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Regional Synthesis Report on HFA Implementation in Asia and Pacific

Interim Report: July 2007 – September 2008

Consultation Draft, November 2008

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Biennial HFA Progress Review Cycle

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities emphasizes the need to monitor and review progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR), not only to document the gradual implementation of the framework, but to feed into informed DRR planning and programming at national, sub-regional and regional levels. Responsibilities for monitoring the HFA are assigned mainly to States but are also identified for regional organizations and institutions, international organizations and ISDR system partners and the secretariat[1]. It is expected that the national and regional reviews generated will help identify gaps and challenges in implementation and inform policy recommendations for Asia and Pacific.

For coordination purposes at the global level, the UN secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) has facilitated the first biennial cycle (2007-09; i.e. the period between the first and second Session of the Global Platform) for monitoring and reporting on progress in the implementation of disaster risk reduction priorities, with support from many partners. The primary objective of setting up the biennial monitoring and progress reporting mechanism is to capture key trends and areas of progress and challenges at the national, regional, and global level with regard to achieving the strategic goals of the HFA.

To facilitate the national review process, an online tool – the 'HFA Monitor' was developed by UNISDR in early 2008 to enable countries to periodically monitor, self-assess and report on progress made in HFA implementation across the years and to establish country relevant baselines. The tool was launched on May 9th, 2008 and is hosted online on the PreventionWeb (www.preventionweb.net). It can be accessed by member states with a user id and password administered by the UNISDR.

At the regional level, requests were sent by the UNISDR to regional inter-governmental institutions to contribute summary reports of progress made in the implementation of the HFA at the sub/ regional levels. The regional progress reviews were intended to include an assessment of overall trends in national progress across the respective sub/regions and also provide a self- assessment of the specific activities undertaken by regional institutions to reduce regional and trans-boundary risks.

To cover some key thematic dimensions, reports were also invited from international and regional partners and networks, in the areas of early warning, response and preparedness, recovery, education, health, gender, risk assessment, urban risk and environmental risk management.

The Interim Regional Synthesis Report for Asia and Pacific covers the period June 2007 – Sept 2008 within the first biennial HFA reporting cycle, and is based on national, regional and thematic HFA progress reports prepared and available at the time. The current report will be updated before the next

[1] Paragraph 30, 31, 32, 33 of the HFA.

session of the Global Platform in June 2009, as more national, regional and thematic reports become available.

The Second Asian Ministerial Conference on DRR in New Delhi on 7-8 November 2007 reaffirmed the regional commitment to the HFA while highlighting a number of areas of specific concern to the HFA agenda in the region. The Conference also laid the foundation for the establishment of a Regional Platform under the leadership of the Ministers in charge of DRR. Against this background, the Interim Regional Synthesis Report analyzes the progress achieved since the Second Asian Ministerial Conference. The analysis will contribute to the regional policy deliberations at the Third Asian Ministerial Conference, and the 2009 Session of the Global Platform on DRR.

2.2 Methodology and Structure

The interim regional synthesis report uses the HFA as the main frame of analysis while also considering the *Delhi Declaration on Disaster Reduction in Asia 2007.* The structure of the interim report reflects the subsections and indicators of the UN/ISDR online Monitoring Tool enriched by the Regional HFA Progress Review Framework for Asia and Pacific 2008/2009. The report is primarily based upon information presented in the thirteen[2] National HFA Progress Reports, as well as the advance draft reports from two sub-regions, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and two regional thematic reports. The Report *"DRR in Asia and Pacific: Overview at the Start of the HFA Implementation Decade and Progress Made 2005 – 2007"* provides an overall context for this information. Additional information on risk profiles and progress on DRR and HFA emanating from national and regional disaster risk reduction agencies, as well as research institutions, has been taken into account. While referring to selected country examples for the purpose of illustration this report seeks to identify common themes and challenges across the Asia and Pacific region. Against a backdrop of limited national reporting these issues are, however, indicative rather than comprehensive.

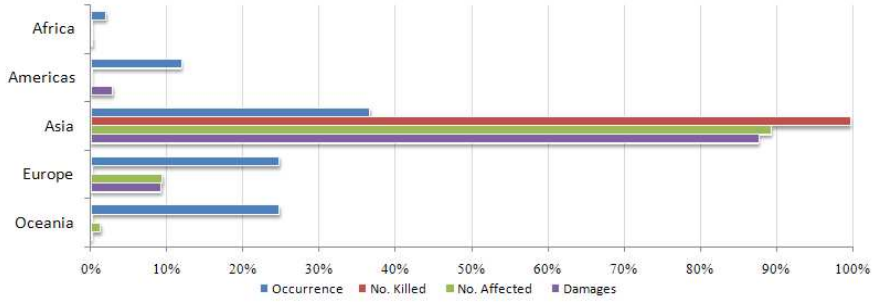
1.3 Recent Disaster Trends in Asia and Pacific

In 2007, the Pacific region was mainly affected by meteorological and hydrological disasters, which is typical for the region. Cyclone Gupta which hit Papua New Guinea in November 2007, affected the biggest number of people with over 162,000.[3] A flash flood caused over 1.7 billion USD of damage in Australia. Asia remained the region most affected by natural disasters in 2007. 37% of natural disasters recorded by the EM-DAT data-base occurred in Asia, accounting for 90% of all the reported victims and 46% of economic damage[4]. Asia was particularly affected by monsoon-related events with India, China and Bangladesh hardest hit. With two disasters of historical proportion - Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and

