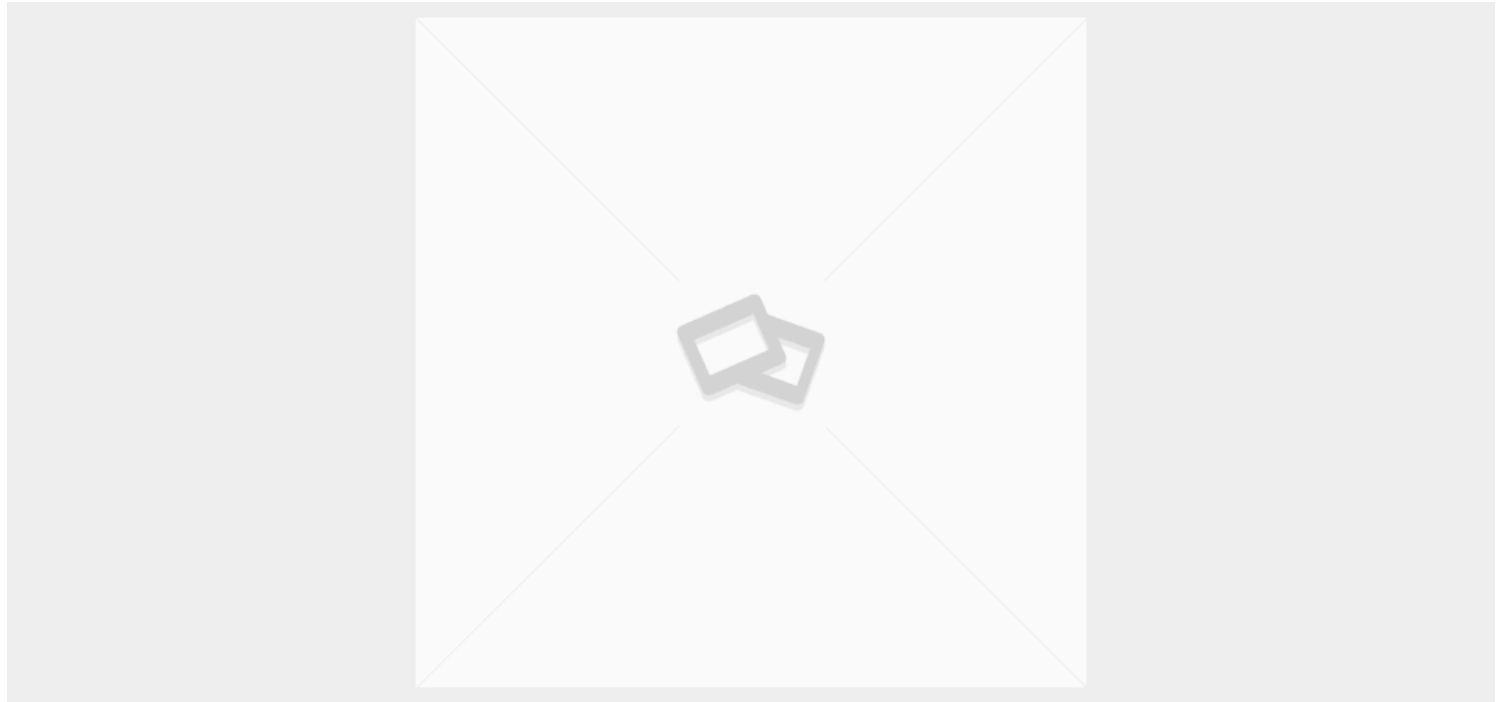


MONUMENTAL CONVERGENCE FOR DISASTER RESILIENCE IN ASIA: A UN AND PARTNERS CASE STUDY FOR THE WORLD

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"I have always believed that the work done by DRR Professionals is God's work on earth. Humanitarian emergencies are that time of the day which enkindles the best and worst of mankind. It not only fosters human solidarity, but also awakens altruism in the true sense of the word."

Never before in the history of human race have we witnessed several global policies pushing forth for creating a more sustainable and meaningful world. In the light of this, it must be remembered that building a more sustainable world requires safeguarding life and livelihood as we march forward. The Asia Pacific region is among the vulnerable zones exposed to hazards of different kind and magnitude. Addressing the same, calls for regional co-operation that transcends boundaries and mandates that countries come together to extend co-operation in terms of information sharing, establishing best practices and addressing cross border challenges.

