

Report from participation at the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), July 3-6, 2018 at Mongolia

Document purpose

The AMCDRR was held from July 3-6, 2018, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The conference was attended by 50 governments and 3000 delegates from Asia and Pacific region countries and had sessions on ministerial statements, 20 lead sessions, 60 side events, 50 ignite state talks and 50 market place exhibitions. The conference was overall in the series and second after Sendai. The biennial AMCDRR has established itself as an important vehicle to address the global and regional disaster challenges. It provides an opportunity to address such issues through cross-border leadership and solutions that can benefit the people and the countries of the region.

The PfR country teams from Philippines, Indonesia and India participated in the conference and contributed to the ministerial declaration (through RCCC prior to the conference) and individual meetings with national delegations. An exhibition at the market place and a featured side event were held. This report summarises reflections from the conference and enlists follow up actions relevant for Asia Regional Programme and PfR India.

Key outcomes

The Ulaanbaatar Declaration (full text can be downloaded at:

https://www.preventionweb.net/files/56219_ulaanbaatardeclarationfinal.pdf) contains the following points of relevance to PfR:

- Recognizes the importance of ensuring coherence among the global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Agenda for Humanity, the New Urban Agenda, the SIDS Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, and regional inter-governmental processes including the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific
- Calls upon governments and stakeholders to commit to translating coherence of global frameworks into policy and practice to achieve resilience at national and local levels across all sectors including by strengthening governance arrangements and by providing practical guidance to ensure effective and efficient management of disaster risk
- Stresses the need to promote and scale up community level actions to strengthen local capacities and foster local leadership to reduce risk and enhance resilience (emphasis on localisation)
- Commits to integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, along with enhancing resilience of natural ecosystems
- Adopting people centred approach in developing and implementing disaster strategies; ensuring a human rights approach and inclusive of vulnerable, marginalized people

The AMCDRR declaration also adopted the Action Plan 2018-2020 of the Asia Regional Plan for implementation of the Sendai framework for DRR 2015-2030. Key elements relevant to PfR are as follows:

Priorities	Relevant actions which PfR can adopt
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Understanding Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthen regional cooperation through public-private partnership for research, development and application of science and technology for DRR – Build capacity of governments and other stakeholders to collect and record disaster risk, displacement, damage and loss data – Establish appropriate baseline information and comprehensive risk profiles to assess disaster risk – Risk assessments to cover multi-sectors, ensuring the complementarities of proven traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices to understand risk and inform DRR strategies – Scale up advocacy and public awareness on DRR by conducting activities annually to commemorate
Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhance regional cooperation and coordination on DRR by strengthening Regional platform for DRR, AMCDRR, the IAP forum – Strengthen the role of and cooperation between intergovernmental organisation for policy exchange, sharing information and supporting national actions – Integrate DRR and ecosystem-based approaches to coherently implement, the Ramsar Convention, Rio Convention and Convention on Bio-diversity, Climate Change and Desertification – Promote and support gender-sensitive and gender-responsive DRR actions – Accelerate actions to achieve target (e) of the Sendai Framework (substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020) – Promote long term DRR plans and monitoring tools alignment with national development and climate change plans, in line with the Paris agreement, SDGs and the New Urban Agenda for achieving risk sensitive development – Strengthen risk informed decision making through inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial coordination – Establish multi-stakeholder's platform with participation of local community leaders
Investing in DRR for resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhance resilience of natural ecosystems through transboundary cooperation – Promote integrated approaches of blue, green and grey infrastructure – Ensure DRR strategies, development plans and climate change adaptation plans are aligned and backed by investment frameworks – Track public investments on DRR to better understand DRR investments and mobilise resources by engaging with development funds, banks, private foundations and stakeholders

Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to build back better in recovery, rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strengthen existing regional mechanisms to enhance multi-hazard early warning and preparedness for transboundary hazards – Strengthen multi-hazard early warning systems and quality of early warning that can be locally understood – Strengthen mechanisms for forecast based early action and financing – Build capacities of local authorities, private sector and communities to develop and implement disaster management and recovery plans
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Some reflections:

- The action plan states hydro-meteorological hazards are on the increase and being worsened by climate change and reverse development. PfR can demonstrate how DRR measures can be mainstreamed into development programmes along with climate change adaptation.
- Most governments have committed to implement local and national DRR strategies by 2020, which is Target E of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030
- No financial targets or commitments have been made towards DRR measures. Thus, PfR would need to demonstrate how DRR measures can be financed by convergence approaches
- Capacity building of governments and local actors. PfR further needs to integrate the IRM (Integrated Risk Management) based modules within disaster training institutes
- There is a greater call towards research and developing risk profiles. The Indian government has committed towards developing a database by 2020, PfR can contribute to information for the same
- Ecosystem based disaster risk reduction received recognition in the action plan, especially for reducing the impact of water mediated disasters. Much needs to be done to increase recognition on wetland management and wise use for disaster risk reduction
- Promoting transboundary cooperation was a key theme of the conference and is listed well in the plan. Cooperation on investment towards DRR, resilient infrastructure and disaster resilient livelihoods is listed. PfR can demonstrate good cases for disaster resilient livelihoods and infrastructure, enhanced investments towards such measures can be achieved by engaging with government and other stakeholders
- Promoting integrated approaches for sustainable development is listed as one of the actions. PfR needs to validate the integrated approach by developing models for green and grey infrastructure for sustainable development

A summary of side event organised at AMCDRR is placed at Annex 1 to this report. Report from participation at various side events and emerging follow up actions are placed at Annex 2.

