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Highlights:

Framework on Regional Policy on Disaster Management

Barmer Flood

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Regional Platform on Disaster Management

South Asia is one of the most critical global hotspots of natural disasters. High seismicity, extreme climate conditions and environmental degradation coupled with increasing population density have made almost all the countries of South Asia extremely vulnerable to various kinds of disasters. Although many recent initiatives taken by the countries have had some positive impact in drastically reducing the number of casualties, lot of efforts would still be required for reducing the risks of disasters in these countries.

Most of the major disasters in South Asia have a regional dimension since both the causes and consequences of these disasters transcend the political boundaries of the countries. Therefore, regional cooperation is crucial for the proper planning for prevention and mitigation of the disasters. Unfortunately the levels of regional cooperation among the countries have not been very high.

National Institute of Disaster Management joined hands with a number organizations in various South Asian countries to organize the first ever South Asian Policy Dialogue among the senior functionaries of the government, scientists, media, corporate sector and community leaders from all the eight South Asian countries. The dialogue culminated in the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration, which resolved to set up a Regional Platform of all the stakeholders on disaster risk reduction, within and outside the governments. This would be a significant step forward to promote enhanced regional cooperation among the South Asian countries for reducing the risks of disasters in these countries.



P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti

South Asia Policy Dialogue

21-22 August 2006

National Institute of Disaster Management- New Delhi, Duryog Nivaran-Pakistan and Intermediate Technology Development Group-Srilanka jointly organized a two day South Asia Policy Dialogue on 21- 22 August 2006 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi to discuss the policy issues related to disaster risk reduction and management in South Asia. The Policy Dialogue was attended by 125 senior functionaries from the government, research and scientific institutions, community based organizations, NGOs, and media personalities working in the

area of disaster risk mitigation and management from the all the eight countries of South Asia, namely India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

The Policy Dialogue was inaugurated by Mr. Shiv Raj Patil, Hon'ble Home Minister of India. Dr. R.K.Pachauri Chairman of IPCC gave the keynote address. Mr. V.K.Duggal Union Home Secretary of India and Ms. Maxine Olson Resident Representative of the UNDP in India were the other dignitaries in the inaugural function. A South Asia Disaster Report was released on the occasion.

The various policy issues were discussed in 5 thematic sessions on i) Country's' Approach for Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management, ii) Human Resource Development and Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction, iii) Community Based Disaster Risk Management- lessons learnt and challenges ahead, iv) Application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for disaster risk reduction- gap areas and road map for regional cooperation and v) Media coverage of disaster events, recovery and mitigation. The outcome of this two-day dialogue was the formulation of the New Delhi Declaration.



Home Minister of India releasing South Asia Disaster Report

New Delhi Declaration

New Delhi Declaration called for an early adoption of the “Disaster Management in South Asia: A Framework for action 2006-2015” developed by the expert group of the SAARC, operationalization of the SAARC Disaster Management Centre at New Delhi, strengthening of the existing SAARC institutions related to disaster risk reduction and management, networking of institutions and organizations within and outside the governments in the countries and the region under the leadership of SAARC Disaster Management Centre, creation of adequate space in each country for the operation of various existing and new regional organizations on different sectors for disaster risk reduction and management in accordance with the global and regional conventions adopted by the countries of the region, and setting up of a Regional Platform for all stakeholders in the region including the Governments, which would encourage, facilitate, catalyze and promote regional cooperation on disaster risk reduction and management in South Asia. The Regional Platform shall hold annual convention of the stakeholders and establish a secretariat at an appropriate place for furthering the objectives of the Platform.

SAARC Disaster Management Centre

An Expert Group of the South Asian countries met in Delhi on 1-2 June 2006 to discuss the Concept Note on the modalities for setting up the SAARC Disaster Management Centre at New Delhi. Experts from all the SAARC member countries and Director from the SAARC Secretariat at Kathmandu attended the meeting. Mr. P.G.Dhar Chakrabarti Executive Director of the National Institute of Disaster Management who had developed the Concept Note made a presentation on the proposed Vision, Mission, Functions and Strategies of the Centre. After two day long deliberations the Expert Group adopted its report , which would be presented to the SAARC Council of Ministers for approval.



Meeting of the SAARC Expert Group to finalize the Modalities for the Setting up SAARC Disaster Management Centre, New Delhi

Barmer Floods 2006

Heavy rains since second week of August 2006, in the western state of Rajasthan, triggered floods and caused widespread destruction in the district of Barmer. Being a desert state, prone to droughts, the floods were unprecedented and the worst in 200 years. The Southwestern monsoon entered Rajasthan in the end of June 2006. This was followed by unprecedented rainfall in the third week of August in many districts of Rajasthan. It recorded a rainfall of 1025 mm & 723 mm against normal rainfall of 686 mm & 565mm. Barmer and Jaisalmer district of Jodhpur division, recorded rainfall as high as 548 mm, against annual normal rainfall of 119 mm. Sirohi also recorded very heavy rainfall of 1334 mm against normal rainfall of 672 mm. Barmer district had a severe intensity of rain-spell between 19th- 23rd August with a total rainfall of 426 mm at Barmer teshil, 392 mm at Ramsar, 383 mm at Gadraroad, 364 mm at Baitu, 311 mm at Sheo and 306 mm at Gida. The district was affected by the catastrophic flood devastating a vast stretch of crop field, rendering many families homeless and causing heavy damage to the property. Heavy rains and downstream over flow of rainwater from Jaisalmer resulted in the disaster.

