

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF MID-TERM REVIEW WORKSHOP:
THE HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: PROGRESS REVIEW & REPORTING FRAMEWORK
FOR THE ARAB STATES REGION,
CAIRO, EGYPT

Date: 30 March 2010

During the meeting in Cairo, Egypt on 30 March 2010 HFA monitors discussed the progress, shortcomings and potential improvements of the HFA. Participants were divided into three groups, each with a different set of key questions aimed at obtaining specific perspectives as well as insights on the implementation of the HFA to date, through 2015 and beyond. *Group One* responded to questions 1, 2, and 3, *Group Two* responded to questions 4, 5 and 6, and *Group Three* responded to questions 7 and 8.

The following is a summary of the discussions of all three groups. Individual group responses to the posed questions can be found in the annex below.

Summary of the Workshop Discussions

Most notably, the HFA monitors focused on the voluntary nature of the HFA. The monitors noted that since the HFA is not legally binding and lacking enforcement, an impediment exists to its effective implementation. However, the group felt that it might not be advisable to have a legally binding instrument as it would introduce explicit obligations. This might prevent countries from signing the HFA and would place more obligations on developed countries, to the detriment of DRR.

With respect to the instrumentality of the HFA over the past five years, the group felt that it did not help extensively in reducing disaster losses but that it served as a reference to increase DRR awareness. Besides this, it has helped in integrating DRR in development planning. IAP representatives in Bangkok, but also HFA monitors in Cairo, noted that disasters trigger the use of HFA. Although HFA is useful in providing guidance it is very theoretical and requires more applied scenarios, cases and examples.

Reporting mechanisms were found to be useful as they indicated the level of progress and enforced implementation. However, introducing annual or biannual reporting would be useful as it allows DRR to be kept on the national agenda. It was also stressed that there is a lack of national, regional, international coordination, as well as too few information exchange. As a result, research has not been accessible to policy makers Nevertheless; the HFA has made a difference in coordination at the country level. There is also a perceived lack of information exchange.

It was also recommended that the DRR ought to be integrated into national development strategies which would allow a linkage to national budgets. This could subsequently address the problem of financing the HFA. Setting up a global fund for the HFA could also be a solution to improve the lack of financial resources.

In addition, HFA monitors stressed the problem of implementation and suggested the establishment of institutional systems for monitoring. Cultural aspects were furthermore found to pose certain problems. Specifically in the Arab region there is a highly negative perception of sharing disaster news. Informing the entire country or region about the existence of a major problem without instant solution is disapproved of, mainly because of the fear of spreading panic. As a result, the creation of a common vision and commitment to DRR and CC needs to be a priority in order to overcome this fear.

Finally, the group suggested shifting the HFA focus towards achieving national platforms, national focal points and regional conventions. Vulnerable countries need to be prioritized and setting up specific international and national targets would help improving DRR impact at the national and local level. Overall, since Arab States are still in the early stages of implementation, the monitors found it premature to talk about post-HFA.

Annex: Individual Group Responses

The following is a summary of the discussion of Group One, which responded to questions 1, 2 and 3.

- Legally not binding/no enforcement/voluntary
- No financial mechanism
- Awareness of risk – will help prioritizing DRR even if HFA is not binding
- Linking HFA to increasing investments for development
- Governance, coordination, information

Question 1: In your experience has the HFA been instrumental over the past five years in reducing disaster losses in communities and countries in country X/region Y?

- If a country had a disaster in the past 5 years it would have been more appropriate.
- Not really. Just increased awareness on DRR.
- As a mechanism with others contributed “possibly” to DRR.
- Disasters trigger the use of HFA, not the other way.
- HFA as a framework offered a reference/knowledge.
- Helped in integrating DRR in development planning.

Question 2: How has the HFA informed decision making or priority setting in country X/region Y?

- HFA informed decision making/programme design. HFA offers a comprehensive guidelines and reference of key actions that needs to be addressed to reduce risk.
- HFA is useful in providing guidance.
- However, very theoretical. Needs more applied scenarios/cases/examples.

Question 2.1: How are HFA reporting mechanisms supporting its implementation?

- Reporting mechanisms are useful and indicate the level of progress and enforce implementation.
- UNISDR to support reporting and monitoring systematically.
- Annual or biannual reporting needed– annual would keep the issue on the national agenda.
- Quality control to ensure it reflects reality.

Question 3.1: What were the three most critical factors that prevented effectiveness in those areas (in reducing DRR)?

