

REGION WISE RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT

Cross Border Cooperation and Respect to the People's Sovereignty should be the Primary Basis for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia



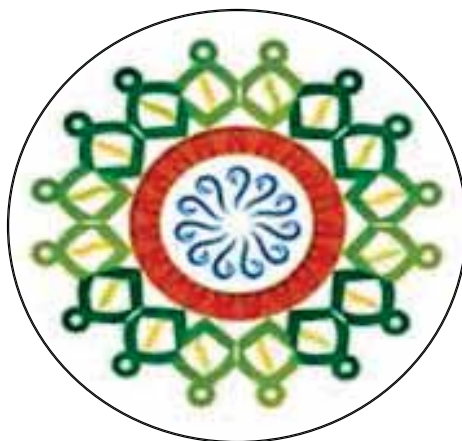
Background: Most Vulnerable Communities are living in Bangladesh

Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), 2016 is going to be held during 2-5 November 2016 in New Delhi. Indian Government is hosting the event through collaboration with United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). As a requirement of the Sendai Framework, the intended outcome of this conference will be to adopt an 'Asian Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework'. The AMCDRR 2016 will provide a unique opportunity to shape the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework in Asia. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was adopted at the third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan, on March 18, 2015. It is the outcome of stakeholder consultations initiated in March 2012 and inter-governmental negotiations from July 2014 to March 2015. Bangladeshi civil societies are calling for "Regional River Basin and Cross Border Cooperation and Respect to the People's Sovereignty should be the Primary Basis for Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia" as an outcome understanding from the conference.

Bangladesh has approximately 160 million people, the third most populous country in South Asia. The country is exposed to multiple hazards including floods, storm surges, river and sea erosion, cyclones, droughts and earthquakes. About thirty percent of the total land area of the country experience annual flood during the monsoon season. Extreme flood events

can submerge over 60 percent of the country (Flood 1988, 1998 and 2007). Given the low elevation and high exposure, Bangladesh has been estimated to be one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. Up to 50 percent of Bangladesh's urban slum dwellers may be Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who are forced to flee their rural homes as a result of river erosion (Internal Displacement Monitoring report-IDMC 2015, Bangladesh).

After 1970 devastating cyclone, Bangladesh gradually has undertaken life-saving disaster risk management actions, such as early warnings and evacuations, rescue and establishment of good number of cyclone shelters. As a result, mortality has been reduced comparison to cyclone in 1970; death tolls were 300,000, in cyclone 1991; death tolls were 135,000, cyclone Sidr, 2007; death tolls were 3,500, cyclone Aila 2009; death tolls were 190, and recent cyclone Roanu, 2016; death tolls were 25. But the capacity of people to save their assets and livelihoods options become vulnerable still with increasing frequency of natural hazards, because of sea water raise and river and sea erosion, frequent floods, tidal surge, salinity, water lodging etc. And multifold effects of poverty, vulnerabilities of the affected people have been increasing. They have fallen in the risk of displacement from their home, forced to change their profession and finally migrate



to big cities and other urban centers. But the cities and urban centers are not prepared to provide fundamental citizen rights like shelter, water and sanitation, health services and education. And the cities and urban centers are vulnerable to geological hazards such as earth quake. If an earth quake hits the urban and city areas nobody knows what will be happened. As per United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR 2011) risk report; Dhaka has been built upon on drained bodies of water or wetlands, and the soil upon which these buildings stand is prone to liquefaction – it liquefies in the event of an earthquake.

The experiences of almost all South Asian countries are almost same. People are exposed to multiple hazards, such as tropical cyclones, floods, earthquakes, landslides, droughts, and tsunamis. But in regards to investing in disaster risk reduction South Asia is lower than other region of the world. As per IDMC 2015 report in South Asia, the risk of being displaced in relation to disasters is increasing, but not as fast as the overall and urban population growth rates.

