

Tracking the Progress: Lessons Learned on HFA Reporting (2007-2009)
UNDP Regional Center in Bangkok-Crisis Prevention and Recovery
In cooperation with UNISDR Asia Pacific
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The following views have been obtained through a survey of individuals and consultants who are supporting government focal points in the process of HFA Reporting in eight (8) countries under an agreement between UNDP-Crisis Prevention and Recovery and UNISDR Asia Pacific. The paper does not constitute an endorsement by UNDP, Government Focal Points and UNISDR and is developed by authors as their contribution to the discussion on capacity enhancement in disaster risk reduction.

1. The Hyogo Framework for Action- Context in the Asia Pacific Region

The adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action for 2005-2015 during the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January 2005 was significant as this was launched with the strong resonance of the powerful earthquake and tsunami that hit the Indian Ocean Region on 26 December 2004. The tragedy of the more than 260,000 deaths and billions in losses highlighted dramatically the importance of risk awareness, early warning, vulnerability reduction, and sustained attention to disaster and risk management.

Sadly, following the 2004 tsunami, many more catastrophic events provided additional reminder of the vulnerability of many Asia Pacific countries to natural disasters. These included the occurrence of major earthquakes (China, Pakistan and India), devastating cyclones in Bangladesh, the Philippines and Myanmar and widespread flooding in Nepal and India. Further, historical disaster loss data bases¹ in a number of countries indicated the increasing significance of extensive risks-i.e. low intensity, but more frequent events that were primarily induced by climate change related impacts. Trends indicate that although they were not life threatening like the big events that get into the news headlines, impacts of extensive risks to livelihoods of communities and poverty situation were very serious. These patterns were seen in small island states (example-wide spread sea swells in Maldives) and landslides and flood prone communities in Nepal, Sri Lanka etc. These events also did not receive international attention and thus recovery of those affected was unaided and losses accumulate over time.

Many stakeholders in the region have now accepted the urgency and importance of a comprehensive and systematic approach towards disaster risk reduction.

¹ National Disaster Loss Data bases (30 year data) in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu and Orissa in India, Indonesia, Nepal, and Iran. Five year data in Indonesia, and limited historical data in Maldives and Fiji

The HFA is seen as a significant stepping up from a reactive emergency response and ad hoc disaster reduction planning to long term and strategic programming. It is accepted as an “integrating” framework of action to enable a concerted national effort in its implementation. The HFA represents the collective commitment of governments, regional and UN organizations, local authorities, NGOs and experts as well as International Finance Institutions.

2. Background on the UNDP RCB-CPR and UNISDR Asia Pacific Cooperation

The UNDP Regional Center in Bangkok- Crisis Prevention and Recovery Team (RCB-CPR) has been providing in country technical advice, facilitating cross learning events and initiating partnerships that resulted in positive progress in developing capacities in disaster risk reduction and recovery. These include improved country level disaster risk reduction (DRR) programming, better information management capacity, enhanced early warning and risk assessment practices and improved skills of specialists in disaster reduction and early recovery. The RCB-CPR and UNDP Country Offices (COs) have substantially supported the governments and stakeholders in a number of countries, with a relative higher focus on the tsunami affected countries in enacting new disaster management laws and establishing new institutional arrangements that embrace comprehensive approaches to disaster risk management. All these legislative changes reflect increased focus on comprehensive disaster risk management. At the international level, all these countries are undertaking the initial steps in forming national platforms and developing stakeholders’ consensus for national action plans to implement commitments under the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA): 2005 -2015.

It is important to note that monitoring and reviewing progress in disaster risk reduction is not only an essential feature of the Hyogo Framework for Action, but even more so a prerequisite for informed DRR planning and programming. Responsibilities for monitoring the HFA are assigned mainly to States but are also to regional organizations and institutions, international organizations and ISDR system partners (such as UNDP) and the secretariat. In particular, the HFA calls on ISDR partners and the secretariat to prepare periodic reviews of progress and to identify gaps and challenges in implementation. Noting this and in response to request from a number of countries, the UNDP Regional Center in Bangkok signed an agreement with UNISDR to cooperate in providing joint support to enhance capacity of eight (8) countries in coordination and reporting of DRR progress. These countries include those that were affected by the tsunami (Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and India) and another set who requested UNDP RCB to provide technical support (Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal and Lao PDR).

