SADR 2013
Summary
Introduction

Current timing is of crucial importance to global disaster risk reduction. The **Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA)** is coming to its conclusion; the world community is making attempts to assess the success of its implementation and to come up with a new framework which will address the rising challenges better. DRR is already recognized as a key consideration in setting new MDGs/SDGs by 2015, while the world is also discussing how to better respond to disaster risks created by climate change. As such, not only are there higher expectations of the new DRR framework to better deliver but, expectations also that the discussions leading up to the development of the new framework will also influence the formulation of other new global frameworks to support and ensure expected delivery. In this context, the SADR 2013 aims to emphasize some key unresolved issues that need priority attention within the post 2015 frameworks for moving towards and achieving DRR: governance and accountability for one and gender issues in DRR for another.

Duryog Nivaran (DN), a South Asia network for disaster mitigation has, since its inception in the mid 90s, called for holistic approaches to disaster management, going beyond popular approaches at the time which considered disasters solely as events that needed humanitarian responses. DN focused on showing the links between risks and vulnerability and the issues of poverty, environment, livelihoods, social norms, governance etc., and argued for the need to address disaster management primarily via changing the manner in which development is designed and implemented.

Since the formulation of the HFA in 2005, these arguments have been formally recognized and endorsed; although progress close to the end of another decade of DRR strategy shows that “practice change” in this area continues to be quite a difficult challenge.

**Deriving Sustainable Development**

2015 is the landmark year when the world would finalize a new global development agenda, with the end of the MDG term. “The Future We Want” the outcome document of the Rio + 20 Conference points out to the need for setting up of sustainable development goals (SDGs), which are based on Agenda 21 and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. It also recognizes the need to strengthen an International “Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD)”, which can better facilitate overcoming future challenges and efficiently bridges gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda.

Negotiations on climate change which are taking place under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol have got formal recognition and considered as key forum and a mechanism for decision making on the subject. The world also agreed to reach an international climate agreement by 2015, and the COP 18 which was concluded in Doha at the end of 2012, reemphasized their resolve and agreed to set out a timetable to adopt a **Universal Climate Agreement by 2015**, which will come into effect in 2020.

Undoubtedly, the HFA; one of the most progressive frameworks of the time, brought issues such as the inter-linkages between poverty alleviation, livelihoods, environment, gender inclusiveness and decentralization of power in development planning to light. It was after the introduction of the HFA that attempts were explicitly made to define disasters and measure the disaster risks as an integral part of the development process which were issues earlier kept in the dark sealed with the label of “undefined problems”. The world community endorsed the HFA as a profound guideline to better plan and achieve DRR and the UNISDR rendered much commitment to facilitate its implementation and monitoring. While the HFA guided and achieved significant results and was instrumental in ameliorating policy changes with some level of good practice, the GARs and mid-term reviews of the HFA continued to report the less than expected progress, particularly in some of the key areas that were conditional to bring about sustainable changes.

An overview of global trends

GAR’09 highlighted that national efforts were mainly focused on strengthening policy, legislation and institutional frameworks, along with boosting capacities for risk assessments, early warning and disaster preparedness and response (HFA Priority Areas 1, 2 and 5). In contrast, countries reported limited progress in using knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of resilience, as well as to address the underlying drivers of risk (HFA Priority Areas 3 and 4).

The 2009–2011 Progress Review indicates improvement across in all priority areas. However, progress in HFA Priority Area 4 (underlying risk) continues to be particularly challenging, as highlighted in Figure 4.2 (GNDRR, 2009; UNISDR, 2009, 2011).

An analysis of government reports, through the HFA Monitor, for the 2005-2007, 2007-2009, and the on-going 2009-2011 cycles, indicates that progress is indeed taking place in disaster risk reduction, especially from an institutional point of view, in the passing of national legislation, in setting up early warning systems, and in strengthening disaster preparedness and response. Concerns remain about the lack of systematic multi-hazards risk assessments and early warning systems factoring in social and economic vulnerabilities; the integration of disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning at national and international level, and the still insufficient level of implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action at the local level. It remains difficult to increase resilience to hazards, especially in the most vulnerable segments of society.
Challenges to the Delivery of the HFA