[2]Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Lao, Korea, Marshall Islands, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu. These are advanced draft reports. In addition 6 less advanced drafts from Bhutan, India, Maldives, Samoa, Singapore and Pakistan were consulted.
[3] See Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), *Annual Disaster Statistical Review. The numbers and trends 2007,* Brussels (Belgium), May 2008.
[4] Ibid.

the Sichuan earthquake in China - the first half of 2008 reconfirmed the particular vulnerability of Asia and the continued if not growing importance to implement strategic risk reduction measures. At the current pace of urbanization, environmental degradation and climate change, the vulnerability of major Asian cities in floodplains and coastal areas is growing rapidly[5]. Therefore, it is paramount that risk reduction becomes part and parcel of urban planning and strategies are devised to manage and reverse urban vulnerability trends.

First semester 2008 natural disaster occurrence and impacts: regional comparison[6]



[5] Asian Regional Task Force on Urban Risk Reduction, *Thematic Review. Overview of Urban Risk in Asia,* 2008.
[6] CRED, *CRUNCH. Disaster Data: A Balanced Perspective, Issue 14,* September 2008.

2. Progress in Reducing Risk

2.1 Priority for Action 1: Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation

Feedback from both individual countries and sub-regional organizations confirms that several countries have achieved progress in this area and that there is a continuing policy trend to move away from pure disaster response to risk reduction. Sub-regional frameworks on disaster reduction and programs have helped a number of countries adapt objectives, enhance commitment and gain understanding. The extent of the shift from response to risk reduction varies from country to country and is related to governance capacity, socio-economic parameters and the time that has elapsed between initial policy formulation and implementation. One group of countries (Australia, Iran, South Korea, New Zealand and Vanuatu) reports comprehensive or significant achievements including strengthened capacity at various administrative levels and resource allocation. For instance, both Australia and New Zealand can build upon a strong legislative framework and organizational structure for risk reduction. The Islamic Republic of Iran allocates 1% of its public budget to risk reduction.

The remaining countries report more modest levels of progress and have mainly focused on the formulation of new risk reduction policies and legislation and the reform or establishment of organizational and institutional structures for risk reduction. Indonesia, for instance, has enacted and continues to implement a new disaster management law that stipulates the integration of risk reduction into development planning. Sri Lanka has been active in consolidating its new disaster management organization at national and local levels. Overall feedback from sub-regional organizations seems to suggest that new disaster management laws, while a positive step, are not all considered comprehensive, and that commitment, technical capacity and the support received from UN, donors, (I)NGOs and sub-regional structures vary significantly.

While practically all countries report the development of long-term Disaster Risk Reduction plans and/ or "National Action Plans" (NAP) to promote the adaptation and implementation of HFA priorities, these plans are not always well synchronized with national policy or sufficiently coordinated among the different stakeholders and have not all been approved yet and/ or matched with budgets. Together with a lack of institutional and human capacity as well as financial resources, this results in slow implementation. The Bangladesh report emphasizes attitude-related challenges in changing the previous emphasis on response: ***"Introducing DRR culture and practices takes time to replace age-old relief culture."***[7]

Progress on risk reduction is particularly difficult and slow at local levels. While Australia, Indonesia, Nepal, New Zealand and the Philippines express clear institutional commitment to the delegation of authority to local levels,[8] and while remaining countries all emphasize the importance of local and

[7] National Report Bangladesh, page 2.
[8] In line with overall decentralization of authority.

community level empowerment, the level of capacity is highly variable. Local officials are not necessarily familiar with new regulations and there is a lack of dedicated organizational local capacity for planning and implementation. In the absence of clear monitoring and evaluation criteria the enforcement of new regulations poses major challenges. This is compounded by a general lack of clarity on the roles of local government and/ or competition of different administrative levels over authority and resources (particularly in highly decentralized countries such as Australia).

Community based risk reduction initiatives are being pursued in several countries. However, coverage and quality is often uneven, and projects are yet to be linked into a wider risk reduction system that links local, provincial and national levels. The active coordination of NGOs wishing to work at the community level remains a challenge for national and local governments, particularly in those countries with limited resources to strengthen community capacities. Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Lao, Nepal and the Philippines specifically point out highly insufficient budgets for risk reduction that may also be prioritized or reserved for response related expenditures. All countries describe difficulties in ensuring adequate levels of resources at the local level.

The existence and shape of national platforms that could in principle serve as a mechanism to promote dialogue and mainstreaming across different stakeholders varies significantly across the region. This suggests a lack of clarity and agreement on the purpose and expected structure of these institutions. Three countries - Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka - reported the establishment of a national platform within the reporting period. This brings the total number of national platforms in Asia and Pacific to seven[9]. All other countries have multi-sector coordinating mechanisms[10]; however, neither civil society[11] nor the private sector is represented. New Zealand seems to remain unconvinced that a ***"singular forum or committee for hazard risk reduction"*** would be necessary when ***"continuing risk management and integrated policy and planning processes are intended to ensure that national priorities for risk reduction are established, […]."***

2.2. <u>Priority for Action 2:</u> Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

