REGIONAL SITUATION ANALYSIS

The State of Production, Dissemination, and Use of Disaster-Related Statistics in Selected Countries in Asia and the Pacific

Technical Working Group on Disaster Related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

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Introduction

Disaster risk management requires sound evidence as the basis for shifting from reactive to a more proactive and predictive perspective. Statistics, therefore, play a crucial role providing the basis for risk prevention, risk reduction and management as well as in the conventional disaster management namely preparedness, disaster response and recovery. The need for timely and accurate data becomes even more pressing given the increasing frequency and severity of climate change-induced extreme weather events.

Disaster-related hazards, vulnerability, exposure and coping capacities are woven through communities, societies and economies in complex ways leading to systemic and cascading risks. In an increasingly interdependent world, these factors are closely related to development. In this regard, landmark UN agreements such as the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals have, in their central core, the idea of a strongly interlinked sustainable and equitable economic, social, and environmental development to help identify and reduce systemic risks, and promote sustainable development. One of the cornerstones for this interlinked framework is disaster-related data that is more readily available, and in a format that is more compatible, consistent, and comparable to the development-related data ecosystem. This could happen only when disaster-related data becomes official statistics in the broader context of the development of a national statistical system.

More recently, the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSD) established an Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG)[1] on Disaster Related Statistics to help concerned agencies to work together in consultation with members of regional expert groups and task forces. The Group is also to serve as a formal mechanism to progress a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics and to sustain cooperation, coordination and fundraising for enhancing statistics related to hazardous events and disasters.

Three years earlier, ESCAP Committee on Statistics in 2018 established a Technical Working Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (TWG) to accelerate and support member States in producing disaster-related statistics for national and international planning, analysis, and reporting. The TWG would build on the results of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which concluded its work in 2018 with the release of the Disaster-related Statistics Framework and recommendations on future work in the region.

The decision also marked the accomplishment of the mandate given by ESCAP in mid-2014[2] that stressed "the importance of disaggregated data related to disasters in enabling a comprehensive assessment of the socioeconomic effects of disasters and strengthening evidence-based policy-making at all levels for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation."

The Situational Analysis Report

This situational analysis aims to provide part of the basis for the work of the Technical Working Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific (TWG) in facilitating the collaboration among national statistical offices and disaster management agencies in Asia and the Pacific in order to advance the production, dissemination, and use of internationally comparable disaster-related statistics.

[1] Note by UN Secretary General (E/CN.3/2021/21) Report of the Core Group of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related statistics
[2] ESCAP resolution 70/2 (E/ESCAP/RES/70/2) on Disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific

This report seeks to help the Asia-Pacific region make the transition from building a statistical framework into the next phase, which is developing guidance for implementing such a framework. Using this report as one of its references, the TWG will be in a better position to help its members form guidance for implementation, collaborative efforts in capacity development, developing pilot studies and good practices as well as further investigations for the Disaster-related Statistics studies to be conducted in close collaboration with complementary in the region and beyond.

Objectives

The situational analysis would substantiate the Terms of Reference of the TWG. Predecessor of the TWG, i.e. the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, in its sixth and final meeting, put together the TOR that, later, was endorsed by the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics. It includes the conduct of a study, to be completed in the formative stage of the TWG, as part of the basis in developing a five-year strategy including the TWG's objectives, strategic direction, activities and modalities of work

Scope

The situational report focuses on the rationale, goals and objectives and ways of working of the TWG. It encompasses the background of the TWG particularly the policies and progress of thoughts that highlights the importance and imperatives of DRSF. These are contextualised in countries' disaster risk reduction and national development, and the need for the countries to be accountable to their commitments to regional and global frameworks. To that end, the situational analysis outlines the goals and objectives of the TWG, as well as the structural and mechanisms and the way of working to attain such objectives.