3. The Capacity Development Context

Routine monitoring and reporting of progress on DRR over period of years requires considerable effort and resources. It is however imperative that a proper and consistent system for monitoring and reporting progress in risk reduction is in place in countries for HFA implementation. In the previous reporting period (2005-2007), national level stakeholders when left on their own were unable to provide reports that were substantial in coverage and quality. Reporting was often limited to listing of activities that did not provide a conclusive picture of achievements and gaps and the challenges and enabling factors associated with these. Recognizing the limited capacities of national authorities designated to lead and coordinate the national HFA progress reviews in some countries, the UNISDR encourages national and regional institutions working in disaster risk reduction to provide facilitation, technical and coordination support for organizing inputs to the national review processes. It is in this context that UNISDR requested UNDP-RCB/CPR to provide such support to selected countries in the Asia region given UNDP's track record in DRR capacity development and excellent partnership with national authorities.

The support that UNDP RCB-CPR provides in the HFA reporting process is within the overall capacity development efforts that UNDP provides through the Regional Programme for Capacity Building in Risk Reduction and Recovery in Tsunami Affected Countries. The capacity development approach of the Regional Programme is consistent with the UNDP corporate approach that recognizes that the ideal country capacity in DRR resides at three levels: the enabling environment, organizational and individual. Within all three levels, there are five types of functional capacities that UNDP seeks to enhance capacities to: 1) engage with stakeholders; 2) assess the situation and define a vision and mandate; 3) formulate policies and strategies; 4) budget, manage and implement; and 5) monitor and evaluate. The Regional Programme support to HFA reporting is a direct pathway to strengthen DRR focal points' capacity in stakeholders' engagement; situational assessment and vision setting and monitoring and evaluating performance in DRR.

4. Inputs, Outputs, Results and Enabling Factors

By the end of August 2008, seven (7) countries had undertaken multi stakeholder consultations and were able to complete the required outputs: country level consolidated reports on the progress of HFA implementation. The Government of India (GoI) has requested for an extension of the reporting deadline due to the vastness of available DRR information to be collected and considered. The GoI's uploading into the HFA online monitor is expected to be completed by end of

November 2008 and a related in depth review requiring national and state level consultations is in progress. During all of these processes, the Regional Programme for Capacity Development for Risk Reduction and Recovery (RP) provided timely advice through the UNDP CO DRM focal points and perform liaison and bridging role between UNISDR and the UNDP COs and Government focal points. Technical assistance included explaining and elaborating on the reporting guidelines and support to conceptualization of detailed workplan and stakeholder consultation process at the national level. In the case of Lao PDR, UNDP directly assisted the national focal organization in analysis of reports and stakeholders' contribution and its uploading into the on line monitor. UNISDR staffs provided overall guidance on the UNISDR monitoring framework and specific advice on request.

The following sections provide an overview of some of the positive effects of the HFA reporting which respondents assigned to the reporting process.

3.1 Improved engagement of stakeholders

A common result reported is related to the improved ability of the focal organizations to engage stakeholders in taking stock of the progress in implementing the HFA as well as conducting joint analysis.

- Comments from a senior official from BNPB Indonesia indicate that the HFA/DRR review process is favorable and propitious for the newly created agency. He stated that the national consultation allowed an excellent opportunity for them to know stakeholders that are otherwise not present in official government functions.
- In almost all countries, the process is observed to increase participating organizations commitment towards achieving DRR in contrast to a prevailing perception that HFA commitments are the sole responsibility of government.
- Stakeholders in Bangladesh believe that the HFA consultation process had increased the understanding of the DRR/humanitarian sector of the broader context of the national development and the relationship of DRR within the process of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and national Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- While the HFA review process increased opportunity for stakeholders' interaction; existing relationships have a strong influence on the extent of involvement of sectors. Thus, the amount of information generated and reported are dependent on the adequacy of participation of specific sectors. Due to these relationships, it is observed that some information are lacking in the country reports.

