
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Committee on Information and Communications Technology

Second session

Bangkok, 24-26 November 2010

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

**Information and communications technology for
disaster risk reduction**

**Asia-Pacific Gateway on Disaster Risk Reduction and
Development: Phase 1**

Information note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

The Asia-Pacific Gateway on Disaster Risk Reduction and Development will be presented on 24 November 2010, during the second session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology. The Gateway is a web portal that promotes the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development planning for countries in Asia and the Pacific. It aggregates relevant information from existing online sources in the region and, where relevant, other parts of the world, thereby promoting an online community of practice where professionals can network and exchange information. The Gateway will continue to be developed and will be made available to the public at www.APDRRGateway.net.

II. Background

In 2005, 168 States members of the United Nations agreed to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters,¹ which called for building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters with the objective of reducing disaster risk by 2015. The Hyogo Framework for Action is one of a growing number of international declarations, frameworks and agreements that indicate both a recognition of links between disaster risk reduction, poverty reduction, and climate change and a growing political commitment to address these issues.

¹ A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

Interim national reports completed by 62 countries in 2008 document the progress made in achieving the strategic goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Their results indicate two trends:

- Countries are making good progress in developing institutional systems, legislation, policy and plans to improve disaster preparedness, response and early warning.
- Reported progress in addressing other underlying risk drivers is, however, less encouraging. Many institutional and legislative systems created for disaster risk reduction have little influence on development sectors. Progress in addressing issues of social equity and gender through disaster risk reduction has also been elusive.

Results are also mixed in terms of the resources available online to assist in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development planning. There are many websites, networks and organizations that deal with disaster management and, to a lesser extent, disaster risk reduction. The websites provide an incredibly diverse range of tools and information to users. This information is scattered, however, and is not necessarily organized in a way that promotes the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development planning. There is no online directory that provides a quick overview of these sites for the region, nor is there a list of services that governments might use to help them when conducting disaster management or disaster risk reduction activities. Also missing is relevant regionally aggregated disaster management information on the following:

- National policies, legislation, strategies and plans
- Roles and responsibilities of national disaster management agencies/offices
- Documents, case studies, training materials and projects
- Contacts

It is also important to note that most of these websites only make information available in English.

A secondary challenge is that many groups working on regional or subregional disaster management and disaster risk reduction initiatives lack an online presence and/or many of the basic functions that networks require, such as online discussions, libraries and calendars.

As a result, in March 2009, the ESCAP Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction expressed support for a recommendation that the secretariat promote an Asia-Pacific gateway on disaster risk reduction and development for information sharing and analysis for disaster risk reduction, in collaboration with regional and other partners working in the field. It requested that proactive action be taken to establish the Asia-Pacific gateway and to make it functional as soon as possible. The Committee also called on the international donor community to provide support for the initiative (see E/ESCAP/CDR/9, para. 9).

III. The Gateway

ESCAP is developing the Asia-Pacific Gateway on Disaster Risk Reduction and Development as a regional hub that is intended to perform the following functions:

- Provide quick and easy access to networks and organizations doing work in disaster management and, specifically, disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific
- Promote the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development planning
- Identify the disaster management services available to governments in the region
- Facilitate value added regional-level analysis, networking and information sharing
- Support and encourage information sharing and multilingual submissions of documentation to be included on the Gateway website
- Provide a number of online services that support existing networks in carrying out their work

IV. Primary users

National disaster management authorities play a pivotal role in disaster management and disaster risk reduction. Their responsibilities include the following:

- Developing national disaster management strategies, plans and guidelines
- Building disaster management and disaster risk reduction capacities with line ministries, as well as with provincial and sometimes local authorities
- Acting as national focal points for international initiatives, such as the Hyogo Framework for Action

As a result, the Gateway will focus on national disaster management authorities/offices as the primary user group for the information and services provided. Other groups will also find the information useful. Regionally aggregated data and information will be of interest to academic and research institutions. Line ministries interested in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into their work will find relevant information and support. Non-governmental organizations doing work in the field will find resources available on the site that will support their activities.

While the Gateway will be available to the general public, members that log on will have access to online discussions and functions that are not available to the public.

V. Demand driven

To ensure that the Gateway will be demand driven, ESCAP has completed the following initiatives:

- It has reviewed the roles and responsibilities of national disaster management authorities/offices in the region.
- It has conducted a preliminary review of the existing resources available to meet the needs of these authorities/offices.
- It has undertaken a stakeholder survey of national disaster management authorities/offices, potential partners and others to elicit feedback on the proposed site design and features that were made available online in draft form for review purposes.

VI. Phased development of the Gateway

Development of the Gateway is a huge initiative being undertaken over a short period of time with limited resources. As a result, the following phases of development are anticipated:

- *Phase 1.* At the time the Gateway is launched, it will provide general disaster management and disaster risk reduction information, resources and services. It is expected that initial partnerships with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, Microsoft, PreventionWeb and others will be formalized before the launch.
- *Phase 2.* Following the launch, various functions available on the site will be tested and fine-tuned to improve their performance. Outreach activities aimed at intended users and stakeholders will be initiated. Information and resource sharing with partners will be improved and expanded for a number of disaster risk reduction and development issues.
- *Phase 3.* A fundraising strategy will be undertaken to support the longer-term development and maintenance of the Gateway. Online tools will be improved, as will mechanisms for collaboration and information sharing with existing Asia-

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