- No coordination: national/national, national/regional.
 - No information exchange – no accessibility for data: dispersed.
 - Lack of communication.
 - Research not accessible to policy makers.
 - No financial mechanisms.
 - Within the same government, they have to pay to provide information
- A. Not legally binding/no enforcement
B. No financial mechanism attached to it
C. Linking HFA to increasing investment in development

Question 3.2: What are the specific constraints to start or increase investments in disaster risk reduction in country X/region Y??

- Competing priorities.
- Integrating DRR in (national) development strategies and linking that to national budgets.

- Multi-sectoral/Multi-stakeholder (civil society).
- “Principle of common but differentiated responsibilities”

The following is a summary of the discussion of *Group Two*, which responded to *questions 4, 5 and 6*.

Question 4: In your experience, does the HFA sufficiently encourage community participation and the utilization of local knowledge to reduce disaster risk? I.e. in country X/region Y, have communities and local authorities been empowered and is local knowledge and community action being useful/tapped into to manage and reduce disaster risk? If so, how? If not, why not?

- Preventive was not our plan
- Unclear border between DRR and response
- Institutional set up not available to coordinate/follow-up
- Internal coordination no happening (often UNISDR makes a difference in coordination at the country level)
- National institutional mechanisms
- Environmental assessment is obligatory – mandated by legislation
- Special mechanisms
- Institutional systems for monitoring and implement the law
- Lack of multi-hazard assessments – we do not know who is vulnerable
- National Resilience System
- Egypt – Technical committee: we also have plans...we need to implement them
- Plans are not enough -> problem is implementation
- Civil society could be a lobbying factor (civil society hindered by lack of training)

Question 5: In your experience is there in country X/region Y a culture of safety and resilience at the level of the general public? For example, do people in county X/region Y seek information about land safety, building structures, etc. prior to building or purchasing properties? Do they expect politicians to have national and local disaster risk reduction plans in place? Do they acquire, or are required by law to acquire, insurance for their properties, crops and livelihoods if they live in disaster prone areas? Are they fully informed, trained if necessary, and equipped about what need to be done in case of disaster?

- Cultural problems -> if there's a major problem (without a solution). Why tell Alexandria about sea level, fear of spreading panic, lack of concerted plan
- Negative perception -> spreading alarming/negative news
- Also in the Arab region if someone is sick, you don't tell them. You overlook negatives
- Need to create a “common” vision/commitment to DRR and CC

Question 6: How can implementation of HFA Priority Action 4, reducing the underlying risk factors, be strengthened?

- Do we know what the source of the problem is? Do we have sufficient resources to dig deeply?
- Need global commitment -> acting at level lower than our needs.
- Lack of progress on PA3 and PA4 - we need to provide more practical examples, best/bad practices

The following is a summary of the discussion of Group Three, which responded to questions 7 and 8.

Question 7: What are the three most important things now that country X/region Y would benefit from, from the international community, in furthering the implementation of the HFA at the national and local level?

- Need for strengthening legislative framework at national and regional level.
- More coordination within UN agencies.
- More regional agreements.
- Focus on achieving:
 - o national platform
 - o national focal point
 - o sign regional conventions
- International community support on technical, logistic and financial level to implement HFA.
- International community: build and develop capacities to implement HFA.

Question 7.1: What adjustments, if any, would be helpful in the international structures of disaster risk reduction to help accelerate the implementation of the HFA?

- Strengthening the Arab office of DRM and financial resources.
- Prioritize vulnerable countries.
- Identification of international instruments that are relevant to HFA
- Allocation of a percentage of national budgets to DRR.
- Have a more needs-based document.
- "Too early to talk about post-HFA. In Arab States where we're still in the very early stage of implementation."

Question 7.2: What kind of financial instruments, as well as monitoring mechanisms, would be helpful in support of DRR action at the national, local and community level?

- Global fund for HFA.
- Looking into the possibility of benefiting of existing Arab funds in implementation of HFA.
- Making use of Arab environmental facility to implement HFA and DRR.
- National budget for DRR.

Question 8: What kind of international instrument/tool do you think would be most useful in furthering DRR to follow-up to the HFA beyond 2015?

- Strengthening HFA implementation.

Question 8.1: Would setting up specific international and national targets help improving DRR impact at the national and local level?

- Yes.

Question 8.2: What kind of international institutional structures/instruments would be most helpful to continue to accelerate and support risk reduction work?

- Fund for UNISDR.

Question 8.3: The HFA is a voluntary international instrument. Has the voluntary nature of the HFA played a positive or negative role in its implementation and buy-in at the international and national level?

- Positive.

- The group felt it was not advisable to have a legally binding instrument, it may prevent countries from signing it because of some obligations and they may stop DRR altogether.
- Legally binding instrument will put more obligations on developed countries, not realistic.

Participants:

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