- A number of national focal organizations were unable to take a leadership role as some of them reside in weak institutional system and others were newly created. The HFA process however provided a learning opportunity and almost all were responsive to the task. In these cases, the augmentation support from UNDP and UNISDR were better appreciated.

3.2 Improved ability to assess the situation and define a vision and mandate

As stated earlier, in the tsunami affected countries, government focal organizations have taken significant efforts in defining a vision and articulating their long term DRR plan². This is also the case for the Philippines and Bangladesh who have already articulated their national vision and priority for DRR prior to the HFA declared in January 2005. The value added of the HFA process in a number of countries is seen in the review of these long term plans against the HFA “benchmark”. The HFA review in Indonesia is noted to have provided the impetus to identify DRR activities that have been implemented, as well as challenges and needs faced by pertinent stakeholders and for BNPB to accommodate them into the national programme. Furthermore, the HFA review is found to be helpful to give direction on how to balance and prioritize DRR activities in terms of programming as well as location of implementation.

In Nepal and in Lao PDR, contributors to this paper believed that this process is enhancing the capacity of their NDMOs to initiate strategic analysis of the country’s DRR situation. These countries have yet to define a strategic plan and the institutionalization of DRR and continuous support is sought from UNDP and ISDR to establish HFA reporting system as part of a capacity development support in DRR.

3.3 Improved ability to monitor and evaluate progress in DRR

Governments take the HFA reporting as an important political obligation. In some countries, the strong involvement of civil societies and UN agencies are also observed. With the support provided by the UNDP and UNISDR, there is marked and positive improvement on the quality and content of reporting in this round compared to the GAR 2007 reporting.

However, the NDMOs- who are the default HFA focal organizations are understaffed, in charge of rather comprehensive DRM projects, and at the same time expected to respond to disaster events³. Individuals tasked to write the report do not have adequate training in DRR monitoring and evaluation and

² SNAP in Indonesia, Road Map to Safer Sri Lanka etc.

³ Philippines, Nepal, India, Lao PDR and Bangladesh were engaged in massive humanitarian programmes during the period.

lack the important skills of networking and facilitating consultation processes. This becomes more challenging in countries where there is no designated institution for DRR and mainstreaming in sectoral planning as required in the HFA is rather weak⁴. In these countries, these gaps directly resulted to poor information gathering and HFA reporting⁵. Reporting schedules are also perceived to be inadequately planned and most countries reported that more time could have been allocated for stakeholders' consultation processes.

In a number of countries who have already embraced a comprehensive approach to DRR, HFA reporting is seen not only an obligation but an important and organic responsibility to ensure that their DRR goal is measured and reported. It is observed however that consistency of information and attention to details can still be improved. For example, in some cases, information provided tend to focus more on achievements of a limited sector (government) and inadequate on information from NGOs, peoples organization, the private sector and the science sector.

NDMOs in these countries do not have a proper enabling structure and work programme to perform HFA progress review and reporting. The involvement of Consultants provided a good stop gap measure in response to country request for such support. However, almost all countries suggest that the support must be better structured rather than ad hoc based on lessons learned from this experience⁶.

5. Feedback to improve on HFA monitoring and reporting process

For the next HFA reporting cycle, contributors to this paper offer the following suggestions presented randomly:

- a) The level of commitment accorded by the HFA focal person has strong influence on the effectiveness and efficiency of the process. Factors that are observed to help were ownership of the process, pressure from stakeholders' expectations and high political level commitment.
- b) Relative to a): more efforts should be undertaken to create ownership of non government actors. The guidelines and HFA appear to be misinterpreted by some as a government mandate and participation of other sectors is voluntary. Revision of guidelines may include specifying roles of non government actors.

