



Statement from U.S. on Risk Sensitive Development for Community Resilience by Ambassador Jonathan Addleton, Mission Director, USAID/India

**First Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
3rd Ministerial Session, Friday, November 4, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, India**

“As Prepared for Delivery”

- Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on this critical issue. First, I would like to thank and congratulate the Republic of India and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) for hosting the 1st Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction after the advent of the Sendai Framework. This demonstrates India’s strong commitment and leadership in the area of disaster risk reduction in the region. I also commend all participants for addressing disaster risk reduction this week in a concrete and systematic way to ensure this important global agenda continues to move forward.
- As previous speakers have highlighted, this region is particularly prone to natural disasters. While the risk cannot be completely eliminated, it can be managed—and in many cases reduced—when national, regional, and international entities partner to put at-risk communities at the center of all risk reduction efforts with the support of all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector.
- The United States Government, primarily through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has long been engaged in disaster risk reduction and response efforts in the region. We are committed to nurturing strong partnerships with governments and non-governmental organizations - including the private sector - in the region, working to reduce the human and economic toll from these events. The U.S. has also renewed its focus on promoting disaster risk reduction and resilience activities globally, working

with an array of both old and new partners to develop effective policies and programs.

- One example of this cooperation was highlighted by the tragic April 2015 earthquake in Nepal, where the effect of USAID's many years of partnership with local institutions and the national government could be seen. When the earthquake struck, our 20-year investment in disaster risk reduction proved critical to Nepal's ability to respond — from the more than 1,000 USAID-trained first responders who conducted search and rescue missions, to a major hospital that continued treating patients uninterrupted due to a preparedness plan we had helped establish.
- Like in Nepal, USAID's DRR investments in the Philippines have saved lives and strengthened communities. Over the past few years, USAID has helped 100,000 people in 61 villages in the south increase their resilience to extreme weather events. This assistance was put to the test in 2014 when a tropical storm roared through Mindanao, affecting nearly half a million people. During the storm, residents followed the flood warning system instituted with USAID assistance, and the entire village of 1,120 people survived. "We could not have been more prepared," said the village chairman.
- As we have all observed, unplanned urbanization and other factors, including climate change, continue to increase disaster risks in many parts of the world. These factors will not only determine the type and nature of disaster response, but will likely shape disaster risk reduction programs as well.
- In this context, the U.S. understands that an investment in disaster risk reduction is an investment in resilience. Incorporating disaster risk reduction into both humanitarian assistance and longer-term development programs can protect economic and development gains against potential shocks, while strengthening community and household resilience to manage risks and recover faster and with less external assistance. I want to emphasize the important role of all stakeholders in fostering this community resilience.

Risk Sensitive Development for Community Resilience

- We must remember that disaster risk reduction requires an inter-disciplinary approach. Standard divisions between disaster management and development need to be set aside, and an integrated approach should be adopted. Collaboration is at the heart of what we do. By partnering with friends, neighbors, universities, technical institutions, civil society, governments, and businesses, we can save lives, alleviate suffering, and lessen the economic and social impact of disasters.
- At the most basic level, we need to involve the whole of society in discussions about disaster risk reduction. We need the knowledge and expertise that various Ministers of Finance, Planning, Urban Development, Health, Environment, Commerce and others can bring. Likewise, by expanding the discussions of disaster risk reduction to include business leaders, bankers, and insurance companies, we will move toward reducing risk while also building resilience. The private sector, both local and international, has a tremendous role to play in building the resilience of countries.
- Encouraging public-private partnerships to support communities where local and multinational enterprises' workforces and clients live can greatly improve local resilience. The very services, products, expertise, and networks that companies employ to be successful in the business world augment what governments and non-governmental organizations do in preparing for and responding to disasters. The private sector is also a major driver for recovery and re-growth in disaster-affected areas, working alongside national and local governments.
- While corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility are important, the U.S. is also interested in and excited about realistic win-win partnerships, which help disaster-affected people rebuild their lives and livelihoods *and* help corporations achieve their strategic goals, such as gaining access to a new market or reducing their own exposure to disaster risks. Partnerships that serve the strategic needs of corporations and our beneficiaries will last longer, and create more real benefit than 'disaster-of-the-month' funding.

- To take one example, when global courier DHL provides worldwide support to airport preparedness for disasters, they are ensuring the continuity of their own operations and building relationships, as well as helping increase the overall resilience of the countries where they operate.
- Our partnerships and our collaborations can and should occur at all levels in order to have the greatest likelihood of success. When DRR programs are supported both through organizations working at a national or regional level, and by local communities themselves, they are far more likely to succeed and branch out beyond the community where they were first implemented.
- At the international level, we must first understand how some of our interventions can actually weaken the resilience of national and local systems if we ignore the structure and function of those systems. For this reason, we must listen to and learn from community, local, and national systems that have effectively built resilience so that our efforts are complementary and external resources can contribute constructively. International support should be simple and broad to allow for tailored interventions that can be adapted to the needs of the complex systems they are meant to enhance.
- At the national level, we can encourage ministries to build disaster management capacity at the local level. Making national-level scientists or experts available for consultation; providing resources for implementation; or working with local communities to develop specific DRR plans would all help to promote local ownership and integrate approaches across a variety of sectors. As an example, the U.S. supports scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to work with scientists from host countries, not only to strengthen earthquake and cyclone monitoring on a local scale, but also to strengthen national monitoring and early warning.
- Finally, at the community level, we have to recognize that the people we seek to help must be active participants in this process from planning to implementation. In some cases, the interventions that we fund may address resilience to risks of interest to us as donors, and not necessarily those that are of most concern to the nations or communities we want to help. We need

broader partnerships, a longer-term focus, and renewed attention on bottom-up programming approaches that are naturally tailored to the beneficiary communities.

- In India, as part of the bilateral engagement with Government of India, since 2003, USAID has supported strengthening the preparedness levels of the communities in rural and urban settings through various projects like the Community Based Disaster Management Program (2003 – 2007) and Developing Resilient Cities through Risk Reduction to Disasters and Climate Change (since 2012). This project seeks to strengthen the capacities of municipal administrations to prepare disaster management plans, action plans, strengthen early warning systems, and train urban volunteers on disaster preparedness. As a result of these efforts, municipalities can more effectively integrate climate risk reduction measures into their long-term development plans to make cities more resilient to climate change.

Closing Remarks

- I again wish to congratulate the Government of India for hosting this important meeting in collaboration with the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, signifying India's commitment to helping the Asia Region, and beyond, to reduce the devastating impacts of disasters.
- I would like to emphasize the United States' commitment to forging new—and strengthening existing—partnerships to promote disaster risk reduction in the region. I look forward to learning from and advancing the outcomes of this conference. Again, thank you for the opportunity to address all of you today. I am honored to be a part of this important event.