Though the warning was given to people in advance, regarding heavy rainfall and chances of floods, villagers didn't believe the possibility of flood in a desert and due to sudden rise and fast flow of water people could not make efficient decisions, and in this process many got washed away and others were either drowned or trapped in marooned buildings and hamlets. The water level went up to 25-27 feet above ground level; villages in a radius of 60 km were under water without road, rail, phone and electricity. More than hundred people died and over 500 people went missing. There was huge loss of livestock too which is the mainstay of the local economy. Immediate evacuation of the people to safer place and rescue operation through Helicopters, Army, Navy, RAC and other Para-militaries was started on a large scale, which saved many lives. Many NGOs and Volunteers came forward for the relief work. Relief distribution was coordinated by the district administration.

Facts of Barmer Floods 2006

Affected villages	55
Affected habitation	2,014
Affected Population	54, 928 [Malwa & Kawas]
Number of villagers homeless	39,000
Number of people missing	500 approx
Number of death	105 (1 Unidentified) +4 *
Number of dead animals	1,00,000
Wastage of kharif crop (in Rs.)	13 crores
Number of people out of employment in the gypsum and bantonite mines	2,500 laborers approx
Number of people suffering from diseases (fever, diarrhea, malaria, abdomen pain)	10,000

* 4 Person died due to house collapse

Source: Barmer District Administration & www.minelabour.org



Floods in Barmer district in Rajasthan



Damage caused by the floods

The villages of Kawas and Malwa, which were the worst affected in the floods, are located on paleo-channels and are on a natural depression. Mining activity in these areas attracted people from other areas to settle in the depression areas, which were traditionally left open by the ancestors. The ancient wisdom was forgotten leading to the growth of settlements that were worst affected. The lessons learnt from the disaster is that natural drainage system should not be tampered with even though such system remained dormant for years. However, the positive effects of the disaster were rise in the level of ground water table, recharging of natural water bodies and increased fertility of the soils. Unfortunately a heavy price had to be paid for these fringe benefits.



Rescue operation after the floods



Floods in Barmer district in Rajasthan

NIDM in International Forum

- Dr. Ajinder Walia participated in regional workshop on Security Risk Management at Suanson Army Resort, Thailand, from 25-30 June 2006
- Dr A.D Kaushik attended a four day FAO Technical Workshop on Coastal Protection in the Aftermath of the Indian Ocean Tsunami: What Role for Forests and Trees?" in Khao Lak, Thailand from 28 -31 August 2006.

Microfinance and Disaster Risk Reduction

Edited by P.G.Dhar Chakrabarti and Mihir R. Bhat

There are substantial evidences from across the globe that various types of micro finance products and services have the potentiality to empower the poor, particularly poor women in the rural areas, in acquiring skill, confidence and capacity to undertake activities that can significantly lift them above the poverty line.

There are also evidences that micro credit groups of poor have done better in coping with natural disasters although many such disasters like the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004 have badly crippled their viabilities.

In the immediate post disaster phase when relief and rehabilitation assistances pour in, micro finance plays a marginal role. But when the supply of doles dry up, the poor have to fend for themselves. In this critical phase of recovery, micro finance assumes even higher importance than before in supplementing other efforts for livelihood restoration and sustainable development.

In order to discuss the potential role that micro-credit can play for disaster risk reduction an international workshop was organized by NIDM at New Delhi in collaboration with AIDMI Bhopal with support from UN/ISDR on 14-15 October 2005, coinciding with the International Day of Disaster Reduction as also the International Year of the Microcredit.

Professionals, practitioners and activists from the tsunami affected countries of India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand and Maldives besides experts from Japan, USA, Switzerland and other countries and organizations attended this one and half day workshop, exchanged their unique experiences from the grassroots and churned out ideas on how micro-finance and micro-insurance can be used as an effective tool for disaster risk mitigation.

The proceedings of the Conference were earlier published by the AIDMI. On the requests of various organizations some of the selected presentations have now been developed as papers, compiled and edited in the shape of a book. The book was released by Shri Shiv Raj Patil, Hon'ble Home Minister on the occasion of the South Asia Policy Dialogue. This book has been reviewed as an important addition to a very limited literature available on the subject.

