

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction

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Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development strategies

Disaster databases for development planning

Note by the secretariat**

Summary

The present information note highlights key issues in taking forward the concept of resilience as decided by the Commission in its resolution 69/12 into evidence-based disaster risk reduction practices. This entails the need to develop parameters and indicators for measuring resilience and to improve the management of disaster data. An Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disaster Data to Build Resilience in Asia and the Pacific, held in Sendai, Japan, from 30 September to 1 October 2013, pointed to the need to develop core set of disaster statistics with the aim to provide sound evidence to justify national budgetary allocation to disaster risk reduction. It also highlighted the need for improving the capacity to collect and analyse disaster-related data and statistics and enhancing collaboration between national statistical systems and disaster management authorities. At regional level, the Experts suggested the establishment of regional database, capacity building and other cooperative activities.

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** The present document has been issued without formal editing.

I. Background

1. In Asia and the Pacific, a region most prone to disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, timely and reliable data is needed to manage risks. Data is needed for reducing, preparing for, responding to, and recovering effectively from disasters. Currently, the lack of reliable data and robust regional mechanisms hinder ESCAP member States responding to disasters swiftly and in helping attain resilience through evidence-based policy making, planning, and programming.

2. In the onset of disasters, the problem is exacerbated by a combination of the urgency for action, the presence of many stakeholders, lack of baseline, lack of trained personnel, disruption and/or collapse altogether of the data collection and analysis system. Compromised disaster data stifles the process of prioritization at all levels, limit the capacity to detect, analyse and monitor trends and hinder evidence-informed priority setting and resource allocation.

3. This situation hinders efforts in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development planning, and in effectively responding to and recovering from disasters in order to build back better.

4. E/ESCAP/CDR(2)/INF/5 provided to the Committee at its second session a concise review of available international and national statistical disaster databases. It also informs the Committee on the lessons learnt from establishing disaster databases and the need for capacity building to integrate statistics to national disaster management.

II. Taking forward the concept of resilience to evidence-based DRR practices

5. The Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (HFA) places the concept of “resilience” as the focus of risk reduction by recommending policies, institutional arrangements, and programmes for disaster risk reduction. Almost a decade after its launching, the concept of resilience has generally been accepted at global and national as well as at regional levels as reflected in the ESCAP resolution 69/12. Efforts have been made to ‘unpack’ the concept into parameters, measurable goals and indicators. Evidence in this regard is to be gathered through a systematic collection of appropriate data to monitor progress. HFA Priority Action 2 calls for efforts to record, analyse, summarize and disseminate statistical information on disaster occurrence, impacts and losses, on a regular basis through global, regional, national and local mechanisms. Consequently, effective data management becomes crucial and to that end there is the need for knowledge on hazards, physical, social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities, an understanding on how hazards and vulnerabilities are changing, and the actions that need to be taken.

6. Management of disaster data has proven to be challenging. Disaster-related baseline are often not readily available, historical record of disasters are spurious and lack consistence, and there is lack capability to undertake forecast/probabilistic risks. National Disaster Management Agencies (NDMAs) usually gather data after the event. National Statistical Offices (NSOs), on the other hand, collect and analyse metadata and are often not involved in managing disaster-related data. Disaster data tend to be collected and analysed independently from the mainstream and from the periodic development surveys.

7. There are good practices in improvement of institutional and legal systems that provide enabling environment for systematic collection, accounting and application of information in disaster risk management. Considerable progress is made by countries, including increasing coordination between the NDMAs and NSOs, development agencies and civil society in the area of disaster data collection and dissemination.

8. The preparatory process for the post-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA2) acknowledged: (a) that the aim of HFA includes assisting governments and their partners in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development planning and increasing their ability to reduce disaster-induced damage and losses by achieving resilient communities and nations; and (b) the importance of assisting governments in measuring their own progress and achievements in disaster risk reduction at the national level, and that such efforts should be considered as imperative in HFA2.

9. At the sixty-ninth session of the Commission, ESCAP member States related the concept of building resilience to a broader context of rebalancing the pillars of sustainable development to include the social, economic and ecological aspects. In this regard, member States recognized the importance disasters, to enable a more comprehensive assessment of the socio-economic effects of improving data on disasters. Resolution 69/12 on enhancing regional cooperation for building resilience to disasters in Asia and the Pacific called on member States to improve the quality and availability of disaggregated data related to disasters, and strengthen evidence-based policymaking for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

10. An Expert Group Meeting on Improving Disaster Data to Build Resilience in Asia and the Pacific was organized in Sendai, Japan, from 30 September to 1 October 2013, by ESCAP in close collaboration with the International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS) of Tohoku University. The Expert Group Meeting discussed ways to build an evidence-based resilience system through improved collection and dissemination of disaster data for Asia Pacific.

11. The following section provides an overview of experts' discussion regarding major issues and challenges in disaster data in the Asian-Pacific region. It highlights strategic approaches to support member States in building resilience by improving disaster data, which are prerequisite for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development planning.

III. Strategic approaches towards building an evidence-based resilience to disasters in Asia and the Pacific through improved disaster data

12. Updated and reliable disaster statistics are essential for helping governments and their stakeholders manage risk and effectively respond to disasters inclusive of and sensitive to the different needs of the marginal and most vulnerable segments of society including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

13. The development planning and financing authorities at national and local levels need to undertake low-regret investments based not only on cost but also on investment and asset benefits to the development.

14. There is need for enhancing mechanisms for improving disaster data at the country level that fully engages local governments and civil society in

different facets of disaster risk management in terms of baseline, historical disaster records, relief and rehabilitation/recovery-related data, predictive and risk probability data.

15. Current gaps and challenges in the coordination between national and local authorities can be addressed by enhancing appropriate policies, platforms, mechanisms, standards and quality assurance schemes. Regional level coordination is needed to support NDMA and NSOs build, plan, and implement disaster data management in a coordinated manner in the countries and to share and learn with other countries.

16. There is need to increase capacity of member States in furthering an evidence-based framework in disaster risk reduction that will complement the above efforts to strengthen the political commitment of member countries.

17. The Expert Group Meeting proposed to grasp a comprehensive picture of the national level reality in the collection and dissemination of disaster data and to understand the capacity of the national statistical system. In order to define a needs-based regional framework on disaster risk reduction there is a need for: (a) developing an action plan in developing a core set of disaster statistics with the appropriate domain and themes containing the comprehensive categories of statistics to guide informed policy decisions on risk sensitive investment; and (b) undertaking further pilot studies in improving disaster data at the national level.

18. An inclusive partnership that forms the basis for developing an evidence-based framework in disaster risk reduction has been established in Sendai. The leading partners group includes ESCAP, IRIDeS at Tohoku University, UNDP, UNISDR (Regional Office for Asia Pacific and North East Asia Office), Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), International Centre for Water Hazard and Risk Management (ICHARM) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Other agencies and governments actively engaged in disaster risk reduction in the region are also invited to form a core group to continue the discussions.

IV. Way forward

19. The above initiative will receive guidance from policymakers and experts from member States through the deliberations in the third session of the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, in November 2013, the seventieth session of the Commission, in May 2014, and the Sixth Asian Ministerial

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