Based on the above issues Bangladeshi civil society are giving following calls to our Asian leaders and Stakeholders in AMCDRR 2016 to consider for greater understanding and also to consider for including in the outcome document / declaration.

1. Listen to People of the Region and Consider Region wise River Basin Management to Reduce River Erosion, Flood and Salinity Intrusion especially in Lower Riparian Countries.

South and East Asian countries have criss-cross by rivers, rivers are indispensable part of the nature and life of these regions. But in the name of national and development interests, hardly any one is taking any opinion of the people living in the bank of rivers both in national and cross border level,

many dams and barrages have been constructed over the rivers, which are causing devastating impacts both in national and cross border level, especially in lower riparian countries. As a result natural flows of the river water is disrupted, river beds are silted, created drought like situation, no or little flow of the water during dry or winter sessions, thus creating sea saline water intrusion especially in dry season. High level of discharge creates unprecedented flood especially in lower riparian countries. Flora and fauna has been hampered, fish resources are being depleted. These have created huge crises among the people who are living in river banks, livelihoods of people, in respect of agriculture and fishery resources are greatly hampered. Countries especially developed and advance countries like China and India are considering more constructions of such dams and barrages. So, we appeal to the leaders especially the leaders of China and India to consider opinion of people who are living both the sides of rivers in cross border level especially of the lower riparian countries, and respect due share of the countries. There should be Regional River Basin wise Management rather than one country one nation unilateral river management.

2. Invest to Construct Critical Infrastructure to Protect People from Cyclonic and Monsoon Tidal Surge, Saline Water Intrusion in Coastal Area. Also Provide Shelter to Poor People in Urban Area. Getting Official Development Assistance (ODA) in this regard is the Legitimate Rights of (Climate Vulnerable Countries (CVCs) as these are happening due to climate change impact.

Economic growth oriented infrastructure constructions like roads, elevated expressway, electricity, bridges etc. are obviously needed for a country, especially to ensure economic growth and to create employment opportunities. In Bangladesh people are facing climate change negative impacts, losing land, losing crops, living at risk of floods, salinity intrusion and monsoon tidal surge. Coastal areas and islands are more vulnerable in this regard. But there are little priority and political will, thereby investment in this regard, to create sustainable and appropriate embankment are also not up to desired level. It is not only necessary to protect the people but also to protect the fertile land, which is a fundamental need in respect of food security of this country. There is influx of urban slum dwellers and this is because not only





of pull factor in most cases there are push factors too, as people hardly see any livelihood security in those areas. Our leaders must provide shelter to poor slum dwellers in a planned relocation manner, so that their dignity and human rights are respected, thus they will provide much better output to growing nature of manufacturing based urban economy. So, we request our leaders especially in the lower riparian climate vulnerable countries (CVC) not to neglect the investment to build critical infrastructure to protect the people in coastal areas, and to provide planned shelter to urban poor / slum dwellers, which is necessary to protect them from possible earthquakes. Also to increase qualities Pre investment into Disaster Risks Reduction like Construction of Critical Infrastructure, Green Belt, and Bio-dyke ... and improve contextualize last mile flood forecasting and early warning system. Otherwise whatever there will be adaptation and social security; people will leave coastal and river basin areas and will gradually create pressure in already pressurized urban areas. The CVCs in the Asia have the legitimate right to get ODA in this regard from developed and advance developed countries as these countries are very little responsible in respect of climate catastrophes.

3. Respect Rights and Dignity of the Displaced People, Prepare Internal and Cross Boarder Displacement Policies in view of UN guidelines. Prepare National and Regional Policy for Planned Relocation and Re-Settlement.

