



Quarterly Newsletter of
SAARC
Disaster Management Centre
New Delhi

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Message from the Secretary General

I am delighted to know that the SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) is bringing out its first Newsletter. The programme activities of the Centre are gradually picking up and it is appropriate that a quarterly Newsletter which will highlight these activities is being launched for the information of the Member States and the benefit of various organizations and individuals associated with disaster risk reduction and management in the region and outside.

SDMC is an important Regional Centre of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) assigned to play a pivotal role in the formulation and implementation of regional cooperation in disaster risk reduction and management.

At the Third Summit in November, 1987 in Kathmandu, our leaders had expressed their concern with the impact of frequent and various types of natural disasters afflicting South Asia and decided to intensify regional cooperation with a view to strengthening disaster management capabilities in the Member States. Since then a number of mechanisms have been created by SAARC to improve and strengthen cooperation in disaster risk reduction and management, including the establishment of a Technical Committee on Environment and Forestry (with mandate over disaster management) and regular ministerial meetings.

The Declaration of the 13th Summit held in Dhaka in November, 2005 stated that "in

view of the extensive loss of life and colossal damage to property as a result of earthquake and tsunami and other natural disasters in South Asia, the Heads of State or Government underscored the urgency to put in place a permanent regional response



HE Mr Chenkyab Dorji
Secretary General SAARC

mechanism dedicated to disaster preparedness, emergency relief and rehabilitation to ensure immediate response. They directed the concerned national authorities to coordinate their activities in such areas of disaster management as early warning, exchange of information, training and sharing of expe-

riences and best practices in emergency relief efforts". The establishment of the SDMC in New Delhi by SAARC in October, 2005 is one of the most important steps in putting in place a permanent regional response mechanism for disaster risk reduction and management.

The Mission of the SDMC is to serve the Member countries by providing policy advice and facilitating capacity development services including strategic learning, research, training, systems development, expertise promotion and exchange of information for effective disaster risk reduction and management.

The launching of the quarterly newsletter SDMC Informs is an important step in fulfilling the mission of SDMC.

I congratulate the Director and the staff of SDMC on the occasion of the launching of the newsletter SDMC Informs.

Secretary General



In view of the extensive loss of life and colossal damage to property as a result of earthquake and tsunami and other natural disasters in South Asia, the Heads of State or Government underscored the urgency to put in place a permanent regional response mechanism dedicated to disaster preparedness, emergency relief and rehabilitation to ensure immediate response. They directed the concerned national authorities to coordinate their activities in such areas of disaster management as early warning, exchange of information, training and sharing of experiences and best practices in emergency relief efforts.

'Dhaka Declaration'
Thirteenth SAARC Summit, Dhaka, November 2005

SAARC Initiatives on Disaster Management

Regional Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and Protection and Preservation of Environment

The Third SAARC Summit (Kathmandu 1987), deeply concerned at the fast and continuing degradation of the environment including extensive destruction of forests and resulting in natural disasters, commissioned a Study for the Protection and Preservation of the Environment and the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters in a well-planned comprehensive framework. Accordingly, a Group of Experts with members from all the SAARC Countries was constituted to prepare the Study. The Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi took the lead role in compiling the study report which was finalized in 1991. The main recommendations of the study are categorized in three parts:

- Measures to protect and manage the environment;
- Measures and programme for strengthening disaster management capabilities; and
- Implementation mechanisms for the measures outlined in the study.

The recommendations were endorsed by Heads of State or Government at their Sixth Summit (Colombo 1991).

SAARC Meteorological Research Center (SMRC)

The SAARC Meteorological Research Centre was set up in Dhaka, Bangladesh in January 1995. The functions of the Centre are to:

- Undertake research on weather prediction, monsoon and other weather phenomena;
- Compile climatological information required for weather forecasting and agricultural activities;
- Monitor special weather conditions;
- Develop a networking system with the member countries to obtain data and to provide processed information to the members

The Centre has the following divisions:

Theoretical Division: This division is responsible to undertake research relevant to weather prediction and better understanding of various aspects of monsoon and other weather phenomena of particular interest in the region.

Synoptic Division: This division is responsible to prepare appropriate synoptic climatology of the region and build synoptic models for sys-



tems associated with large-scale monsoon activity.

Documentation Division: This division is responsible to compile climatological information for the region.