In 2005 very few countries in the region (including Australia) had conducted national multi-hazard risk assessments[12]. Since the adoption of the HFA, Hong Kong, Iran, New Zealand and South Korea report significant achievements in this area. In the remaining countries there is common recognition of the need to conduct comprehensive assessments. Feedback indicates that national-level information on hazards is easier to gather than information on vulnerability, though hazard assessments are often sector-specific and hard to integrate since different sectors employ different methodologies and data formats. Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka report a general lack of consistent approaches and objectives of risk assessments from the national to the local level. Methodological

[9] China, Iran, Japan and the Philippines already had established national platforms prior to this reporting cycle.
[10] Though some seem to focus on response and recovery coordination i.e. are mainly reactive.
[11] Except the Red Cross/ Red Crescent Societies in some countries (Philippines; Iran; eventually others)
[12] World Bank/ISDR/ADRC/ADPC *"Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific", draft,* 2008.

issues include the need to define "community reliance" or "safety" within a broader risk assessment framework to monitor and document the effectiveness of investing in risk reduction at the local level.

On the positive side, some countries, including Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Vanuatu have either suggested, initiated or developed at the very least, a framework for risk assessments and the standardization of risk assessment procedures and methodologies in place (national and/ or local levels). In areas of higher climate risk, global climate change may considerably intensify established patterns of risk and stretch coping capacities to the limit, highlighting an urgent need to conduct climate change studies and model impact, particularly in key sectors and at the local level. Bangladesh reports considerable progress in assessing the risk from climate change on agriculture but this seems an isolated case. According to feedback from countries, the majority of current risk assessment activity seems to be happening at the sub-national and local level, though initiatives tend to be scattered, externally funded and often detached from an integrated risk information and monitoring system.

The Indian Ocean Tsunami disaster has prompted the establishment of early warning systems (EWS), particularly in the countries directly affected (Indonesia and Sri Lanka out of the thirteen countries that submitted reports), but also increased interest in other countries to review and update their systems (Australia, Bangladesh, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, South Korea, Vanuatu). At the national level Sri Lanka and Indonesia have made progress in system development but experience continuing challenges to disseminate information to end-users at the community level, particularly to those in less accessible locations. Another challenge is the ability of communities to respond adequately to warning messages. In many countries targeted investments in preparedness of high risk communities remain sporadic, dependent upon external aid and insufficiently harmonized with each other. An end-to end early warning system as emphasized in the ***Delhi Declaration*** therefore remains an urgent and valid ambition.

Regarding the exchange of information and better regional cooperation across countries, equally called for by the ***Delhi Declaration,*** the sub-regional organizations of ASEAN, SAARC and SOPAC have provided important support and coordination. Agreements on trans-national and regional cross/ border risks have been reached in the ASEAN sub-region to develop the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System. A Regional Early Warning Strategy was endorsed at the 13th Regional Disaster Management Meeting in 2007. South Asian nations have also agreed on the establishment of a regional EWS coordinated by SAARC.

Only five countries report progress on trans-boundary risk reduction at sub-national levels. This includes comprehensive capacity and achievements in Australia, New Zealand and South Korea and selected intra-district or intra-provincial initiatives in Indonesia and the Philippines. It is fair to conclude that trans-boundary risk reduction practices are still in their infancy as solid local and regional risk reduction capacity has still to emerge in a majority of countries.

2.3 Priority for Action 3: Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

Five countries (Australia, Hong Kong, Iran, New Zealand and South Korea) report substantial and even comprehensive achievements in the development of disaster management information systems. In the Pacific, SOPAC has developed a regional information base (Pacific Disaster Net) to assist members in the implementation of their national action plans. Out of the remaining eight countries, six report an institutional commitment to the establishment of a central and comprehensive information management system. Progress in this regard, however, has been slow and often dependent upon external aid. While there are numerous studies and assessments undertaken across the region, the research is often sector-specific and therefore dispersed and not presented in a format that can be easily accessed (which points back to the lack of standards for risk assessments raised under Priority 2). ASEAN's sub-regional progress report summarizes these challenges succinctly: ***"The issue appears to be not in the availability of information but in the duplication and inefficiency of distribution of such information".***[13] This is at least partly related to the lack of awareness on the usefulness of consolidated information, the lack of incentives to share information as well as institutional and human capacity gaps. Two countries (Australia and New Zealand) have standardized tools for local risk assessments, while SOPAC has been actively advocating the use of the Comprehensive Hazard Assessment and Risk Management (CHARM) Tool in the Pacific Islands (with Vanuatu reporting its adoption). In general, however, there are far more tools for hazard than risk assessments, and cost-benefit analysis of investments into DRR remains uncommon.

The integration of DRR into school curricula and public awareness has been high on the agenda of multi regional, bilateral and national governmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami, as reiterated in the ***Delhi Declaration***. The subject was given further prominence by the 2006/2007 ISDR/UNESCO campaign "Disaster Risk Reduction begins at school" which promoted the safety of school buildings and the integration of DRR into school curricula or activities. A majority of countries have however not yet reached considerable levels of progress. While an outperforming group of four[14] countries (Australia, Hong Kong, Iran and New Zealand) report comprehensive or substantial achievements, three countries (Bangladesh, Korea and Nepal) have reached institutional commitment, and the remaining countries have not yet made significant progress. Several national reports reflect a certain degree of skepticism regarding the effectiveness of current public awareness activities and describe the absence of clear national strategies, of solid monitoring and evaluation systems and a top-down approach that takes insufficient notice of cultural and linguistic differences within countries. The New Zealand report highlights the need for a sustained, long-term approach**:** ***"The major challenge is changing behavior of individuals and organizations, and progressing intentions into actions".***[15] Yet in many countries public awareness remains dependent upon foreign aid and sustainability is limited. There is growing awareness of the role that national and local

[13] ASEAN, "Sub-regional report on DRR and then Current Status of Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in South Asia", October 2008
[14] Five for public awareness.
[15] New Zealand Progress Report 2008, page 8.

media can play in public awareness; however, their potential requires enhancement and remains underutilized.