⁴ Cited in Nepal and observed in Maldives and Lao PDR whose NDMOs are relief and recovery oriented.

⁵ UNDP DRM focal points see these as opportunity to intensify capacity development support and as argument for a multi sectoral DRR platform.

⁶ Most indicate- support should have been started "at the beginning of the year" or "could be "advanced forward."

- c) Assessment of progress is still subjective with limited quantitative evidences. Most are challenged in consensus building on the “levels of progress” and “context and constraints”. Amount of funds allocated to a specific priority item is one of the suggestions made to describe level of commitment/progress. An improved guideline on “assessment of indicators” is needed.
- d) The set of guidelines provided by the UNISDR is very useful and staffs from the Secretariat and UNDP (both from RCB and Country Offices) had been efficient and responsive to the needs of the country focal organizations.
- e) Some respondents observe that the guidelines should add a well described section on profiling risks and establishing baseline. UNDP observes that the description of natural disasters in the reports is uneven in quality and most refer to most recent catastrophic events.
- f) All respondents encountered difficulties in using the online monitor, albeit UNISDR Secretariat responded quickly to requests for help. The most common complaint was the limited number of words allowed in sections and almost all suggested a “spell checker” function.
- g) Due to the nature of the 5 HFA priorities, repetitions and overlaps were unavoidable. Improved guidelines can help. Under Priority 5: there is more than enough reference to preparedness and emergency response but very limited reference to assessing post disaster recovery.
- h) Training of reporting officers were inadequate; not much time allocated for setting up the country level processes. The involvement of the UNDP Country Offices in the preparatory processes had been uneven.
- i) Four (4) months are inadequate for some (some say 6 months), while others believe 4 months is adequate with proper planning and focused attention of the government focal points. Inadequacy of time was seen in “sector specific” consultation that will provide input to bigger multi sectoral consultation. In larger countries of Indonesia and India, more time for sub national level consultations are required.
- j) For many of the non -native English speakers, some of the terminologies used need further elaboration (*what do we mean by “functioning”?*). Most common clarification required was in the section on “drivers of progress”.
- k) The contributors are interested in obtaining copies of completed monitors and determine patterns and conclusions that may improve future HFA reporting. Feedback would be useful for the stakeholders who worked on this.

6. Conclusions and Proposals for Immediate Follow Up Action

The overall experience of those directly involved in this cycle of reporting indicates a positive improvement from the previous (2005-2007) reporting. Furthermore, anecdotal evidences show positive changes in functional capacities of the stakeholders involved in this process. Since HFA reporting requirements

will continue to be needed beyond this current cycle, stakeholders at the national and regional level should consider the need for enhancing such capacities in a sustainable way.

Without negating the need to develop a long term strategic support, a menu of immediate follow up actions arising from these survey of lessons learned are presented as follows:

1. The systematic Capacity Assessment⁷ process that UNDP RCB is supporting should be undertaken in 2009 as planned. This would help clarify an endogenous capacity development strategy (functional-including M and E and technical capacities) to address this in Indonesia, Maldives, Sri Lanka and the Philippines. For other countries, requirement for support in future HFA reporting shall be assessed and roles and responsibilities within a “regional/national work plan” will be developed.
2. A review of the guidelines must be undertaken with the involvement of those who were directly involved in this cycle. Revision of guidelines may include specifying roles of non government actors and hence non government sectors may also be involved.
3. Interested countries may participate in a process to analyze training needs of focal organization/individuals involved in HFA reporting. This will respond to a common request for a properly structured training input on HFA reporting.
4. UNDP and UNISDR will consider follow up support to help conduct training needs analysis and develop a training module based on both corporate and field level doctrines and experiences.
5. An analysis of trend and patterns of reporting including strengths and weaknesses must be undertaken. A strategy to address information gaps for example may be developed.

⁷ Under an AIDCO funded agreement between UNDP RCB and UNISDR.