The centre has completed the following studies:

- Impact of Tropical Cyclones on the Coastal Regions of SAARC Countries and their Influence in the Region
- Changes in the Frequencies of Cyclonic Storms and Depressions over the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea
- Vulnerability Assessment of the SAARC Coastal Region due to Sea Level Rise: Bangladesh Case
- Recent Climatic Changes in Bangladesh
- Recent Climatic Changes in Sri Lanka
- Climate Variability and its Trend in Maldives
- Sea Level Variability along the Indian Coast
- Integrated Approach to Sea Level Changes, Coastal Erosion & Inundation and their Impacts in Maldives.

SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre (SZMC)

The SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre was set up in Male, Maldives in June 2005. The functions of the Centre are to:

- Collect, compile and disseminate information through networking among the Member States

- Assess and standardize planning methodologies for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
- Provide support for the promotion and development of ICZM concepts, methodologies and planning tools
- Assist in institutional strengthening and human resources development for capacity building in ICZM
- Conduct and coordinate research in the field of coastal zone management and facilitate technology transfer.

The Centre is assessing the state of oil pollution in the Indian Ocean through Tarball Monitoring Programme. Besides the centre has conducted Workshops on:

- Developing a Framework for Managing Land-based Activities that Impact the Coastal and Marine Environment in the Maldives
- Formulation of the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Action Plan.

Malé Declaration in the Aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami

Ministers of the Environment of the Member Countries of the SAARC met in Malé, Maldives on 25 June 2005, for the *Special Session of SAARC Environment Ministers in the Aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Disaster of 26 December 2004*, which had caused unprecedented loss of life and property in the South Asian region. The meeting ended with the adoption of Malé Declaration which expressed deep appreciation for the prompt and generous assistance and contributions by some of the Member States, other countries and the international community and agencies and called for

- (b) developing a strategy to integrate the disaster recovery and reconstruction activities into the national sustainable development strategies of the Tsunami-impacted SAARC countries;
- (c) formulating a Comprehensive Framework on Early Warning, Disaster Management and Disaster Prevention;
- (d) enhancing the capacity of the existing SAARC institutions, namely, the SAARC Meteorological Research Centre in Dhaka and the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre in Malé to carry out their mandated tasks;
- (g) developing SAARC regional programmes/projects for early warning, preparedness and management of Tsunami and other natural disasters. ■

Fourteenth SAARC Summit April 2007



The 14th SAARC Summit was held in New Delhi on 3-4 April 2007. This Summit was historic in more than one sense. First, Afghanistan was admitted as the eighth Member of the SAARC and five countries and organization - the People's Republic of China, Japan, Republic of Korea, the United States of America and the European Union - were allowed to participate as Observers. A number of very concrete initiatives which would have far reaching implications were adopted at this Summit.

Agreements to establish a South Asian University and a SAARC Food Bank were signed and the South Asia Development Fund with an initial corpus of \$300 million has been set up. Within six months, specific projects to alleviate poverty will be given shape, for the regional Council of Foreign Ministers to approve.

Mr. Manmohan Singh Prime Minister of India said in his closing remarks that regional leaders had agreed to "make tangible progress in the next six months on four issues which affect our people's daily lives - water (including flood control), energy, food and the environment". He said a new sense of purpose and determination among the leaders of SAARC was visible and the "summit has given us the hope that we can live in peace and amity and the confidence that we can make SAARC work".

The year 2008 has been designated the 'SAARC Year of Good Governance'.

The 15th summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation will be held in the Maldivian capital of Male.

SAARC Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management

South Asia with its population of about 1.3 billion is one of the regions in the world highly exposed to a variety of natural as well as human induced hazards. Countries in the SAARC region experienced a number of major disasters in the last one and a half decades, which took lives of about half a million people and caused huge economic losses and massive destruction in the countries' economy. Among others the major reasons in increasing vulnerability of people in the region is largely related to the demographic conditions, rapid technological and socio-economic changes, fast expanding urbanization and development within high-risk environment.

Recurring disasters pose a great development challenge for all SAARC countries. In that context, a SAARC Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management and Disaster Prevention is articulated. The SAARC Centre for Disaster Management and Preparedness (New Delhi), SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre (Male) and SAARC Meteorological Research Centre (Dhaka) will implement the Framework in context of regional co-operation within the mandate of the respective Regional Centres.

The Framework is also aligned with the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.