The report covers the followings

- Background of the establishment of the TWG
- Description of the gaps in disaster-related statistics
- Disaster - Related Statistical Framework

- Challenges
- Illustration of current practices
- The Technical Working Group

This situational report will not contain the substantive and technical content of disaster management nor statistics, which are elaborated in the DRSF handbook and other more tailored to the specific technical and practical purposes

Methods

The situational analysis report is compiled based on data collected through deskwork, structured interviews, and as necessary, surveys. Data is triangulated, to the extent possible, with results of deliberations in the TWG. For instance, in its first meeting, the TWG has provided the Secretariat some feedback regarding some areas of work that participants considered to be priority areas of the TWG. The secretariat, on the other hand, advised the TWG that a Situational Analysis Report will be compiled soon. For this purpose Secretariat will undertake a study that will involve data collection techniques including dsk review, survey, key interviews, and as necessary focused group discussions.

The Imperatives for Disaster Statistics

The Committee on Statistics, in October 2018, had endorsed the Disaster-related Statistics Framework, the main output of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. This product has been included in the report on disaster-related statistics to the 50th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2019.

As early as 2013, ESCAP already identified the challenges associated with compiling, maintaining, and updating disaster data in developing countries. It was obvious even then that post-disaster losses data plays a crucial role to help determine the impacts. Pre-disaster data, on the other hand, provides the basis for determining areas of high risks and, therefore, allowing

the stakeholders to focus on risk reduction interventions on the vulnerable elements (population, infrastructure, and economic activities). Together, these data would help governments determine their most optimal investment to offset risks, mitigate and adapt to hazards, respond to critical events, and to recover from their impacts. An Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific was constituted for this purpose.

Six years later in april 2019, the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific submitted its works to the Bureau of the Committee on Statistics. The Committee approved the report and went on reconfiguring the Expert Group into a regional Technical Working Group on disaster-related statistics and approved the draft Terms of Reference. The Technical Working Group is envisioned to operate as a Community of Practice, an international network of professionals and experts. Such a group is to support the capacity of member states to implement the basic range of disaster-related statistics that are aligned with national priorities, internationally comparable across countries, and coherent with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The TWG found new importance as it provides one of the basis for, and is an active partner of, the global Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related statistics IAEG.

Gaps in Disaster-Related Statistics

ESCAP study[3] revealed some gaps including the use of differing terminologies that hamper the aggregation of data at the regional level. Many countries in the region such as Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, and some states in India have established the Desinventar methodology and software as disaster loss databases with historical disaster data going back up to 30 years or more. Many more countries are at various stages of institutionalizing these disaster loss databases and are still in the process of developing systems and clarity. As customary, a few developed countries in the region have already developed their disaster-related databases.

[3] --- Expert Group Meeting (2013), Improving Disaster Data Towards Building Resilience in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP Technical Paper Sendai, Japan

Korea, for instance, has already have Disaster Statistical yearbooks, for natural, human-made, and fire, used as the bases for determining damage and subsidy since 2014[4]

ESCAP Expert Group noted that countries in the region face various challenges including the differing typologies for classifying disaster occurrences; issues in recording cascading and overlapping disastrous events; difficulties to distinguish small to large events; and lacking standard terminologies on disaster impacts. Countries' disaster data are often disconnected from data of other sectors in the broader context of development planning, monitoring, and reporting. Practitioners in the field often produce disaster-related data with relief mobilisation in mind and thus putting the premium on speed rather than accuracy. Disaster-related data, therefore, is short-lived and rarely comparable across time and region, and has little value to help the disaster-related projection.

National Disaster Management Agencies (NDMAs) that hold the mandate and expertise on disaster management and risk assessment rarely make use of the data and expertise of National Statistical Offices (NSOs). Due to this gap, opportunities have been lost in establishing the socio-economic baseline data from population census that are crucial for risk assessment, in determining potential impacts, and in estimating damage and losses in the case of disaster occurrence.

An ESCAP study[5] revealed that countries are not consistently aligned with any single international reference to classify their data on hazardous events and to measure the immediate impacts of disaster. There is the need for further work in terms of categorization and definitions; alignment with international statistical standards; and a clear list with the definition of assets for recording of damage or losses as direct impacts.