

## SUMMARY REPORT

Despite being the most disaster prone region globally, the Asia-Pacific region leads the advancement of the disaster risk reduction agenda. The Ulaanbaatar Declaration<sup>1</sup>, adopted at the 2018 Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR)<sup>2</sup>, puts the focus on “underlying, interconnected and evolving disaster risk factors” and commits to “translating coherence of global frameworks into policy and practice.”

The Action Plan 2018-2020<sup>3</sup>, a key outcome of the AMCDRR 2018, puts the focus on local action, gender and inclusiveness, and coherence as key policy directions. As the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda move into the fourth year of implementation, it is imperative that these cross-cutting elements are strengthened and advanced. This will result in a “resilience dividend,” i.e. the long term social, environmental and economic benefits that will be gained from reducing disaster risk.

The ISDR-Asia Partnership (IAP) Forum, organised by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) from 11-12 December 2018 at the UN Conference Centre in Bangkok focused on these key themes and identified emerging themes in the region. The meeting was attended by over 100 delegates from 20 governments, intergovernmental organizations, stakeholder groups, the United Nations and international organizations.

### The State of Play

The overall status of disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region is mixed, with progress being made in the development of national strategies, mainstreaming DRR into development in some countries, and strengthening of governance and institutional capacity, especially in the areas of risk analysis, and early warning. Year 2018 in particular demonstrated the shifting narrative from high frequency low impact to high frequency high impact events, making ‘extreme risk’ the new normal, further exacerbated by increasing unpredictability of disasters and their impact in a changing climate.

These uncertainties get compounded by the changing nature of risk where, despite scientific advancements, the capability to accurately measure the disaster-induced economic losses and the aggregated impact of localised disasters, understanding the systemic nature of disaster risk and its cascading impact and dynamic interactions with social, ecological, economic and political systems, remain a challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bit.ly/2zcsKk7>

<sup>2</sup> [www.unisdr.org/amcdrr2018](http://www.unisdr.org/amcdrr2018)

<sup>3</sup> <https://bit.ly/2KK4D0y>

## Emerging DRR Themes and Advancing them in Asia-Pacific

The stage for the IAP Forum was set with three key themes that define the changing dynamics of risk in the region – local action, inclusiveness and displacement. The Forum identified an additional set of themes and proposed means to advance these themes in the region. These can be summarised as below.

- 1. Localisation of the Sendai Framework:** Communities remain at the forefront, both in terms of proactive actors and the first responders against disasters. The local authorities and communities recognise the wisdom in the global frameworks but often lack the tools and capacity to implement them at the local levels. Localisation of the SDGs serves as the bridge to promote local action for DRR, including through local platforms that enable turning coherence into practice. Target E of the Sendai Framework, aligned with SDG Targets on national and local DRR strategies, offers a critical opportunity to enhance local implementation of the global frameworks.

Simplified language for DRR communication, promotion of local leadership, including through recognition of local champions, and innovations driven by local social entrepreneurs are some key means to enhance local action for DRR. End-to-end early warning systems, including collection and dissemination of good practices on decentralised early warning systems, and integration of traditional and indigenous knowledge offer some key opportunities to advance localisation.

- 2. Inclusiveness:** Disasters don't discriminate but prevailing social and economic inequalities do, determining how disasters impact people, their levels of preparedness, capacities and ability to cope and recover. Disasters further magnify social inequalities resulting in a vicious cycle of disaster risk, poverty and inequality. Such inequalities need to be addressed through inclusion of at-risk populations in governance and their empowerment to make them active agents of change, wherein the focus needs to shift from vulnerability and servicing to empowerment and capacity development and from addressing of immediate needs to addressing underlying and root causes of vulnerability.

Collection and analysis of sex, age and disability disaggregated data is a basic requirement to ensure this. Development of an 'Inclusion Index' to inform SDG and Sendai Framework Monitoring should be explored. Institutional mechanisms and platforms need to be established and/or strengthened that enable women and groups at-risk to participate. Incorporation of gender equality, social inclusion and rights-based approaches in developing national and local DRR strategies and early warning systems should be considered critical.

- 3. Displacement:** Over half of the global new disaster-induced displacements during 2015-2017 were recorded in Asia-Pacific. Disaster-induced displacement is triggered by both sudden-onset disasters (mostly cyclones and floods) as well as slow-onset disasters and processes like drought, sea level rise, environmental degradation. This gives several opportunities for this issue to be integrated in national and local DRR strategies.