II. Regional Objectives, Expected Outcomes and Strategic Goals

A. Objectives

The Framework provides a platform for South Asian countries to:

- Establish and strengthen the regional disaster management system to reduce risks and to improve response and recovery management at all levels;
- Identify and elaborate country and regional priorities for action;
- Share best practices and lessons learnt from disaster risk reduction efforts at national levels;
- Establish a regional system to develop and implement regional programmes and projects for early warning;
- Establish a regional system of exchanging information on prevention, preparedness and management of natural disasters;
- Create a regional response mechanism dedicated to disaster preparedness, emergency relief and rehabilitation to ensure immediate response; and
- Create a regional mechanism to facilitate monitoring and



evaluation of achievements towards goals and strategies.

B. Expected Outcome

- An efficient Disaster Management System;
- Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into the development policies and practices of the government at all levels;
- Disaster resilient communities that have enhanced coping capacities in relation to all hazards;
- Development of policies and programmes that recognizes all risks to the communities, and mitigation strategies that are based on a risk management assessment;
- Greater levels of coordination and cooperation at national, regional and international levels; and
- Enhanced information, warning and reporting systems within governments at all levels.

C. Strategic goals

1. Professionalising the disaster management system;
2. Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction;
3. Strengthening of community institutional mechanisms;
4. Empowering community at risk particularly women, the poor and the disadvantaged;
5. Expanding risk reduction programming across a broader range of hazards (all hazards approach);
6. Strengthening emergency response systems; and
7. Developing and strengthening networks of relevant national, regional and international organizations.

III. Priorities for Action 2006-2015

A. General considerations



In determining appropriate actions to achieve the expected outcomes and strategic goals, the framework takes into account the following:

- To proactively pursue national and international agenda for poverty reduction and sustainable development.
- To align national service delivery with the vision and priorities of national governments.
- To strongly advocate the adoption of a comprehensive approach to risk reduction and disaster management.
- To promote the integration of research outputs within development planning and community risk reduction strategies.
- To engage the governmental system at all levels in risk reduction and disaster management through mainstreaming and advocacy strategies.
- To develop policy and operational frameworks for sustainable coordination, collaboration and information management across governments, and with key stakeholders.
- To establish partnerships of government agencies with civil society, private sector and other stakeholders for effective and sustainable service delivery.
- To have a community focus with a strong emphasis on issues of gender and the disadvantaged embedded in all programmes.
- To establish and maintain strong regional partnerships and networks, and to actively contribute to national, regional and international agenda.
- To pursue the standardization of training curriculum and its adaptation to suit local context by aligning with best practice standards, models and competencies and exchange of expertise.
- To build and maintain high level competencies of the professionals involved in disaster risk management.
- To learn from traditional and indigenous coping mechanisms of the communities and further improve the same.

B. Priorities for action

Taking into account the recommendations of the HFA, and directives of SAARC meetings including the Dhaka Declaration 2005 of the 13th SAARC Summit, the framework envisages the following priority areas of action:

1. Develop and implement risk reduction strategies which include:

- a) development of methodologies and standards for hazard and vulnerability assessments;
- b) development of strategies to make a right balance across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR) programming
- c) development and implementation of risk reductions programmes

2. Establish Regional and National Response Mechanisms which include:

2.1. Establish, strengthen and improve Regional Early Warning Systems to:

- a) define national and regional needs and priorities;
- b) identify national organizations responsible for early warn-

ing;

- c) identify their current procedures during normal working hours and after hours;
- d) identify their linkage with regional centres or of other countries;
- e) share real-time data relating to natural hazards
- f) find out the best possible options to strengthen the national systems as well as to integrate them regionally.

2.2. Develop systems and procedures to establish an effective Community Alerting System.

2.3. Establish and improve Search and Rescue Mechanism.

2.4. Develop and standardize Damage, Loss and Impact Assessment Methodologies and Relief Management Procedure.

2.5. Establish a post-disaster recovery and reconstruction mechanism

3. Establish a Regional Information Sharing and Develop Network of Institutions and Organizations including, but not limited to, the followings:

- a) Mainstreaming and advocacy
- b) Community risk assessment
- c) Geo-information technologies
- d) Research information database
- e) Emergency response management
- f) Networking with relevant national, regional and international systems

4. Develop and implement Disaster Management training, education, research and awareness programmes which will include the following:

- a. Conduct training need assessment
- b. Develop strategies for HRD
- c. Develop training modules for various stakeholders
- d. Standardize training curriculum
- e. Mainstream disaster risk reduction in education curriculum at all levels
- f. Exchange trainers and experts
- g. Conduct research, documentation and publication
- h. Compile best practices and indigenous knowledge
- i. Develop indicators for measuring the impact of training