With the introduction of the HFA, guidance for a paradigm shift in DRM began. Looking back almost a decade later, it seems that the progressive concepts that HFA presented to the global DRM community at large, (who had thus seen DRM as mainly managing humanitarian challenges) may have been overwhelming. “Many countries lack a strategic framework for addressing disaster risk” reports the GAR (2009) supporting this assumption. Further, as the world community digested the complex message that DRM needing thinking and planning way beyond the extremely important humanitarian response functions, the goals set by the framework were challenging to begin with. The goals while were quite holistic, the implementation as prescribed needed quite strategic changes in attitudes, policies, institutional processes, practice etc. More importantly it also needed such changes beyond the “disaster community and their institutions” to achieve the wider change that HFA aimed at. Thus, like in a shop of ready-made appeals, where the customers pick and choose what is most suitable and affordable to them, the governments and stakeholders seemed to have picked up the most easily understood choices and implemented actions which they could show some tangible and visible results with minimal pain. In line with this trend, sensitive and intricate issues such as gender inclusiveness and delivering DRR through devolved governance system, building capacity and empowering local governments did not get adequate attention.

Gender concerns in development, now long discussed, are accepted as a precondition for sustainable development and poverty alleviation, and yet by and large remain unaddressed. Gender sensitive DRR is a concept that stakeholders find easy to agree with, however, few have been able to translate this beyond statements of policy, intent etc.

Do the vulnerable groups (women, children, elders, poor people) receive sufficient early warning?

The SADR argues that while creating the policy environment is important, this alone is insufficient impetus to translate into gender sensitive DRR practice. There is a need to see political commitment, investment of resources and accountability built into the agendas that advocate gender in DRR if practice is to change. This needs to be a key objective of the post 2015 global framework on DRR. Formulation of new millennium/sustainable development goals by 2015 not only must embed resilience to achieve sustainable development, but also must target gender sensitive resilience building.

- The path ahead is not an easy one. The dominant patriarchal context and hidden power dynamics in South Asia and many other regions, makes this a difficult subject to broach, let alone address. The post 2015 framework must take on this challenge and provide adequate guidance to push practice. Targets for gender issues in DRR should be set in such a manner that it will trigger practice. It should not only have global indicators or general targets but also help benchmarking and setting standards so that implementation can be easily assessed and compared. Every time work around DRR is planned, implemented or reported, use of the post 2015 framework should reject any design, plan or progress which does not have/show plans or progress against, gender targets.

1 GAR 2009 pg 117, chapter 5
Although the framework strongly suggests addressing gender inequalities sufficient guidance is not available in ways that can easily be used to shift to improved practice, overcoming sensitive issues. Where there are no mandatory conditions nor the accountability mechanisms set, the conditions to encourage practice is lacking.

Similarly though the conceptual justification is elaborated to strengthen the local governments in the framework, the missing decisive component must be the “strategy” of making it a reality. The weak status of the local governments in the South Asian region, set out clear examples of this, where local DRR through local institutions has been isolated and ad hoc.

**Empowering Local governments for Disaster Risk Reduction and sustainable Human Development in South Asia**

The national governments, though being signatories to these covenants or frameworks normally do not take local governments into confidence for their decisions with regard to international agreements. Resultantly the local governments neither take the ownership of these national commitments nor consider themselves accountable for their implementation at the local level. This situation creates a serious disconnect between the ‘international’ and the ‘local’. The ultimate losers in the whole scenario are the citizens whose vulnerabilities to disasters, shocks and turmoil continue to prevail despite all the good intentions, diplomacy of cooperation and policy euphoria.!

Argues SADR 2013

**Are we convinced? lack of evidence**

While the HFA promoted generating more and convincing evidence and presented these through various advocacy and influencing initiatives to governments and other stakeholders, practice is acknowledged to be low and needing improvement. There is a need for the research and academic establishment to come on board as a strong partner to produce convincing evidence that decision makers look for from credible sources. This is especially true at national and local levels and research to convince and provide justifications on DRR investment is insignificant at these levels - a gap that needs to be filled. Further, even when these are available it is not presented to the key stakeholders in a language they understand. A significant improvement of this area should be promoted through the new framework particularly to promote investment to building up local capacity for research and prioritizing locally relevant issues in research agendas.