The AMCDRR was a very significant event in terms of gaining an understanding of key policy processes and national priorities towards disaster risk reduction. The participation therefore has been an opportunity for capacity development and learning. Specific follow up actions have also emerged which would benefit the regional program as well as the PfR India program.

Towards AMCDRR 2020, a more structured approach can lead to delivering higher impact on the political processes and the conference in general. By this time PfR implementation would have

greatly matured, nearing completion, with collated lessons and experiences available for wider dissemination and outreach. It would be-fitting to consider the following:

1. Stronger and wider engagement of the PfR group in contributing to ministerial declaration.
2. Organising more thematic side events with necessary pre-event preparations including dissemination of information through networks and websites.
3. Strategic engagement with national delegations on using a common engagement framework (elements to highlight and pursue, specific calls for actions related to realisation of PfR regional and country level issues)
4. Development of position papers on technical issues of relevance to PfR
5. Develop a bridge with UNISDR (key anchors of the conference) to ensure that PfR receives recognition within the conference development processes

Annex 1 – Report from the Side Event

Wetlands as natural infrastructure for reducing disaster risk

July 5, 2018, (9.00 am - 10.00 am)

Soyombo Room 2, Best Western Premier, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

At the AMCDRR, Wetlands International South Asia (WISA) as part of the Partners for Resilience consortium held a side event on “Wetlands as natural infrastructure for reducing disaster risk” at Soyombo Room 2, Best Western Premier, Tuushin Hotel. The event aimed to discuss the role of wetlands in reducing disaster risk and for promoting collaboration between development, humanitarian and environmental sectors. Mr PK Taneja, Director SAARC disaster management centre chaired the session. The panellists included Dr Manu Gupta (founder SEEDS India), Brig (Dr) BK Khanna (CEO-Arise Network, FICCI) and Dr Raditya Jati (NDMA Indonesia). The event was attended by 27 participants from Asian Government Ministries, the German Embassy, the World Meteorological Institute, the Asian disaster preparedness centre, research and academic institutes, civil society and private sector members.



Mr P K Taneja (Director SAARC DM centre) delivering the opening remarks

Session Objectives

- Promoting recognition of the role healthy wetlands have in reducing water-mediated disaster risk
- Promoting collaboration between development, humanitarian and environmental sectors for designing and implementing wetland-based solutions to increase resilience to water-mediated disasters

Proceedings

Dushyant Mohil (Program Manager-PfR, Wetlands International South Asia) welcomed the participants and introduced the panel members. He made the introductory presentation on the role of healthy wetlands in reducing disaster risk, through their wide-ranging ecosystem services and biodiversity values. The presentation highlighted that wise use and management of wetlands are a cost-effective component of disaster risk reduction strategies and provides support to local economies. Further he illustrated that continued wetland degradation in Asia region had implications for enhanced disaster vulnerabilities for communities particularly water mediated disasters. Wetlands conservation, restoration, and wise use should be applied in complementarity with other engineering structures was stressed by him.



Image 1: Dushyant (WI-South Asia) delivering the introductory presentation: 'Healthy wetlands for reducing disaster risk'

Mauliyati N Slamet (Policy Advocacy and Communications Coordinator, Wetlands International-Indonesia) presented an overview of Wetlands International Indonesia experience in Demak and Pulau Dua, Banten, where wetland restoration and maintenance are being undertaken using the holistic Integrated Risk Management approach. As part of the program mangrove restoration has been undertaken in the provinces and local ownership is enhanced through the bio-rights mechanism. She further showcased results from the Building with Nature program which focuses on building green infrastructure (permeable structures) to catch sediment for the natural growth of mangrove seedling in restoring the mangrove green belt. It is also aims to enhance the local community's capacity through the formulation of bio-rights contracts and improving the community's livelihood through the coastal field school sessions.



Mauliyati (WI-Indonesia) sharing experiences of wetland management and wise use for DRR

Aditi Kapoor (Climate Advisor, Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre) presented how variations in climate are going to affect wetlands and its biodiversity. She illustrated how rainfall is decreasing in India and is becoming more sporadic in nature with short but intense rainfall spells. She stated the impacts of climate change are going to affect wetlands greatly and she reiterated the need for wetland management and wise use for mitigating climate change impacts. She ended the session by concluding that Integrated Risk Management for reducing disaster risks needs to be adopted by governments and other actors, as single point approaches can have limitations.