5. Apply the ICT for disaster management.

6. Establish an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

IV. Implementation and Follow-up

A. General considerations

- i. The implementation of and follow-up to the strategic goals and priorities for action should be addressed by different stakeholders in a multi-sectoral approach, including the development sector. Member States and regional organizations will integrate disaster risk reduction considerations into their sustainable development policy, planning and programming at all levels. Civil society, including volunteers and community-based organizations, the scientific community and the private sector are vital stakeholders in

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SDMC VISION
The SAARC Disaster Management Centre would be a vibrant centre of excellence for knowledge, research and capacity building on disaster management.

SDMC MISSION
The SAARC Disaster Management Centre would serve the Member Countries by providing policy advice and facilitating capacity building services including strategic learning, research, training, system development, expertise promotion and exchange of information for effective disaster risk reduction and management.



Hon'ble Union Home Minister Inaugurating SAARC Centre

SAARC Disaster Management Centre

South Asia is one of the most disaster prone regions of the world. Some or other part of the eight countries of this region - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - are hit every year by one or more disasters, taking heavy toll of life and property and causing enormous suffering and distress to thousands of families. Hard earned gains of development made over years of efforts of the government and the people get eroded and scarce resources are diverted for relief, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction, which create further setbacks for development.

Most of the natural disasters in South Asia are rooted in the geo-physical and hydro-climatic conditions of the sub-continent that connect several countries of the region. Almost all the major disasters transcend the boundaries of the affected country and simultaneously impact one or more neighbouring countries. The Pakistan earthquake of 2005 affected part of north India just as the Bhuj earthquake of 2001 sent tremors as far as Karachi. Much of the recurrent floods in India and Bangladesh have their origin in Nepal. The cyclones of Bay of Bengal affect the coastal regions of India and Bangladesh just as the cyclones on Arabian Sea hit the

coasts of Gujarat in India and Sindh in Pakistan. Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 caused devastation simultaneously in India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Considering the regional dimensions of natural disasters the 3rd SAARC Summit had commissioned a comprehensive Regional Study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters. A SAARC Meteorological Research Centre was established in Dhaka in 1995 and a SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre was set up at Male in 2004. A Special Session of the SAARC Environment Ministers in June 2005 adopted the Male Declaration, which called for formulation of a Comprehensive Framework of



Disaster Management in South Asia.

The 13th SAARC Summit at Dhaka in November 2005 considered the issues of regional cooperation for preparedness and mitigation of national disasters and approved the offer of India to set up a SAARC Disaster Management Centre Management in New Delhi.

The Vision, the Mission, the Function and the modalities for setting up the SAARC Disaster Management Centre were decided by an Expert Group of the SAARC countries which met at New Delhi on 1-2 June 2006. The Report of the Expert Group was accepted by the SAARC Council of Ministers in its meeting held at Dhaka on 30-31 July 2006. The Centre was inaugurated on 10th October 2006 by Mr. Shiv Raj Patil, Honourable Home Minister of India.

FUNCTIONS

The functions of the SAARC Disaster Management Centre would be:

- to collect, compile, document and disseminate data, information, case studies, indigenous knowledge and good practices relating to disaster management particularly from the Member Countries;
- to analyze information, undertake research and disseminate research findings on disaster management among the Member Countries;
- to develop educational materials and conduct academic and professional courses on disaster management;
- to organize training and awareness programmes for various stakeholders on disaster management for the Member Countries;
- to develop training modules on various aspects on disaster management and conduct programmes of Training for Trainers including simulation exercises;
- to provide assistance in the formulation of policies, strategies, disaster management framework and any other assistance as may be required by the Member Countries or organizations and institutions nominated by the Member Countries;
- to undertake, organize, facilitate and participate in workshops, conferences, seminars, lectures etc on various aspects of disaster management in the Member Countries;
- to undertake publication of journals, research papers and books and establish and maintain online resource centre in furtherance of the aforesaid objects;

- to collaborate with other SAARC Centres, particularly SMRC, SCZMC and SAARC Forestry Centre to achieve synergies in programmes and activities

STRATEGIES

The SAARC Disaster Management Centre shall develop appropriate strategies for the performance of its functions, which may include the following:

- Network with the national focal points of disaster management and with the concerned regional and international bodies;
- Assist the national focal points of disaster management of Member Countries to develop appropriate models for networking with their research, training and other institutions ;
- Develop a network of networking institutions to facilitate quick acquisition, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information, data and knowledge on disaster management including linkages with approved real-time data providers ;
- Use information and communication technologies to develop a virtual resource centre for disaster management in South Asia ■

Operational Plan

The Governing Body of the Centre has approved the following operational plan for implementing the networking strategy:

- Each Member Country shall nominate its National Focal Point with which the SAARC Disaster Management Centre shall network.
- The National Focal Points in turn shall network with the national research, training and other organizations engaged in creation, dissemination and use of knowledge on various aspects of disaster risk reduction and management.
- Appropriate networking model shall be developed by each Member State in consultation with the Centre, which will be linked with the SAARC Disaster Management Centre. This will interlock a large number of organizations engaged in disaster risk reduction and management in South Asia and a vast pool of knowledge and resources already available in the region shall be made available for the use of the people of the entire region.
- Each National Focal Point shall identify its National Focal Point Coordinator with whom the SAARC Disaster Management Centre shall work on a day-to-day basis. ■

National Focal Points

The Member countries have nominated the following organizations as their National Focal Points for the SAARC Disaster Management Centre.



AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority



BANGLADESH

Disaster Management Bureau



BHUTAN

Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs



INDIA

National Institute of Disaster Management



MALDIVES

Disaster Management Centre



NEPAL

Ministry of Home Affairs



PAKISTAN

National Disaster Management Authority



SRI LANKA

Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights



“Building Culture of prevention is not easy, while the cost of prevention has to be paid in the present, its benefits lie in the distant future. More over the benefits are not tangible; they are the disasters that did not happen”.

UN Secretary General

SDMC NEWS

Release of Report ‘Violence Against Women’

A Report titled *Violence Against Women In The Post-Tsunami Context* was released in a function held in the SAARC Disaster Management Centre on April 2, 2007. This Report is based on the work of alliances of 174 organizations and discussion with 7583 tsunami-affected women in India, Maldives, Puntland (Somalia), Sri Lanka and Thailand.

While considerable relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts had taken place in these countries, many women experienced violence which highlighted the need to understand their plight in risk situations and to develop policy and programmes for community lead solutions.

Women representatives from the affected South Asian countries shared their experiences which were followed by interesting discussion in which women activists, NGOs, media personalities etc participated. Senior representatives from the High Commissions and Embassies of the SAARC countries also participated in the discussion.

Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

The World Conference on Disaster Risk reduction in Kobe, Japan in January 2005 adopted the *Hyogo Framework of Action 2005-15: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* which provides overarching guidelines to various actors at national, regional and global levels for mainstream-

ing disaster risk reduction in development. Complying with the HFA guidelines several national governments have set up National Platforms involving the representatives of various stakeholders including the national, provincial and local governments, scientific and technical institutions, media, corporate sector, community leaders etc to create awareness for disaster risk reduction.

During 2006 the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) which the focal point in the UN on disaster risk reduction launched a consultative process to consider practical ways to strengthen the ISDR system. The consensus that emerged was to restructure and broaden the ISDR into a Global Platform which would involve the national governments, UN agencies, international financial institutions, regional bodies, civil society organizations, private sector and the scientific and academic communities to raise awareness on reducing disaster risk, increase the profile of disaster risk reduction as part of development and climate change adaptation and reiterate the commitment of policy and decision-makers to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The first session of the Global Platform was held at Geneva on 5-7 June 2007. 1150 participants from 124 Member States and 105 regional, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations attended the session, deliberated on a wide range of issues and reaffirmed their commitments for strengthening the *Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*. The Global Platform has signaled the transformation of the ISDR into a Global Movement for Disaster Risk Reduction. ■

SAARC Comprehensive Framework on Disaster

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supporting the implementation of disaster risk reduction at all levels.

- ii. While each Member State has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development, an enabling regional environment is vital to stimulate and contribute to developing the knowledge, capacities and motivation needed to build disaster resilient nations and communities.
- iii. All the Member States will be encouraged to apply a holistic approach and maintain consistency in programming and building multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels,

as appropriate, to contribute to the implementation of this Framework for Action.

- iv. Member States and other actors are encouraged to promote the strengthening or establishment of volunteer corps, which can be made available during disasters.

B. Specific considerations

- Member countries shall develop their own plan of action for implementation of this framework.
- The regional cooperation components of this framework shall be implemented by the concerned regional mechanisms. ■

SAARC Disaster Management Centre

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