fatalities, the accident is the third deadliest in India, after the 1996 Charkhi Dadri mid-air collision which killed 349 and the 1978 crash of Air India Flight 855 which killed 213. It marked the first major Indian aviation accident since the July 2000 crash of Alliance Air Flight 7412 in Patna. After touching down on runway number 06/24 (length 8,033 feet or 2,448 m), the plane overran the runway and crashed down the hill at the end of the runway. The last conversations between ATC and the pilot prior to the landing, showed no indication of any distress. According to Indian civil aviation ministry the aircraft was following an ILS (instrument landing system) approach for landing on the newer runway, which was commissioned in 2006. The pilot reported to the ATC (air traffic control) that it was 'established' on ILS approach at about 15 km from touchdown, landing clearance was given at 7 km from the touchdown. The airplane concluded the ILS approach on runway 24, touched down slightly past the touchdown zone,

overran the runway, ploughed through a 90-metre long sand arrestor bed which could not stop the airplane. The aircraft then went beyond the arrestor bed when its starboard wing impacted the concrete socket of the ILS localiser antenna; it then plunged over the cliff and on to the hillside coming to a stop 200–300 metres past the top of the slope.

Local villagers were among the first on the scene to help. An estimated 15 firetrucks, 20 ambulances and 100 rescue workers were immediately pushed into the rescue operations. The Karnataka Police force, bomb squad, Karnataka Fire & Emergency Services, Karnataka State Reserve Police and all the hospitals worked together to help out in this situation. The Central Industrial Security Force had sent a team of 150 personnel to Mangalore to help in the relief and rescue operations.

Parts of Bangladesh reel under flood

In June, parts of Bangladesh were under flood as many of the rivers of the Brahmaputra basin in the country were flowing over the danger mark. The



situation had worsened due to heavy inflow in the river from the upper reaches and heavy downpour. About 70,000 people of 150 low-lying char villages in seven upazilas in Kurigram, three upazilas of Gaibandha and Sariakandi upazila of Bogra and some other riverside upazilas of Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari and Sirajganj were partially marooned. People took shelter in schools, colleges, and flood centers and faced scarcity of food and water. However, many of the affected were forced to continue to live in their inundated home due to lack of space in flood shelters. The price of regular household commodities rose sharply. Shortage in food is anticipated as the main crop, Boro Rice suffered loss due to flood.

SAARC participates in the UN-SPIDER Technical Advisory Mission Male, Maldives



N. Muhammed Akram System Analyst, represented SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) in the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) Technical Advisory Mission in Male, Maldives between 18-21 April 2010. The technical team comprised of experts from UN-SPIDER, UNESCAP, UNOCHA, SDMC and UNISDR. The key objectives of the meeting were to assess national capacity and evaluate disaster and risk reduction activities, policies and plans with regard to the use of space-based technologies and to facilitate access of national institutions to space-based information to support full cycle of disaster management.

The Technical Advisory Mission began with an initial briefing with the State Minister and Head of the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) Maldives and subsequently the mission team held meeting with Government offices like NDMC, Ministry of Health and Family, Maldives Meteorological Service and, Department of National Planning and UN Offices like UNDP, WHO,

and UNICEF.

During the mission, one day workshop was organized by UNOOSA and NDMC bringing together 25 representatives from various government and UN agencies to discuss cross cutting issues related to use of geographic and space-based information for disaster risk reduction and emergency response.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) visits SDMC



A delegation of Gulf Cooperation Council visited SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) on 27 May 2010. The delegation was led by Brig. (Engineer) Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Mohanadi. The meeting began with the introduction of the delegates. Mr. P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti, Director SDMC elaborated upon the genesis, vision, mission and function of SDMC, the road maps on different aspects of disaster management and the projects under implementation. Dr. D. Chamlagain Specialist Geological Disasters Division SDMC gave a presentation on the Digital Vulnerability Atlas of India and Mr. Muhammad Akram System Analyst SDMC explained the South Asia Disaster Knowledge Network (SADKN) to the members of the delegation.

120 killed in train accident in West Bengal, India

More than 120 passengers were feared killed and 160 injured after 13 coaches of Mumbai-bound Gyaneshwari Express were derailed leading to a collision with a goods train in West Midnapore district early on 28 May 2010. At 01:30 local time, Gyaneshwari Super Deluxe Express travelling from Howrah to Mumbai with 13 carriages passing over the missing track got derailed. 5 coaches of the derailed train were then hit by a goods train travelling in the opposite direction. This was suspected to be an act of sabotage by a local militant group. The missing track was between Khemasoli and Sardiya stations.



