

**“PREVENTING DISASTER RISK - PROTECTING OUR COMMON HOME”
UNDER THE LIGHT OF ‘LAUDATO SI’¹
CARITAS CONFEDERATION IN ASIA**

Caritas Asia² as a federation under Caritas Internationalis³ congratulates UNISDR for the organisation of the event and appreciates the hospitality and warm welcome by the Government of Mongolia and UNISDR.

Understanding Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the context of *LAUDATO SI’ (#14)*, where Holy Father Pope Francis called for the **Care for Our Common Home**: “I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. The worldwide ecological movement has already made considerable progress and led to the establishment of numerous organizations committed to raising awareness of these challenges, we require a new and universal solidarity. “Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest”. Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear **both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor**.

The confederation recognizes the importance the Sendai Framework’s (2015-2030) priority and its contributions to the substantial reduction of the loss of lives and assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

As a member of Caritas Internationalis, responding to natural and human made crisis and building back better for those in most needs is our key priority in our work worldwide. We are facing challenges in responding to the natural disasters and humanitarian crisis, due to the increasing complexities of the natural and human-made disasters, climate variability, the disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable people, the deprivation of the rights to access to the basic human needs, limited local capacities and good governance, human exploitation to the eco-system and lack of protection of human rights and dignity. Poor and most vulnerable ones are affected most by the consequences of disaster risks. People affected by disasters need to survive with dignity, rebuild their lives and livelihoods and strengthening capacities of the local communities and countries to respond better towards the future disasters.

¹ Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si* is a worldwide wake up call to help humanity understand the destruction that man is rendering to the environment and his fellow man. While addressing the environment directly, the document’s scope is broader in many ways as it looks at not only man’s effect on the environment, but also the many philosophical, theological, and cultural causes that threaten the relationships of man to nature and man to each other in various circumstances. (Kevin Cotter)

² Caritas Asia is a forum of 23 members of Caritas in Asia, which has a mandate to work with an Integral Human Developmental approach towards responding to the needs of the disaster, climate risks and conflict affected population. Its strength lies in the diversity of its membership, which ranges from small groups of volunteers to some of the world’s largest humanitarian and development organizations.

³ Caritas Internationalis is a global network of 165 humanitarian and development organizations with a moral mandate to respond to humanitarian needs without distinction as to origin, nationality, creed or sex. Caritas plays a pivotal role in humanitarian emergencies and social development. As part of the Catholic Church, Caritas, which is present in nearly 200 countries around the world, has dynamically adopted people-centred initiatives to bring about change in the lives of affected and at risk communities.

Building back better will remain ineffective and inefficient unless there isn't a global approach of integral human development in addressing the root causes of the ecological and environmental issues which are political in nature, strongly influencing the humanitarian situation. "Building back" better must systematically address the root causes with improved governance, localization and stronger community leadership.

Our proposed actions:

1. **Community leadership and governance to reduce the disaster risks:** Invest and measure local capacities including that of communities, local organizations and local governance, through establishing functional DRR systems and structures, policies, financing the risk reduction and ecosystem development interventions, integration of humanitarian and developmental actors, that will allow increased access to the rights and entitlements by the affected communities both in urban and rural contexts.
2. **Stronger regional, national and local coordination:** An effective and efficient regional, national and local level coordination mechanism will ensure equal allocation of and access to human, financial and knowledge resources, to address the wide needs of the affected population, bring in equality of the resilience across communities – urban and rural.
3. **Human rights based approaches to DRR strategies:** As emphasised in the guiding principles of the Sendai Framework⁴ international human rights law can play a fundamental role in preventing and reducing disaster risks and should be systematically included in DRR strategies. States have the primary responsibility to protect and provide assistance in an emergency setting, but they have also the primary responsibility to prevent and reduce disaster risks, provided adequate resources are available. Measures adopted toward the full enjoyment of human rights, such as housing and a healthy environment, lead to more effective disaster risk reduction. A human rights-based approach can also ensure the protection of vulnerable groups, including children, women, elderly, people with disabilities, migrants and forced displaced people exposed to the impact of natural or human-made hazards, including violence and conflicts. If grounded in human rights law, inclusive and participatory DRR strategies can effectively strengthen the resilience capacities of people by preventing potential abuses and discrimination in an emergency context, or even environmental degradation.

⁴ "Protection of persons and their assets while promoting and protecting all human rights, including the right to development" cf. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.