Starting DRR education early, i.e. in school and even pre-school, is commonly seen as an important strategy to effect change in perceptions and behavior. Reports from seven countries indicate that initiatives in the area of DRR concentrate on "projectized" activities often implemented in areas recently hit by major disasters. There are few systematic efforts starting with clear needs assessments, strategies and an approach that looks for opportunities in both extra- and intra-curricular activity as well as formal and non-formal education. Countries noted the absence of technical capacity to design DRR curricula and training materials and the need to create a cadre of trainers and educators.

2.4 Priority for Action 4: Reduce the underlying risk factors

The ***Delhi Declaration*** on DRR re-emphasized the mainstreaming of DRR into development plans and sector strategies to reduce underlying risk factors. On the whole, countries report the lowest progress levels against this priority. All responses illustrate a reasonable level of commitment recognizing the need to integrate DRR into environmental plans, land use and natural resource management, economic human settlement planning, major development projects etc. However, translating hazard and risk information into integrated policies across planning documents and undertaking coordinated and concerted action is a challenge. Linkages with poverty reduction and national MDG strategies are a rarity (see next page). Only Australia, Iran and New Zealand report substantial achievements, whereas the remaining ten countries see themselves between level two ("some progress") and level three ("commitment attained"). One of the obstacles is that the inclusion of DRR objectives in development or sector plans is not always followed up by dedicated budgetary, department/ agency or business plans. In addition some of these initiatives are small-scale pilots that need yet to be translated into policy and institutional commitment.

Overall low achievements in this area should not come as a surprise since priority 4 is in many ways the most challenging area, and signifies the biggest departure from the previous emphasis upon response. It also depends upon the preceding priorities, i.e. solid risk assessments and information management systems, clear risk reduction strategies, strong institutions, awareness of risks and risk reduction options and capacity to implement/enforce and evaluate.

In general most countries report some initiatives on environmental and natural resource management policies and standards, though it is not always very clear to what degree these really include DRR objectives. Some reports seem to reflect an assumption that environmental and DRR objectives largely overlap. Others are more skeptical. The Philippines report for instance remarks ***"While environmental and natural resource laws do provide a framework, their interpretation does not easily translate into instruments for DRR and DRM."***[16] Work on climate change as re-emphasized in the ***Delhi Declaration*** is underway in some countries; South Korea for instance reports very specific work to adapt DRR plans and

[16] Philippines National Report 2008, page 12.

standards in the light of climate change scenarios (against a sobering realization that growing risk exceeds the current ability and practices to mitigate). In Australia, Bangladesh and Vanuatu the linkages between work on DRR and climate change focus on the preparation of climate adaptation frameworks and programs.

Only Australia and New Zealand base their work on an explicit social inclusion agenda, though all reporting countries recognize the need to address the social vulnerability dimension of risk. However, instruments to address social vulnerability often remain restricted to conventional programs such as food aid. A more positive perspective provide encouraging initiatives, such as in the Philippines, where the National Anti Poverty Commission has designed a poverty reduction strategy for people in hazard prone areas that incorporates interventions ranging from microfinance and insurance instruments to rice credits and cheap food and burial benefits. In Lao the United Nation's Development Assistance Framework (in support of the Sixth National Socio Economic Development Plan) lists disaster risk management as a critical component of the poverty reduction framework. Nepal, Sri Lanka and Iran are conducting studies on the relationship between poverty and disasters which will feature in greater detail in the 2009 Global Assessment Report. A growing diversification of social safety net programs with a very active role of NGOs is reported from Bangladesh. Yet these initiatives require detailed evaluations to identify the exact benefits for communities and to better understand the inter-relation between microfinance and risk reduction.

With the exception of the highly industrialized countries that are part of this small sample, efforts to address vulnerability through economic and productive sector policies are rare. There is no doubt that the attempts to increase the resilience of (often privately owned) critical infrastructure through public-private partnerships in high income countries represent innovative examples, however they cannot be easily transferred to nations where large segments of the population earn a livelihood in the agricultural sector and poverty levels are high. The National Report from Indonesia captures this when it says:***"…the assumption that better or improved public private partnership can provide protection to vulnerable economic activities seems to be not always the case."***[17] Climate change has added to a renewed interest in agriculture and one country reports studies on agriculture resilience. Risk transfer schemes such as crop insurance– if existing - are at a stage of experimentation and require an increased dialogue between regulating agencies i.e. the government, the insurance industry and representatives of the intended client groups.