New team of professional joins SDMC

Dr. O.P. Mishra joined SAARC Disaster Management Centre on 9th June, 2010 as Head, Geological Disaster Division on deputation from Geological Survey of India. He has obtained his M. Sc(Tech).in Applied Geophysics from Indian School of Mines Dhanbad and D.Sc. in Seismology from Geodynamics Center, Ehime University, Matsuyuma, Japan. He was the Visiting Professor and Head at Foreign Guest Professor Division at GRC Japan. His areas of specialization are Applied Geophysics, Seismology, 3-D and 4-D Multiscale Seismic tomography to translate geological and geodynamical signals into Earth Dynamics. He is a recipient of several national and international honours including the prestigious Best Overseas Student award (2000) in at Japan and National Mineral Award (2008) in the field of Disaster Management under Applied Geosciences by The Government of India and has been referred in the Marquis who's who. He is a bonafide member of various national and international professional scientific bodies and reviewer of several reputed journals and publications.



Dr. Deepak Chamlagain, former Vice-Principal of Khwopa Engineering College, Purbanchal University, Nepal joined SAARC Disaster Management Centre on 16th April, 2010 as Specialist in the Geological Disaster Division. He has obtained B. Sc. and M. Sc. in Geology from the Tribhuvan University, Nepal and M.Sc. and PhD on simulation tectonics from University of the Ryukyus, Japan. He was a visiting faculty member of the Tribhuvan University, Nepal. He has teaching and research experience on Himalayan neotectonics, seismicity and disaster management. He has several research papers in national and international journals of repute. He has received the Nepal Vidaya Bhushan award (2008) and Young Scientist Award (2008) for his outstanding researches on Himalayan tectonics. He is a Life Member



of Nepal Geological Society and Member of Scientific Committee in the current executive body of the society.

Mriganka Ghatak joined SAARC Disaster Management Division on 14th June 2010 as Specialist in the Geological Disaster Division on deputation from Geological Survey of India. He has obtained M.Tech. degree in Applied Geology from National Institute of Technology, Raipur. He has more than 10 years experience of mapping and characterization of intraplate seismogenic fault zones flanking the Satpura ranges of Peninsular India and evolution of the fault bound Central Indian Quaternary basins. His other major areas of specialisation include Structural Geology and Quantitative Geomorphological Studies for characterisation of evolutionary history of fault zones. He has been working on a prototype project of Active Tectonics-Palaeoclimate correlation of the major river basins of Central India.



N. Muhammed Akram joined SAARC Disaster Management Centre as System Analyst on 12th April 2010. Muhammed Akram holds a post graduate in Computer Application from Bharathidasan University Tiruchirappalli Tamilnadu. He is an Information Management professional with 15 years of experience in the industry. He was involved in development of databases on Disaster Impact for the states of Tamilnadu, Kerala, Puducherry and Andhra Pradesh as a part of UNDP's Tsunami Recovery Program. Prior to joining SDMC he was associated with TREC-STEP (Tiruchirappalli Regional Engineering College – Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Park) as a project officer promoting innovative knowledge based industries in the region. In his corporate stint for a decade in India and abroad he was involved in the complete administration of the IT department and involved in formulating company's IT policy, procurement, and future strategy to meet the company's IT requirements.



More than 100 burnt alive in blaze in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Over 100 people, mostly women and children, were burned alive and many more wounded in a blaze in the densely-populated Nimtoli area in Old Dhaka on 3 June 2010. More than 8 houses and 20 shops were reduced to ashes by the fire, the biggest in recent years in Bangladesh. The devastation was so severe that charred bodies, many of them beyond recognition, were seen lying everywhere- in alleyways, in front of shops, in staircases and inside rooms. Witnesses said they heard a huge bang and saw flames swallowing the houses and shops adjacent to the transformers in no time. The fireball leapt up to around 200 feet and then rained down on the houses. The glow of the fire could be seen from parts of the capital far away. Though there were conflicting reports on the cause of the fire, it was reported that chemicals stored in a five-storey building had swelled the flames, accounting for such high casualties.



Fire Brigade and Civil Defence, Rapid Action Battalion, the army and police rushed to the spot for the rescue of the trapped victims. However, it was the local people who braved the odds and first rushed to the rescue of their neighbours. Hundreds of locals risking their lives joined the rescue operations. They fought the fire with whatever they could find near, recovered bodies and rescued the wounded. Initially high temperature, smoke and darkness made rescue operation almost impossible.



A three-member probe committee headed by Addition Home Secretary Iqbal Khan Chowdhury, Bangladesh made the following recommendations to stave off recurrence of such accidents:

1. Evacuation of all kinds of chemical go-downs from the Old Dhaka,
2. Strict instruction for maintaining Fire Prevention and Extinguishing Rules 2003 and Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) for building construction,
3. Installation of separate hydrant points in the capital as well as all divisional towns across the country to facilitate fire fighting.
4. Coordination among the organisations, which provide licenses for chemical and inflammable materials and Strengthening the Fire Service and Civil Defense.

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