**Challenging Structures and System**

When attempts were made to move forward in the direction of HFA ideology, the enthusiasm was often curbed and questioned due to the barriers imposed by the structures and systems themselves. Apart from the argument made about the need for an overall systemic change to genuinely push issues such as gender and local governance in DRR, other aspects too that needed cross coordination have stumbled upon challenges. Attempts to introduce Disaster Impact Assessments as a precondition in project appraisal and for granting approval in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are examples which have yet to gain acceptance and be put in to practice. The HFA therefore did not sufficiently address the need of a strategic plan ensure bringing about the changes it called for.
Time to Address the ‘How’ Question

The HFA aimed at influencing national governments and other stakeholders, and to get their commitment to reduce disaster risk, described what would deliver reduction of losses. The fundamental question the HFA attempted answering was, the Why and WHAT; why is DRR important to development and human security? What needed to be done to achieve this? These questions were crucial to be posed at that time as stakeholders were not as aware of the wider links and implications of disasters let alone knew what kind of strategies would deliver DRR for a more sustainable world. After almost 10 years of advocacy using the HFA concepts, a gradual buy in by stakeholders, be it the governments, donors, CSO or private sector is observed. With many coming to a more coherent understanding and the apparent interest in wanting to contribute to improve the current status more seriously, it seems that concepts promoted by the HFA would be taken up more seriously now than a decade ago. The acknowledgment of lower lack of commitment in earlier attempts to move towards DRR, as well as more than anticipated difficulties in such attempts, could be the start towards greater commitment. The growing interest of key stakeholders such as donors, governments and private sector could be triggered by the increased awareness created through to HFA based advocacy over the years, more evidence emerging about the seriousness of the trends in disasters and therelated losses and damages, better understanding of climate change, conflicts and other forms of social issues aggravating the problem. With this greater understanding of the key concepts of DRR the world community would now not be satisfied with only more refined concepts addressing any conceptual gaps that the HFA may have had; but will also look for the more important aspect of ‘how to do what is needed to be done’. All agree that the focus on practice must be the key objective the new framework. Therefore the challenge is to come up with a framework that not only guides DRR but, prescribes how to do it. “How’s” that stakeholders ultimately agree on would be the much needed push at present to make DRR work for all.

While the HFA framework showed the world a 2D picture of DRR, and the, succeeding framework should be able to incorporate the missing 3rd dimension to the picture, that is HOW to make the change? We admit that creating a “practice” outline for the diverse conditions throughout the world is challenging, yet, the world has no choice but to take it on.

Need to Look Beyond Post 2015 DRR Framework to Deliver DRR

Another positive aspect is, even through it can be argued that it is a decade or so late, the current increased interest on DRR comes from all quarters, including stakeholders across sectors, systems and processes beyond the “direct preview” of disaster management. This is the change we have been waiting for and we need to use the opportunity to push for desired and essential changes in other sectors to ensure the fundamental preconditions for effective DRR falls in to place. The timing is also right to get their continued commitment, as 2015 also marks setting up of new global development goals and goals to reduce climate change and deal with its impacts. Therefore our strong and convincing messages should not just be confined to post 2015 DRR framework development, but targeted at all changes happening at the global level. Recognition about DRR across all consultations for global framework development is the entry point, but messages we send should be articulated in such a manner that stakeholders in other sectors can continue to understand the logic and agree on prioritizing investment on DRR as a strategy to achieve their own thematic goals and objectives. For example, the table given intends to highlight what type of discussion going on within framework development process and how some of the messages on gender and decentralization reinforce and are even preconditional in order to achieve goals of each framework:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Messages emerging from the Post 2015 Framework Development discussions on</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MGD/SDG</td>
<td>Climate Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable development is not possible without disaster risk reduction, and effective DRR is not possible without due consideration given to gender.</td>
<td>Climate change impacts are felt at all levels and all communities. Men and women in society, due to the way society is structured and functions, could experience differential impacts depending on their gender, amongst other factors. Gender-equality concerns should be integrated into international negotiations and agreements on climate change mitigation and adaptation to ensure that new policies do not disadvantage poor women and other vulnerable groups but rather deliver equitable benefits to them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement of targets set through MDGs heavily depend on availability of supportive policy and structural frameworks of individual countries. Achievement of targets such as improvement in health, education etc. need local support systems for these to be achieved. Strengthening local governance through decentralization is fundamental to delivering targets of global development goals.</td>
<td>Common but differentiated responsibility and response capacity (CBDRRC) is the key principle agreed with climate negotiations. The CBDRRC can be operational only if the global and national level treaties and plans are efficiently translated through local development plans and actions. Decentralization approach is also imperative, because it is shown to work on the ground even though there are still isolated initiatives, while at the global level an agreement seems impossible.</td>
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Conclusion