The recent years have marked the beginning of a classic South South Co-operation that is strengthening Asian Nations like never before. Very recently, UNESCAP and its partners like UNDP, IFRC, ADPC and others came together to demystify the global frameworks into practice. This was by

far a monumental convergence for disaster resilience by Asian Countries and their partner organisations which signalled the beginning of a long standing vision that is now being created. A wise man once said, coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress. This regional meeting held at Bangkok in Thailand on Demystifying the Global frameworks into practice echoed and magnified the saying and highlighted the need to come together and emerge stronger.

Policy makers from different countries and grass-root level workers were brought together to identify the best practices and also recognise the challenges which could be addressed through collective will and shared optimism. The regional meeting stood out head and shoulder above the rest because it created an inter-sectoral resilience dialogue, brought about networks from the Asia Pacific region to ideate upon top down and bottom up approaches to engage in risk reduction and resilience building measures which remain integral to human survival.

Historical disasters in the past will record that unless country to country co-operation exist, addressing disasters effectively will not be possible. It has also served to understand that one size fits all approach can best be confined to the books in libraries and a horizontal and vertical approach is necessary to achieve resilience so that less people die due to a disaster and also to ensure that less economic damage occurs thereby enabling faster recovery and rehabilitation processes. The challenge disasters bring is that multiple agencies need to be involved. We need effective and efficient early warning systems, we need trained man-power to rescue and provide relief, we need health workers to be competent to ensure optimum treatment to the victims of disasters, we need governments to have emergency funding for addressing post disaster recovery and we also need regional, national and state level co-operation and integration to connect the dots in an efficient, quick and organised manner.

Creating a new regional future would mean integrating Disaster Risk Reduction into the Sustainable Development Goals drawing inspiration from the Sendai Framework for DRR and have time bound, accountable achievement to attain serious result cutting across all sectors that become party in the risk reduction processes. UNESCAP in the Asia Pacific Disaster Report 2015 documents that over 1625 disaster events have been recorded from 2005 to 2014 leading to over 5,00,000 deaths, affecting 1.4 billion people and causing economic damage of over \$523 billion.

Addressing this challenge will require integrating the philosophy and concept of early warning system into national level and state level policy and planning. Trans-boundary river basin flooding and coastal hazards will need regional co-operation to be strengthened. Involving the private sector and working with multi-national companies will tilt the balance to secure a resilient future and build a better world.

Disaster Risk Reduction is no longer a wait and watch approach, but it remains by far a way of life that needs to percolate as a deeper conscience. This conscience will bloom only when we remain convinced that safeguarding societies and empowering communities is more than just about saving life and protecting economic development, but it is also a way of leaving the world, a bit better than what we possibly inherited.

The Asia and the Pacific region have so much to learn from each other. Take for example, India's

ever prepared National Disaster Response Force which is a specialised force to respond to a disaster situation must be seen as a best practice by other countries and can be emulated. Also the top down approach of NDMA, SDMA, DDMA must serve as an example to strengthen gaps and build institutional capacities by integration with sectoral co-operation.

The Indonesian case study of how their Disaster Mitigation project factors in policy mandates at the local and national level can be viewed as an example of how horizontal and vertical approach for risk reduction must be married.

Urban disasters managed by community resilience in the Naga City of Philippines as covered in the ADPC summary paper of the proceedings held in Bali, Indonesia tells about how funding for risk reduction came from local city government budget and grants to achieve stronger results.

Japan's basic law of national resilience highlights the gravity of concern and the level of commitment that every country must exercise as being a participatory actor in a vulnerable geography.

The disaster of our times compounded by the concerted burden of climate change must force us to re-dedicate with a new vigour the sense of organised urgency needed to converge and join hands in friendship. Sustainable development will simply necessitate establishing effective disaster risk reduction mandates and committed on-ground action. The monumental convergence brought forth by UNESCAP and the partner agencies is just the beginning of a big story of hope, courage and vision in the right directions. The best thing to do for enlightened institutions like UNESCAP is to build stronger on this experience of convergence and knowledge resourcing and sharing in-order to achieve more effective south-south co-operation and deepen regional friendship.

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