

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 resources 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. It is necessary to retrofit all new development activities for reducing the threats of impending disasters. Additional costs involved shall always be far less than the benefits accruing from such investments.

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:

- Developing crop varieties that are resistant to drought and can withstand flood and saline conditions
- Creating stand by employment opportunities in non-farm sectors in hazard prone areas
- Providing insurance cover for crops and animals

Education:

- Initiating School Safety programme
- Including disaster management in school curricula
- Conducting simulation drills and first aid training for students
- Preparing school level Disaster Management Plan

Environment:

- Integrating Disaster Impact Assessment (DIA) in Environment Impact assessment (EIA)
- Ensuring that eco-system is part of all developmental activities, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas such as coastal and hill areas etc

- Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction in Climate Change Adaptation Programmes

Housing:

- Developing disaster resistant Land Use Plans and Building Codes
- Enforcing zoning and building regulations

Health:

- Initiating Hospital safety initiatives
- Encouraging Hospital Emergency Preparedness Plan

Risk Transfer and Risk Insurance:

- Promoting social and public funded insurance schemes
- Developing innovative micro-insurance services and products

Critical Infrastructure :

- Ensuring that all new critical infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, power, water, communication etc compulsorily comply with the safety standards of disaster reduction
- Ensuring that all existing infrastructure projects are retrofitted from future disasters, to the extent possible

5. **Disaster Impact Assessment:** National governments shall develop necessary frameworks, guidelines and institutional mechanism of Disaster Impact Assessment (DIA) of all new development projects at national, provincial and local levels.

6. **Governance:** Implementation of the guidelines of MDRRD shall require capacity building of the institutions and key functionaries at all levels and sectors of governance. Systematic measures shall be required to be taken for streamlining governance system to make them efficient, accountable, transparent and sensitive to the tasks of disaster risk reduction.

7. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Mechanisms should be developed for periodic monitoring and evaluation and of implementation of the guidelines of MDRRD in all sectors of development.

8. **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

- Taking into account the local needs, capacities and resources, SDMC shall develop regional standards, tools and methodologies for MDRRD in general and specific sectors in a systematic and sustainable manner through a participatory process.

- The Tool Kits shall, inter alia, spell out multi-hazard specific entry-point activities in specific sectors

b) Training and Technical Support

SDMC shall provide technical support and capacity development services such as cross-sectoral risk analysis, area development programmes, viz., coastal zone management, hill area development, dry land and desert development etc, disaster risk auditing, public-private partnership and project management with focus on mainstreaming in the newer developmental activities,

c) DIA of Trans-boarder Development Project

SDMC shall develop a framework for Disaster Impact Assessment of trans-boundary development projects

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.