The regional record regarding spatial planning and land use control is equally diverse, with considerable achievements in Australia, Iran and New Zealand, and with some institutional commitment in Hong Kong, Korea and Nepal, and very limited progress in the remaining 7 countries. The biggest difficulty reported concerns the enforcement of codes and regulations which is related to complex land tenure conditions, a lack of clearly designated authority and ability to impose sanctions, and conflicting interests between various layers of government, to name just a few. However, these difficulties often reflect the lack of a broader framework and strategy for settlement development that emphasizes accountability of those involved in settlement planning and construction. There is a general lack of

[17] National Report Indonesia, page 13.

awareness of minimum building standards among the population. Codes require reviews in the light of climate change and changing risk patterns. The use of GIS technology for land-use planning is becoming more common throughout the region though issues related to compatibility of data-bases and clear protocols for data-entry and use persist in some countries.

The record regarding procedures for the integration of risk reduction into major development projects is a little better as four countries (Australia, Iran, Marshall Islands and New Zealand) report comprehensive achievements, six report on an institutional commitment, and only three report on modest progress. Vanuatu has initiated the development of an overall policy requiring risk assessments for all development projects, South Korea has established a disaster mitigation impact regulation for development planning and other countries have decided to focus upon a priority sector (Philippines: transport) or a densely populated urban area (New Zealand: Wellington). Common obstacles to push the integration of risk reduction include the lack of an effective regulating agency and enforcement capacity. An increasing commitment to addressing risk in development projects seems contingent upon a realization of the cost-benefit ratio of investing in risk reduction.

Countries[18] that that have had recent experience of significant disasters such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran and Sri Lanka report institutional commitment to integrate DRR into recovery and reconstruction strategies (also an action point of the ***Delhi Declaration***). However, experience has shown that translating these resolves into reality is difficult in practice, particularly in the absence of resilient coordination mechanisms, guidelines and other relevant specifications and previous experience. Obviously difficulties affecting the sustainable development of settlements during "normal" times will also affect reconstruction after disasters including complex or insecure land tenure systems and a lack of community awareness. Successful risk reduction practices in recovery start to emanate but are overall far and few between.

2.5 Priority for Action 5: Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

It may come as a surprise that the self-assessment of progress in disaster preparedness and response, an area that most countries have more solid experience of than risk reduction, is not more positive. Yet this area scores lower than both, HFA priority areas one and three. Australia, Iran, South Korea and New Zealand report substantial achievements and Lao, the Marshall Islands and Nepal report only minor to modest progress while the remaining six have achieved institutional commitment but not solid levels of performance. There are many possible explanations for this phenomenon (amongst others longer experience in disaster and response that may lead to a more critical self-assessment). The reports also suggest that while policy development[19], institutional development at the national level, and planning have been stronger, the areas of financial resources and mechanisms for information exchange and management and local level preparedness capacities are lagging behind .

[18] Other countries such as Hong Kong, South Korea and Vanuatu have also reached institutional commitment or even more significant levels of achievement (Australia, Marshall Islands and New Zealand).
[19] Already highlighted under priority1.

All countries, except two, report the existence of permanent emergency funds, however two main problems are mentioned: the insufficient level of funding and slow disbursement mechanisms. Slow disbursements may not only be related to decision-making and administrative procedures but also be caused by weak post-disaster assessment capacity and poor information management mechanisms. On a positive note the concept of Emergency Operation Centers is spreading and currently actively introduced in Sri Lanka and Indonesia together with standardized information management systems. Other countries have been exposed to the concept by training events.

Except for the four outperforming countries mentioned above, availability of funding for preparedness, particularly at the local level, seems another important concern. Out of the other countries, only the Philippines report the possibility to use National and Local Calamity Funds for pre-disaster activities. While efforts are reported to strengthen local disaster preparedness capacity, this is frequently related to UN- or NGO- programs raising questions of sustainability. The Philippines and New Zealand note that supporting local disaster preparedness requires the development of standard assessment tools for benchmarking capacity to determine required investment and monitor performance. Well targeted training in preparedness and disaster response at the local level for both decision-makers and technicians requires more attention.

With regard to the development of disaster and contingency plans to reduce the loss of life and property, an item that was again included in the ***Delhi Declaration,*** most countries report success or continue to work on such plans.[20] However, there are huge variations in scope and geographical coverage of these plans between countries and the various national, sector-specific and local plans seem not always integrated into an overall planning framework. Some plans are reportedly outdated and funding, as well as the human and institutional capacity to actually implement (and update) these plans can be inadequate. On a positive note there are an increasing number of drills and simulations in reporting countries of the region. Debriefings and post disaster reviews are held more frequently though a culture of regular learning from disaster response operations is yet to emerge in most countries.

[20] Only one country emphasizes that it does not have a contingency plan at any level.

3. Drivers of Progress

3.1 Multi-hazard approach

As to be expected, the situation among responding countries varies considerably reflecting the different stages of overall DRR development and the varying level of resources available. However, the validity of this approach seems commonly recognized and only one country reports no or little reliance on the multi hazard approach (while indicating policy commitment). Ten countries have undertaken integrated multi-hazard analysis, though the scope of these studies ranges from comprehensive to sector- or area-specific. Some experience with taking multi hazard analyses and approaches down to the local level concludes that local governments tend to find it easier to focus on one hazard (Philippines), while an integrated approach at the community level seems to encounter fewer difficulties (Bangladesh). The application of multi hazard risk assessments in policies and development planning is currently institutionalized in four countries (Australia, Iran, New Zealand, and South Korea). In the Philippines the approach is currently tested and applied in 27 provinces within the framework of an externally funded Community Based Disaster Risk Management Project (READY).