Discussion

The chair asked the panel two questions following the presentations:

1. How to imbed wetland solutions within ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction policies and programmes?

The panellists proposed the following points for integrating wetland solutions for policy and practice

- Strengthening research to develop wetland-based solutions for reducing disaster risk
 - Undertaking ecosystem monitoring as part of the disaster risk management cycle
 - Allocating greater resources towards ecosystem management and protection within DRR investments
 - Mainstreaming ecosystem protection and management within development policies
 - Enhancing gender inclusion within ecosystem management
2. How can policy planners from humanitarian, environmental and development sectors address barriers limiting inter-sectoral collaboration on wetland-based solutions for reducing water-mediated disaster risks?

Suggestions by the panellists for inter-sectoral collaboration are as follows

- By shaping a shared vision and defining roles and responsibilities for all sectors and actors

- Fostering cross-sectoral partnerships by identifying each sectors priority and issues
- Developing a framework for collaboration
- Participative management where multi-stakeholders have equal say in decision making and all contributions are valued



Panellists and speakers after the session

The chair Mr P K Taneja summarised the discussions and stated that wetlands should be promoted especially for their role in disaster risk reduction. He asked the participants to consider and adopt the integrated risk management approach within implementation of disaster risk reduction programmes. He further stressed the role of cross sectoral partnerships was highlighted.

Follow up

PfR India to engage with:

- NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) to include integrated risk management (IRM) framework with the district policy risk assessment framework
- With SAARC (South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation) disaster management centre to integrate the IRM module within their training curriculum
- TATA CSR department to build a partnership for resources towards IRM
- The ARISE network and the Federation of Indian chambers of commerce and industry (FICCI) to build private sector relationships to influence investments and make them risk informed

List of participants

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Annex -2 Key takeaways and follow ups from sessions attended

S.No	Session Attended	Key Takeaways	Follow up
1	CSO consultation meeting on July 3	Disaster risks are generally linked to other development issues. Drivers of risk such as ecosystem degradation and climate change were well recognised and were reflected in the consultation meeting notes	Maintain linkages with CSO consultation processes for AMCDRR 2020
2	Private sector stakeholder consultation	Investment should be guided towards resilience building. Private sector should be motivated by putting in place regulations for increased spending towards DRR initiatives. Companies also need to internally build resilience for employees and reduce dependency on government and other aid. Companies should also spend on DRR mitigation and promote scientific research	Meeting with TATA representatives, ARISE network and FICCI to be scheduled
3	Indian Delegation stakeholder consultation	Heatwaves not reflected as disasters, policy checklist for districts to be out soon. Disaster database in India to be developed by 2020. Companies act 137 should include CSR funding towards DRR specifically. Climate change and ecosystem degradation as drivers of risk were not mentioned in the ministerial statements and commitments. Development to be risk informed. Improved understanding of the role of stakeholders for greater accountability. Important flagship DRR schemes such as school safety programme in areas falling in seismic zone IV and V; national cyclone risk mitigation project in coastal states to reduce vulnerability of coastal communities to cyclones and drawing on the experience were also shared with the delegation	Meeting with NDMA and SAARC disaster management centre to be scheduled
4	Cultural heritage and disaster risk reduction	Loss of resilient traditional engineering skills and techniques in protecting, strengthening or restoring monuments and heritage buildings. Engineers need to be trained in knowledge and skills required for protection of heritage buildings. Destruction of cultural heritage buildings is quite traumatic for people. People's livelihoods that are linked to cultural heritage buildings needs to be looked at. Mapping of heritage sites and infrastructure in disaster-prone areas should be undertaken. Intangible benefits of cultural heritage should be valued.	Traditional skills and techniques within the PfR working areas can be assessed and utilised in a similar manner as recommend in the cultural heritage-guidelines by NDMA India
5	Ecosystem based disaster risk reduction	Lessons from IIT Roorkee infrastructure that is permeable, IUCN EPIC green roads project in Nepal (IUCN), Bio rights mechanism Wetlands International Indonesia. Wetland management and wise use received recognition in the thematic session but was not reflected in any official statements and declarations	Best practices and lessons learnt can be replicated and adopted in PfR work

6	Understanding risk	Developing disaster databases and using them effectively (experiences by NASA). Call for universal risk assessment framework.	The new disaster databases are to be utilised by PFR for strengthening research
7	Disasters and displacement (Ignite Stage and side event)	Refugees in disasters are also a high priority for the region, and several CSOs and governments have raised attention on the ongoing Rohingya crisis in south Asia. Linked to the issue of humanitarian crises is the need to consider the special situation of DRR in fragile states, as was highlighted by ODI's report launch on DRR in contexts of fragile countries in Asia	Internal displacement within the country due to disasters is to be investigated by the PFR India team