

## Oxfam Asia Statement to the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

3-6 July 2018 | Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Chairperson, Honorable Leaders, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The jury is out. The number of people affected by disasters has almost doubled over the past decade and is expected to keep rising<sup>1</sup>. Weather-related disasters have increased by 233 per cent where records are available. Then there are smaller, localized disasters with off the grid communities which continue to account for a large proportion of disasters' total impact: 80% of people affected, and 83% of people injured yet are often unreported, much less supported<sup>2</sup>. Food security crises are becoming more protracted and intertwined with fragility, conflict, and weak governance.

This is a grim prognosis of where we are at.

Yet despite this, Asia, more than ever is the place where opportunities for economic growth and wellbeing are more realizable than ever. Asia is young with the bigger portion of the population belonging to citizens of "productive age" and is the centre of innovation, commerce, diverse culture and have so much to offer the world, especially in the field of pioneering work in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Asia could and must lead the world, in cooperation with the rest of the world, to a new era of shared prosperity by reducing disaster impacts as outlined by the Sendai Framework and hold true to the SDG 2030 call of "leave no one behind".

Against this backdrop, Oxfam supports the 8<sup>th</sup> AMCDRR and aims to work side by side with you honorable Ministers and fellow DRR workers and practitioners with our offer of a 6-point agenda:

1. **Invest in mechanisms to make local humanitarian leadership a truly Asian reality.** This means investment in funding, political will, technology, and cross peer to peer learning, among others. This 8<sup>th</sup> AMCDRR can rally a wide range of actors to support local Asian capacity to both deliver and *lead* humanitarian response and in reducing disaster risks. Oxfam is at one with the Ministers in pushing for faster implementation and systematic changes in the humanitarian system to enable the localization agenda amongst us INGOs, Donors and UN Bodies.
2. **Increase in social protection as an approach to reduce vulnerabilities to risk and fostering sustainable development.** There are various models of social protection existing in Asia and beyond in recognition that social protection and vulnerability reduction is an important key policy and practice issue to help communities manage a range of risks to their livelihoods and wellbeing, including climate shocks. However, it should not be considered a replacement to humanitarian aid when disaster hits but part of a comprehensive package to ensure faster recovery. Adjunct to this, we can together explore disaster risk financing (DRF) as another useful strategy and tool to reduce disaster risks and vulnerabilities, and protect social, economic and business infrastructures.
3. **Safeguard the interests of the most vulnerable people, especially women and girls.** There has been little appreciable increase in women's participation and the inclusion of women's human rights issues in peace agreements since UN Resolution 1325 was passed in 2000. The rights, participation and leadership of women and girls in the design and implementation of DRR action plans are critical to ensure that policy and systems reflect their needs, priorities and capacities. We need more women in NDMO and DRR offices across the region.
4. **Define a clear urban risk reduction agenda.** Lack of dignified jobs put youth and marginalised women at more risk in urban slums especially during disasters thus adding to their vulnerabilities. Lessons should be gleaned from reforms done in recent urban disaster experiences and recovery in Bangladesh, Nepal and Philippines.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and DARA, *Saving Lives Today and Tomorrow: Managing Risk of Humanitarian Crises* (2014), <http://www.unocha.org/saving-lives/> (citing OCHA, *Overview of Global Humanitarian Response 2013 at Mid-Year* (2013), docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/MYR\_2013\_Overview\_of\_GHA.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), *Revealing Risk, Redefining Development: Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2011 (GAR 2011)* (Geneva, 2012), 37 and Box 2.4, [http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2011/en/bgdocs/GAR-2011/GAR2011\\_Report\\_Chapter2.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2011/en/bgdocs/GAR-2011/GAR2011_Report_Chapter2.pdf).

5. **Advance transboundary DRR action plans in Asia to address protracted conflict and displacement.** At least 1.5 billion women, men, and children – equal to half the world’s poor people – are living in areas affected by fragility, conflict, or large-scale violence in the world today. There are 65 million people who are forcibly displaced by conflict, persecution, or human rights violations– the highest number since the Second World War. Asia is not untouched by the ever growing threats of conflict to the safety and resilience of millions of poor and vulnerable people across the region. We call on you honourable Ministers, to urgently scale up and accelerate peacekeeping mechanisms and humanitarian response across borders and find a strategy to address transboundary risks arising from forced migration (*due to climate change and others*) and displacement which can lead to conflict.
6. **Focus on executing the Sendai Framework instead of getting drawn into too much planning**

Oxfam continues to work in support of governments and communities and has been recognized for its leadership in DRR in recent years. However, although much work has been accomplished with our partners on the ground, we recognize that there is still much to be done. In front of you honourable Ministers, Leaders and Colleagues, we commit to work towards addressing our own challenges and work with others to help build a resilient world.

We are one with you in strengthening international cooperation and regional and global partnership to achieve a culture of resilience in all aspects.

Thank you on behalf of Oxfam staff and partners for this opportunity to address this distinguished gathering today.

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