

BACKGROUND PAPER

Issues of Vulnerability with Specific Reference to Gender in the Asia Pacific

**POST-2015 FRAMEWORK FOR
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
CONSULTATIONS**

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This Background Paper 'Issues of Vulnerability with Specific Reference to Gender in the Asia-Pacific: Post - 2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction Consultations' is being developed based on five sub-regional studies conducted by UNISDR on this theme in the Asia Pacific Region, and the consultations conducted by the Stakeholder Group on Gender and Women's Issues, UNISDR Asia Partnership .

The paper was reviewed by the Asia Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (RCM TWG-GEEW), and shared with the UN Gender Group in the Pacific and the Pacific Protection Cluster for further inputs.

The paper is a work in progress, and intends to secure input from a wide range of experts and practitioners on the theme of vulnerability from countries and UN agencies during and after the 4th Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

1 | Introduction

1.1 Background

This paper has been compiled by UNISDR Asia-Pacific, with a view to making use of the opportunities presented by the post-2015 consultations taking place with governments, civil society, and a number of stakeholder groups including parliamentarians, Inter-Governmental organisations, Media and the Private sector to highlight the importance of addressing vulnerable groups and gender issues more systematically in development planning and implementation in the Asia-Pacific region. Even though the past decades have generated comprehensive research on issues of vulnerability and gender, and there have been many institutions, investments, and projects to address these issues, the outcomes and changes in the Asia-Pacific region (and globally) have been far from optimum, well below expectations.

The paper takes stock of the current context and aims to bring greater clarity to the issues under this thematic area of concern. It proposes to inform the post-2015 consultations by presenting what needs to be done to integrate vulnerability and gender issues more effectively into development practice, and suggesting how it could be done. It is targeted at national and local governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies and civil society organisations, national and international. It focuses on disaster risk reduction and argues that failure to build resilience to disasters caused by natural hazards will undermine sustainable development goals, and that building such resilience requires that the situation of the poor and the vulnerable is taken into account, bearing in mind that poverty and vulnerability are mutually reinforcing.

1.2 Vulnerability, disaster risk reduction, resilience and sustainability in the Asia-Pacific

Vulnerability refers to the inability of a person, a community or a social system to withstand the effects of a hostile environment. More specifically, the UNISDR defines vulnerability as *'the characteristics and circumstances of a community, system or asset that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard'* (UNISDR, 2009). This paper focuses particularly on social vulnerability, i.e., vulnerability resulting from social relations, institutions and systems of cultural values.

The Asia-Pacific context is very varied, and the status of the 'vulnerability' manifests itself differently from country to country. Overall, the region has seen significant progress in reducing vulnerability as part of the historic battle against poverty. But even in countries that have had success in reducing the national incidence of poverty, there are geographical concentrations of deprivation. Some people are vulnerable during particular seasons e.g., during periods of *duzd* (dry summers followed by

harsh winters) in Mongolia and north-west China or during the *monga*¹ period in Bangladesh when access to food becomes a challenge. In a country like Georgia, the successful economic reforms transformed the economy of the country, but did not address poverty, leaving Georgia with large numbers of poor people and a prevalent and rising urban disaster risk resulting from rapid urbanisation, the highest incidence of poverty and disaster risk in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS region).

Patriarchy is prevalent throughout the Asia-Pacific region, and results also in the vulnerability of girl children, older women and women with disabilities². In the Asia-Pacific region, patriarchy is reflected in the strong preference for male children that has encouraged practices of sex selection at birth, female infanticide and neglect of the girl child. It is also less dramatically reflected in the lack of gender disaggregated data on disasters that serve to keep female mortality, injuries and violence invisible.

The number of vulnerable children is significant and there is a growing number of vulnerable older people. Disability is also an issue though the statistics of people with disabilities are likely to be grossly underestimated.

Formal disaster risk reduction policies and practices however are a recent phenomenon in the region, and have emerged out of a global concern for mounting losses of lives and property due to several disasters triggered by natural hazards in the 1980s and 90s and the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, which culminated in the adoption of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters* (HFA).

The governments of countries in the Asia-Pacific region have signed up to a number of global instruments that are designed to reduce vulnerability, and have been persuaded to develop policies and create new legal and institutional mechanisms for coordinating more inclusive disaster risk management. The translation of global instruments into legislation and action on the ground has not been consistent, however. The HFA offers a guidance framework for action, but its progress has been the weakest in the area of reducing social vulnerabilities. The stronger focus has been on disaster response, such as search, rescue and providing humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of disasters, rather than on assessing and addressing the hazards, risks, and vulnerabilities.