3.2 Gender

Only New Zealand reports a significant reliance on the adoption of gender perspectives on risk reduction, mainly because gender is not seen as a significant determinant of vulnerability as equal opportunities are well established. Overall, the record on gender, re-emphasized in the ***Delhi Declaration,*** is rather weak with four countries indicating no or minimal and the remaining eight countries only partial reliance. There is acknowledgment of the issue and gender has been integrated into strategic and action plans and policy directives (six countries), yet very little is done about it. Some responses reflect a perspective of gender that concentrates on vulnerability rather than on the capacities and complementary roles women and men can play in risk reduction. It may be indicative of the significant cultural differences in the region that only one country, Vanuatu, emphasizes the role of women in DRR: ***"The role of women in relief, rehabilitation and recovery is common knowledge in Vanuatu. Their roles as disseminators of traditional knowledge and food security are also acknowledged by the community […]."***[21] Some countries report that the lack of disaggregated data on gender and the impact of disasters complicate the design of comprehensive strategies. Policy directives that promote the participation of women in DRR decision-making may encounter resistance at the local level, particularly in multi-cultural societies.

3.3 Capacity Strengthening

Capacity building, particularly at the local and community level, as emphasized in the ***Delhi Declaration,*** is a subject that all country reports reflect upon as a central requirement for the implementation of the HFA. However, only Australia, New Zealand and South Korea report dedicated budgets and systematic national and local initiatives to build DRR capacity on an ongoing basis. In the other countries efforts are more sporadic and centre on the national level. Local level efforts were also dependent upon external

[21] National Report Vanuatu, page 18.

funding and (I)NGOs that work through CBOs and link residents to resources. This dependency often leads to significant imbalances in coverage, with funding and activities typically restricted to areas recently hit by major disasters. Highly vulnerable areas that may experience smaller-scale disasters on a much more frequent basis, on the other hand, remain uncovered. It is important that local governments are sufficiently involved in community capacity building initiatives. National reports refer to capacity strengthening in line ministries as another necessity that can be difficult to obtain funding for.

3.4 Human Security and Social Equity

Poverty as an important determinant of vulnerability is not yet fully appreciated, and many national legislators are yet to be convinced that risk reduction can help to alleviate poverty. Only Australia, Iran and New Zealand report a systematic integration of social equity approaches into DRR and recovery activities. While the Marshall Islands, Sri Lanka and Indonesia indicate the inclusion of social equity perspectives into DRR policy and legislative frameworks, implementation has been weak. As for the concept of Human Security, different countries seemed to interpret it differently (relating it to either conflict or to environmental safety), and no clear picture emerges from the reports.

3.5 Engagement with non-governmental actors

Even though all most all countries report an often considerable involvement of non-governmental organizations in DRR activities, only five countries (South Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Indonesia) report dedicated legislation, formal agreements and MoUs with non-governmental actors. Genuine partnerships as called for by the ***Delhi Declaration*** are a rarity. Australia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka highlight the current lack of a common understanding of DRR and mutual roles between governmental and non-governmental agencies and the need to develop well-defined quality partnerships. Despite these limitations the engagement with non-governmental actors in Indonesia has gained considerable momentum, and will be formalized by the creation of a National Platform[22]. In Nepal the "DP net" emerges as a forum for government and (I)NGOs to exchange information, coordinate and share best practices.

While the Philippines report successful engagement with professional associations, and Sri Lanka has entered into agreements with mobile phone providers (in the context of its Early Warning System), linkages with the private sector seem to be overall less common than partnerships with (I)NGOs and CSOs. Corporate or social responsibility is still a new concept in many countries. Working with non-governmental actors requires clear selection criteria and well defined commitments, as the following quote from Sri Lanka demonstrates***: "Prolong sustainability of some partnerships has become a difficult[y] as these have been created for the benefit of organizations rather than the communities they work for."*** This also underlines the need to enhance the capabilities of communities, including organizational development, so communities can find their own "voice" and become less dependent upon intermediaries.

[22] The national platform on DRR was launched in Indonesia in mid-November 2008, shortly after the submission of the country's interim national HFA progress report.

4. Outlook

4.1 Key Challenges and Gaps against HFA strategic goals

The following highlights some key challenges in making progress on the three strategic HFA goals based on observations from national and sub-regional actors and the preceding analysis of their reports.

Goal 1:

The more effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with a special emphasis on disaster prevention mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction

The shift from disaster preparedness and response to an emphasis on risk reduction and development represents a major departure in many countries of the Asia Pacific region. Translating the HFA into a strategy that fits the conditions in each country and giving it the necessary legislative and political support is complex. Some countries in the region have been working towards a more integrated risk reduction system and capacity for the past thirty years. Others have really only initiated this process three years ago, often in the aftermath of recent major disasters. There has been an impressive range of initiatives to design and enact new DRR policies, plans and legislation and these achievements should not be under-estimated. However, policies and plans have only rarely been based upon comprehensive multi-hazard risk assessments and capacity assessments. Policies and plans are not backed up by adequate budgets and implementation is often dependent upon external support that tends to be selective. In addition stakeholder buy-in, particularly in line ministries and sector departments, is not yet strong. Consequently, there are so far only few examples of using existing national planning or development mechanisms to "mainstream" risk reduction. Local governments, who are, eventually, the government entities with the most at stake in the progress of risk reduction, often have no or little knowledge of the policy changes, and/ or lack the instruments and capacity to translate them into local realities and enforce them. Only few countries have undertaken concerted efforts to discuss and consult DRR draft policies and legislation with key stakeholders and critically assess their enforceability. Lastly, resources outside the government are not sufficiently utilized, and cooperation with non-governmental actors is not based upon clear strategies and cooperation agreements. As rapidly increasing risk in the region threatens to outstrip the mitigating capacity, there is need to translate the growing momentum for risk reduction into rapid action based on sound strategies.