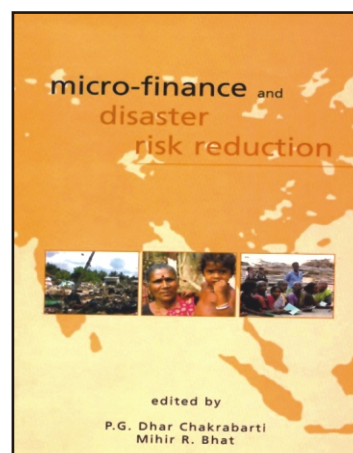


PHOTO GALLERY O SOUTH ASA POLICY DIALOGUE



Mr. Anand Sharma Minister of State for External Affairs delivering Valedictory Address



Session-I : Country's Disaster Management Framework



Session-II: Human Resource Development and Capacity Building



Session-III: Community Based Disaster Risk Management



Session-IV: ICT Application for Disaster Risk Reduction



Session-V: Media Coverage of Disaster Events, Recovery and Mitigation

NIDM News

Appointments

The Institute has recruited eight new faculty members in July. The faculty members have been drawn from varied backgrounds like Environmental, Agricultural and Earth Sciences. Six new faculties have joined NIDM as below.

1. Dr. Chandan Ghosh joined as Professor on 7 July 2006
2. Ms. Sushma Guleria joined as Research Associate on 14 July 2006
3. Dr. Ritu Raj joined as Research Associate on 19 July 2006
4. Dr. Surya Parkash joined as Associate Professor on 17 August 2006
5. Dr. Vinay Kumar Sehgal joined as Professor on 18 August 2006
6. Shri Bishwanath Dash joined as Assistant Professor on 31 August 2006

ED NIDM appointed Director SAARC Disaster Management Centre

Secretary General of the SAARC, His Excellency Mr. Chenkyab Dorji has appointed Mr. P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti Executive Director of the NIDM as the Director of the SAARC Disaster Management Centre, New Delhi. The proposal to set up the Centre was approved at the 12th SAARC Summit held in Dhaka on 12-13 November 2005.

The 1st Governing Body meeting of the Centre shall take place on 9-10 October to discuss the programmes and the budget of the Centre for the year 2007.

Training Programs

On Campus

- Industrial and Chemical Disaster Management, in collaboration with National Safety Council of India, 19-20 June 2006
- An international training Program on Disaster Risk Reduction and Schools, 31 July-11 August 2006 (25 participants from Sri Lanka).
- Urban Risk Mitigation program from 28 August - 1 September 2006

Off Campus

- Earthquake Risk Mitigation and Management at IMPA Srinagar, 12-16 June 2006.
- Heat Wave and Cold Wave, NIDM launched a new program at UPAAM Lucknow, 26-28 June 2006
- Understanding Hailstorm and Cloudburst, NIDM a new program with HCMRIPA, Jaipur, 28-30 June 2006
- Flood Mitigation and Management, at MGSIPAP, Punjab, 3-7 July 2006
- Awareness Program on Geo-information in Disaster Management, in collaboration with ADPC, Bangkok and ITC Netherlands at IIRS Dehradun, 10-14 July 2006
- Workshop on Development of DDMP at ATI Kolkatta, 19-21 July 2006
- Flood Mitigation & Management at ATI Guwhati, 24-28 July 2006
- Sensitization Program on Disaster Management at Centre for Disaster Management; Institute of Land Management, Thiruvananthapuram, 27 July 2006
- Cyclone Risk and Mitigation at Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development, Hyderabad, 7-11 August 2006.
- Earthquake Risk Mitigation and Management at MGSIPAP, Amritsar, 21-25 August 2006
- Workshop on Forest Fire Disaster Management. NIDM in collaboration with Forest Research Institute (FRI) and Disaster Mitigation and Management Center at FRI Dehradun, 23-25 August 2006
- Workshop on Development of DDMP at CAA Raipur, 23-25 August 2006

Upcoming Events

Workshops

- First India Disaster Management Congress at Vigyan Bhawan from 29-30 November 2006 in New Delhi
- SAARC Disaster Management Centre shall be inaugurated by Hon. Union Home Minister Shri Shivraj V. Patil on 10 October 2006

Training Programmes

- ToT on Disaster Management, 11-15 September 2006
- Disaster Health Care, 25-29 September 2006
- Earthquake Risk Mitigation and Management at ATI, Guwahati, 4-8 September 2006
- Understanding and Management of Landslide and Avalanche at ATI Himachal Pradesh, 13-15 September 2006.
- Urban Risk Mitigation at ATI, West Bengal from 19-21 September 2006 in Kolkata.

“Building Culture of prevention is not easy, while the cost of prevention has to be paid in the present, its benefits lie in the distant future. More over the benefits are not tangible; they are the disasters that did not happen”.

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, 1999

**We welcome comments/responses/articles from readers of our Newsletter
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