168 countries irrespective of their cultural diversity, economic affordability and legislative flexibility committed to the HFA in 2005 in order to bring up some progressive change to reducing the negative impact of disasters. Many of these countries implemented, monitored and reported progressive change as a result. The global consultations on post 2015 DRR framework development provides evidence that this has generated local, national and international knowledge and experience which gives governments and stakeholders more confidence and desire to face challenges at another level to achieve effective DRR.

The SADR 2013 strongly recommends exploring ways to develop the new DRR framework, building on this resolve to continue commitments of multi stakeholders. More specifically the framework should focus on how to “encourage and ensure practice” and what would be the minimum accepted level of practice through the development of standards and benchmarks. Such specifications would only be valid and could be achievable targets if they gain acceptance across sectors of development. Equal emphasis must be paid to get necessary messages to other consultations. Getting the right levels of commitment included in the other new frameworks too will be crucial to ensuring achieving DRR through the new framework.

Getting in the 3rd dimension – the ‘how’

Some suggestions

- **Benchmarking at global level**: So that clear guidance on processes are inbuilt, to achieve key aspects including gender and decentralization. National governments can set up their own set of standards based on the global, e.g. develop ISO standards on DRR, Asia Pacific can align the SAMCDRR Gender Annexure recommendations to this - to guide the member countries and stakeholders

- **Ensure other frameworks achieve their goals**: The links between risks and vulnerability and the issues of poverty, environment, livelihoods, social norms, governance etc. are so strong that they have to be considered as preconditions to achieve DRR. The vice-versa too also may be true, but the important fact remains that DRR cannot be addressed in isolation. Effective addressing of DM requires changing how development per se is designed. Achieving targets set in the next phase of HFA will increasingly depend on what MDG/SDG recommends as development as well as how the global community will address climate change issues post 2015. Thus, the ways we influence other framework development will be crucial. In this context expertise possessed by those in the DRR sector, will be in demand and we should take the opportunity to share this expertise with them in a convincing manner that DRR is a key strategy to achieve their own goals and frameworks. This would be better than trying to convince them to set targets to achieve DRR through their frameworks. Similarly, we should also rally support for emphasis on cross cutting issues such as devolution of governance and facilitate subsidiarity, gender and vulnerability issues in development and addressing climate change etc. to achieve goals of these frameworks.

- **Use political economic realities of developing countries to promote DRR**: Achieving DRR is costly particularly for the developing countries. It needs “additional” investment and has “more” time implications. Both these issues are difficult for national level political decision making as South Asia would demonstrate.

- **National budgets have competing priorities**, although awareness of disasters is rising political powers do not recognize that ‘avoided disasters’ would gain votes for them. Thus, financing made available for DRR to cover that “additional” investment, without linking it to trade or other international conditionalities will certainly prioritized DRR in development. Time, is of an essential to the short political cycles in developing countries as South Asia demonstrate. Weak or fragile and unstable governments where politicians are compelled to deliver results in short term to get re-elected will clash seriously with the long run commitments required for DRR and disaster sensitive development. Thus, need to prioritize and create a stronger public awareness and support for sustainable development over the ad hoc. The public appreciation of this reality will give the politicos the leadership, and mileage out of championing DRR.

- **Credible Local Research to Convey Convincing Messages**: Considered credible at national and local levels should be available to shift thinking of planners and decision makers. DM sector and its community may be fully convinced with available results, but obviously the others are not. Research and academia in general encourage research in issues that they believe is relevant. While research on social impacts of issues key to development and disasters, such as gender & decentralization is relatively popular, research is rare on areas such as the financial/economic cost of not paying adequate attention on these issues. This is even worse at developing country levels taking South Asia as an example. Decision makers, political powers and the private sector is yet to be properly convinced as the shift in practice that comes out of difficult decisions by them is yet to happen. Credible local evidence and public awareness as mentioned above should put pressure on them to move towards this.