It is forecasted that, 1 % of the world's 6.7 billion people are estimated to be displaced within their own countries by armed conflict, violence, large-scale development projects and natural disasters. Africa hosted almost half of those who were displaced by violence in the world. The 2004 Tsunami displaced 2.2 million people in 12 countries. In Bangladesh, Cyclone Sidr and floods displaced 4.4 million people in 2007. It is already forecasted that by the year 2050 there will be 30 million climate-induced displacements in Bangladesh.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that, "displacement remains arguably the most significant humanitarian challenge that we face." Scientists already forecasted that there would be displacement in countries especially in South Asia due to disaster and climatic impacts. It is already vivid in coastal part of South Asian countries. These displaced people taking shelter here and there, sometime which is creating problem for communities and development projects. Moreover as there are pull factors of employment opportunities a big chunk

of displacement people are taking shelter in urban areas, living in shanties. There are some CVCs; we see the country like Bangladesh who will be hardly be able to manage this sort of situation in future, while population density in the whole country, especially in cities are alarmingly high. We urge our governments, without any delay, they must prepare Internal Displacement Policies for those people who are already displaced and who have the probability to be displaced in future, these policies should facilitate the planned relocation and resettlement of this displaced population.

There are already existed UN guidelines and framework in this regard; there are several state led non-binding declarations, especially declarations by 109 countries during October 2015 in Geneva, which was organized by the Nansen Initiatives, Government of Switzerland and Norway. There are best examples in Kampala declaration in Africa, and also in Latin America, where Brazil has given shelter to the Haitian disaster displaced people. Already these disaster and climate forced migrants are in cross border, so there should be cross border displacement policy in this regard.

4. Countries in Region Should Prepare Emergency Response Agencies Fully Equipped, Ready and Stand by for Rapid Response in Cross Border Level.

In Bangladesh recently we experienced Rana Plaza collapse with the death of about 1200 garments workers. We have realized that the country lacks sufficient equipment and human resources to face such a building collapse and to rescue people immediately. India, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal faced such situation; several countries including Bangladesh helped them in this regard by sending army. Search & Rescue operations need advanced technology and highly sophisticated equipment; it is much more challenging while building and infrastructure are collapsed. Many cities in Asia including Dhaka are at risk and in the verge of such a situation. So, we urge Asian leaders to

prepare a Regional and inter-state agencies/bodies with all modern and possible equipment, so that if there is a situation in own or in any other countries then on request the agency or body could be deployed even in cross border level. We must take learning from Rana Plaza's Collapse, China, Gujarat and Nepal earthquakes in this regard.

5. Sendai Framework Monitoring and Implementation should be in an Inclusive Process both in Country and Region level especially with the Participation of Communities and Civil Society.

Each of the Governments has produced reports on Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-15 on implementation and achievement thereby. But there was little formal involvement of civil societies in this regard, there was hardly any public validation process too. We call upon our state leaders in the region to prepare National and Regional level Taskforce to develop Sendai Implementation Action Plan and progress monitoring framework in transparent and inclusive way i.e., there should be participation of academia, experts, civil society, private sectors and other professional stakeholders. There should be transparent, accountable and participatory process in planning, implementation and review of Sendai Framework in both country and region level.

6. Uphold WHS key spirit of Accountability and Localization: Role of Local Community and Local Civil Society Should Come First.

Bottom up process of World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) key outcome spirit is localization and accountability. In this regard there should be more decisive role of local level community and civil society organization / non-government organization, for the sake of building a sustainable and accountable resilience community. It was found that only 2 % of humanitarian aid channeled through the local / national NGOs. In respect of local / national NGO relations with international NGOs (INGO) there are wide spread understanding for more equitable and dignified relationship in respect of partnership. There is no or very limited opportunity for affected and vulnerable women to make decision and participate in humanitarian project. Often capacity questions come in forefront in this regard, but it is also true that unless there is a process the capacity will be developed little. Majority of the INGO come up with the Charter for Change (C4C) where they have committed to channel at least 20 % fund to local NGOs in coming years. There is also question on need of more of humanitarian advocacy in national and international level rather than humanitarian service delivery. So in this regard too, local / national NGOs along with community should be facilitated to take lead to an effective role. So, there is a need of reshaping humanitarian aid in this regard to give steering role to the local community along with local / national NGOs or civil society organizations.



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