Goal 2:

The development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels in particular at the community level that can systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards

In many countries national efforts have so far focused upon the strengthening of national-level capacities, often concentrating on the national "Disaster Management" or "DRR" agency. While this

effort sometimes involves the institution and/ or strengthening of local satellite offices, more needs to be done to build the capacity of a) local government actors and the community and b) key sectors. This includes the understanding and commitment that such capacity building is not a one off exercise but an ongoing task that requires dedicated budgets. Furthermore multi-stakeholder platforms with clear tasks need to be created not only at national but also at the sub-national and local levels. Solid systems that would guarantee the dialogue, information exchange and strategic and operational coordination between different administrative levels and across key sectors have yet to emerge. This involves the need for better coordination and dialogue between government agencies, NGOs and CBOs. While post disaster recovery operations following the large scale disasters in the region have involved investment in public awareness campaigns and formal education programs, their effectiveness has suffered from a lack of clear long-term strategies and harmonization of the various objectives pursued by key players. There is need for more targeted, hazard- and sector-specific inputs into curricula and training modules and for the identification and activation of local knowledge. In several countries this includes the requirement to address training of the informal sector, for example, in safe building techniques. With the exception of some community based DRR programs[23] learning about and applying risk reduction measures is too often pursued in separation. Finally, the role of women in the prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response and recovery is largely ignored and their capacities remain under-utilized.

Goal 3:

The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programmes in the reconstruction of affected communities

There is as of yet an insufficient linkage between hazard monitoring, risk identification and analysis, and disaster preparedness and response, including Early Warning. Warnings that do not lead to an adequate response of the targeted communities are of little use. There is a need to design preparedness activities that are informed by both an understanding of risk, local capacities and local knowledge, including social factors that influence the decisions of communities to act upon hazard information, and to take precautionary measures. Such activities or programs are contingent upon local monitoring and risk management capacity which is still in short supply, as national level capacity building efforts are rarely matched by sufficiently supported parallel efforts at local levels. Budgets for local planning and preparedness are highly inadequate in a majority of countries.

There is a need to intensify the exploration of alternative financial instruments to relieve governments and communities from the burdens of response and recovery including micro-finance, micro-insurance and reinsurance options. Contingency plans currently focus on response and do not cover the key areas of recovery and reconstruction. This leads to delayed and inefficient recovery processes where local actors tend to get side-lined. If not properly considered beforehand, and backed up by regulations and standards, the integration of risk reduction gets easily pushed aside in the aftermath of a disaster.

[23] Because most CBDRR programs tend to focus upon preparedness and response.

Business continuity plans for key local government agencies and solid coordination structures for both response and recovery require more attention.

4.2 Reporting

It is important to acknowledge that countries that responded to the on-line monitoring tool represent a self-selected sub-group of countries with above average interest, higher capacity in risk reduction, and/ or access to technical assistance in preparing the national HFA progress reports[24]. The distribution against income indicators (Gross National Income)[25] may illustrate this point: four countries belong to high income countries, six countries belong to low middle income countries and three countries are in the category of low income countries[26]. In this small sample the correlation between high levels of income and high levels of achievement is consistent; however, the example of Iran demonstrates that a long-term strategy, and consistent levels of commitment may generate high levels of progress in countries with lower incomes. This also applies to Bangladesh that despite being a low income country reports levels of achievement that exceed the performance of most of the lower middle income countries.

While some reports give good insights into selected core challenges in implementing the HFA at the national level, others are either too generic or list activities providing no or little analysis. Tracking DRR progress across sectors represents a particular challenge in most countries as this requires fairly advanced information management capabilities. Most reports are at least in places unclear about when specific progress was made, i.e. whether or not it was achieved within the reporting period. Self-assessments are in places not sufficiently backed up by quantitative or qualitative evidence. Reporting on "cross cutting" issues is superficial and may partly reflect linguistic difficulties. However the reporting format also includes redundancies between certain cross-cutting issues ("capacity strengthening", "multi hazard approaches", "social equity") and preceding, closely related sections on HFA priorities. Depending on the quality of the national HFA review process the efforts or different perspectives of non-governmental partners, i.e. Civil Society actors, such as academic institutions, NGOs, and local bodies, are not fully reflected. Overall the sample provides an overview of key issues, but is too small to reflect the full extent of challenges faced by the region in implementing the HFA. While two sub-regional progress reports do fill in some of the gaps, the limited number of national responses to the monitoring tool does raise the question how the reporting process may be further accompanied by measures to strengthen monitoring and reporting capacities, and tailored to ease the burden of reporting and generate better coverage of the national, sub-regional and regional progress in reducing disaster risks. This includes further clarification and streamlining of the supportive role and operational responsibilities of regional and sub-regional organizations in the reporting process.