Safe return of displaced persons, migration tracking, impact on children and youth, analysis of repeated cycles of migration and interventions at the source of migration to prevent displacement risk are areas of further analysis and action. The informal working group on disaster-induced displacement in the region is expected to advance the agenda.

- 4. Climate Action:** While climate change and disaster risk have conceptual interfaces the two communities and institutions have evolved largely parallel to each other. DRR not only provides a key entry point for climate action but also the co-benefits of integrated DRR and climate change adaptation offer several no-regret options, e.g. ecosystem-based adaptation and DRR and sustainable consumption and production.

The COPs provide a good opportunity for national cooperation between the DRM and climate change institutions, building upon several good examples in the Pacific. Key areas of further work include joint analysis of climate and disaster data to enhance the robustness of projections, attributed impact of climate change on disasters and extreme events and estimating the costs and benefits of mainstreaming DRR and climate change into sector policies.

- 5. Disaster Risk Financing:** While DRR financing presents several gaps there are a number of funding tools that are yet to be explored, including some relevant climate financing sources. Social protection and forecast-based financing are viable vehicles for several risk transfer instruments like insurance. Formation of a working group on disaster risk financing should be explored including the private sector and financing institutions.
- 6. Resilient Infrastructure:** Disaster resilient infrastructure is an emerging strategic area of work awareness on which needs to be enhanced, including through knowledge products and guidelines. Local governments should be supported with technical guidance on development and enforcement of building codes. Participation of ministries of planning and finance should be encouraged at the APMCDRRs. Further, platforms like the upcoming Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure should be leveraged to promote peer learning and capacity development.
- 7. Risk Knowledge and Data:** Enhanced knowledge of risk is the common basis for all planning and implementation wherein data, disaggregated to the extent possible, is a key requirement. Analysis of economic losses, cascading impact of disasters and systemic risk analysis are key gaps that need to be addressed. Data gaps, including sex, age and disability disaggregated data, should be filled through technology as well as citizen participation.

Such risk knowledge needs to be both standardized as well as contextualized for coherent messaging and understanding. Knowledge hubs should be created, wherein IAP can leverage its role for effective knowledge sharing.

- 8. Technological and NATECH Hazards:** The Sendai Framework enhances the scope of DRR through inclusion of technological risks. However, the awareness level on technological hazards and Natural Hazard Triggering Technological Disasters (NATECH)

is limited. Apart from the Words-into-Action Guideline on this theme, specific case studies should be developed to enhance understanding for different stakeholders.

**9. Communication and Advocacy:** It was recommended that the way DRR is communicated needs to be reviewed and embedded in the development discourse. Social media campaigns play a huge role, where community leaders play a key role to communicate better with the policy makers. IAP should facilitate development of advocacy kits and good practice documentation that can be tailored to national and local needs. Partnership with the private sector and youth is key to achieve this. Education is a key sector that has vital interfaces with DRR – the concept and practice of Comprehensive School Safety needs to be strengthened and promoted.

**10. Leadership:** DRR leadership underlies all themes and action and needs to be strengthened at various levels, through inter-ministerial coordination as well as community leadership. DRR champions should be leveraged to become regional ‘opinion leaders’ while the capacities of the finance ministries be enhanced to have a better understanding of DRR, including through relevant tools and markers.

The role of the IAP in advancing these ten themes have been outlined, including through a series of cross-cutting issues. There was a concrete demand for more **knowledge products** across the board: technical guides, case studies, good practices and illustrative examples that can help simplify complex concepts and practices. **Capacity development** for governments and stakeholders was cited as a critical support area. This includes training on how to use risk information for planning and decision making in areas such as displacement risk, outreach to vulnerable groups, and supporting local DRR efforts – while ensuring that such efforts create sustainability and not dependencies. Finally, the role of **partnerships** was recurrently cited as common cross-cutting theme and a critical role for the IAP to bring the knowledge acquired from AMCDRRs through its national and subnational mechanisms for effective implementation of Asia Regional Plan.

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Webpage: <https://www.preventionweb.net/go/61009>

Web-Story: <https://www.unisdr.org/archive/62615>

Presentations: <https://bit.ly/2LrjPOH>

Photos: <https://bit.ly/2JSPdbi>