[24] Out of 13 countries submitting reports summarized in this synthesis report 6 received such assistance from UNDP with the financial support from UNISDR.
[25] See World Bank Atlas Method, http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS.
[26] According to World Bank Definitions, Bangladesh, a low income country, also compares favourably with the more advanced middle income countries.

Recommendation: The strengthening of sub-regional reporting or even peer reviews (within sub-regional or bi-lateral agreements) may provide alternatives to strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the overall reporting mechanism. In addition the institutionalization and strengthening of DRR monitoring and reporting capacity (i.e. beyond HFA progress monitoring) may be considered. It is recommended to focus such efforts upon countries with a combination of high vulnerability, low capacity and high commitment.

4.3 Policy Recommendations

Analysis of the resolution from previous Ministerial Conferences on Disaster Risk Reduction, in particular of the Second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, in Delhi, November 2007, confirms that the recommendations remain fully applicable. However, the Third Asian Ministerial Conference may consider coming up with **a smaller list of prioritized recommendations** and try to generate **more specific and time-bound commitments** from individual states and stakeholders.

The following five priority areas build upon the five HFA priorities, but address core gaps and limitations as highlighted and analyzed in this report:

HFA Priority Area 1:
Adapt risk reduction strategies and agree on national action plans that create a consensus amongst all key stakeholders on an **all of government risk reduction agenda covering national and local levels:**

- Ensure that risk reduction strategies and action plans involve a long-term capacity building plan matched by adequate budgets;
- Ensure plans and projects address not only preparedness and response but also underlying risk factors while prioritizing key sectors and high-risk areas (see next point);
- "Socialize" plans and initiate the development of follow-up risk reduction strategies and plans at sub-national level;
- Promote adequate involvement of civil society and the private sector in the planning and implementation effort.

HFA Priority Area 2:
Continue to gradually strengthen **multi-hazard and risk monitoring capability** while emphasizing the creation of integrated, user-friendly information management systems that can inform the design and regular review of national and local risk reduction strategies and initiatives:

- Promote continuous multi-hazard risk assessment and monitoring activities at national, sub-national and local levels;

- Intensify efforts to understand and assess the likely impacts of climate change in areas and sectors exposed to risk from climatic hazards;
- Develop standardized tools and commonly accepted indicators for tracking progress in risk reduction and demonstrating the cost-benefit ratio of investment in this area;
- Initiate the collection of disaggregated data on the gender-specific impact of disasters;
- Promote assessment of local risk perception and processes that will help to capture and merge local knowledge of risk with "scientific" risk assessment information.

HFA Priority Area 3:
Urge governments to create **comprehensive education programs**[27] that involve intra-and extra-curricular activity through primary, secondary and higher education; informal education needs; as well as the participation of civil society and the private sector:

- Promote flexible educational approaches that can incorporate local priorities, knowledge and that can build upon existing awareness and coping capacities;
- Promote educational and public awareness activities that are followed up by action and evidence for the importance and relevance of risk reduction (i.e. drills, simulations, non-structural mitigation; strengthening the structural safety of key buildings etc.);
- Establish (continuous) training and skill development opportunities for risk reduction professionals;
- Provide training and professional development opportunities for administrators and decision-makers at different levels.
- Promote the inclusion of women in disaster related functions and/ or professions at all levels.

HFA Priority Area 4:
Initiate or accelerate the design of programs and initiatives to **address underlying risk while prioritizing sector(s)** and areas that are at **high risk** and/ or **demonstrate particular interest in risk reduction and cooperation:**

- Areas of particular interest for sectoral mainstreaming include poverty reduction and livelihood diversification; environmental and natural resource management; adaptation to local climate change impacts; infrastructure development; safe building and risk sensitive planning;
- In particular analyze existing and emerging financial mechanisms for disaster reduction while identifying and developing the most adequate risk transfer and risk finance instruments;

[27] Possibly as a sub-section of national action plans.

- Generate public debate in different locations to test approaches and mechanisms and involve civil society and the private sector.

HFA Priority Area 5

Ensure that **communities are at the centre of all aspects of preparedness, response and recovery strategies and planning:**

- Early Warning Systems in the region need to facilitate the dissemination of messages to the "last mile" as well as strengthen community preparedness to respond to messages;
- Establish a well-defined process and system for disaster and contingency planning that covers and reaches out to all administrative levels;
- Include recovery and reconstruction in local, sub-national and national contingency and disaster plans;

5. Conclusions

Overall, the HFA implementation process in the region is still in its infancy and requires a more strategic and focused approach that takes better account of the national and local context, challenges and opportunities. Strategic plans that identify a set of realistic priority goals need to be matched by appropriate budgets and follow-up action. As new communities of DRR technocrats and practitioners are emerging in the region, they need to look for opportunities outside the confines and restricted budgets of national disaster management or risk reduction offices to move from words to action. This requires commitment and skills in communicating and establishing a common vision, principles and standards with the diverse group of sectors, agencies and actors that will have to integrate risk reduction in their policy-making, planning and working routines: legislators, bureaucrats and administrators, technical experts and researchers, educators and trainers, NGO and CBO activists, businessmen, professional associations and unions, to name just a few. Only through such efforts to consult, convince and agree on action can the multi-sector ambition of DRR, be gradually turned into a reality.