There is still a lot to be done before it can be said that the countries in the region are looking into the issues of social vulnerability in a systematic and comprehensive

1 A Bengali term that describes a condition where families dependent on agriculture for employment suffer from pre-harvest hunger due to lack of purchasing power as a consequence of lack of employment opportunities.

2 Patriarchy describes the unequal power relations between women and men in society, where women are systematically disadvantaged. It manifests itself in strong gender stereotyping, deep-rooted attitudes and practices regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in family and the society.

manner. Social vulnerability issues are excluded from many disaster management policies and plans in the region, and where they have been included, there is no clear understanding if there are mechanisms in place for their implementation. In most countries even the disaster response to the specific needs of groups such as women, children, the elderly and disabled, has been somewhat superficial.

2 | Vulnerability and Disaster Risk Reduction

2.1 Background of addressing vulnerability in disaster risk reduction

Both conceptually and with evidence it is possible to demonstrate that without adequately addressing gender issues and issues relating to social vulnerabilities, there cannot be effective disaster risk reduction or adequate resilience. Though the available data is scarce, empirical studies back up the variance of disaster impact. For example, case studies show that in Aceh province of Indonesia children and older people were adversely affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami: 21.1% of the tsunami's victims were children below 10 years, and 32.6% were elders above 70 years (Abdur Rofi, 2006). An OXFAM study of India and Sri Lanka showed that for every man killed in the tsunami in those countries, four women lost their lives (OXFAM, 2005). It is easy to see that in any economic or social system, or community, women and men, the elderly and the youth, children, women and men with disabilities, will have different assets and capabilities and play different roles and that this will influence how they are affected by hazards, and how they cope and respond. Understanding the nature of this difference is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of disaster risk reduction policy and implementation.

In the Asia-Pacific region, despite several decades of analysis and study, disaster risk reduction does not adequately address issues of social vulnerability. Three sets of agencies can be identified within and outside the government that are primarily responsible for reduction of social vulnerabilities: the specialized agencies of social protection that are responsible for the welfare, social development and empowerment of the vulnerable population; sectoral agencies of health, education, employment, rural and urban development etc., which are the key agencies which design, implement and monitor development policies and programmes; and the agencies responsible for disaster management (Chakrabarti, 2013).

Some countries have passed legislation, and there are some innovative interventions, but the way in which the sector has dealt with social vulnerabilities has been to focus more on the 'vulnerable groups' rather than on the the social systems, community structures and power relations that keep them vulnerable. Vulnerable groups are defined *a priori*, as the poor, women, children and older people, and people with disabilities. More recently there is some attention being paid to different groups that face multiple forms of disadvantage and discrimination (e.g., children living on the street, indigenous people), and groups that are hard to reach (e.g., sexually diverse

populations, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, people who have been trafficked, sex workers, migrant workers, people who use drugs, and prisoners) (UN-NGLS, 2012-2013). There is also a growing recognition that despite their vulnerability, these groups have capacities, and that mitigating vulnerability requires building on these capacities.

Further, it is also highlighted that the focus on reducing vulnerability over the past years has largely disregarded the capacities of the vulnerable groups. Evidence from South East Asia for instance, indicates that women play an active role in disaster recovery and reconstruction. The collective will of All-Acehnese Women's Congress brought the women in driver's seat in a traditionally orthodox and male dominated society in Indonesia in the planning and implementation of one of the most successful post disaster recovery and reconstruction programmes. This provided significant lessons about how the capacities and strength of women can be utilized for rebuilding a community ravaged by disaster. Also, the skills and capacities that women display in coping with and managing regular disasters such as seasonal floods, droughts, landslides, etc. in South Asian countries points out the utmost importance of factoring in such capacities for effective disaster risk reduction (Duryog Nivaran, 2004).

But a focus on the vulnerability of social groups alone is insufficient to effectively reduce disaster risk; and strengthening their capacities may not always lead to mitigating their vulnerability. Vulnerability is driven by context, so it is important to understand the context within which vulnerable groups live, the social, economic and political institutions that circumscribe their lives, discourage or actively prevent them from realizing their capacity and continue to disadvantage, discriminate against, exclude and dis-empower them.

2.2 Global agreements for addressing vulnerability issues

There are a number of global instruments that compel governments to act to reduce vulnerabilities. The MDGs are probably the most high profile targets that have, since the Millennium, driven governments to address poverty and vulnerability issues. In addition there are many other agreements targeted towards specific vulnerabilities/vulnerable groups. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) focuses on child rights. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979) holds governments accountable for ending discrimination against women. The Madrid Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), the Macau Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and Pacific Region (1998) focus on older people, while people with disabilities are the focus of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and the Bonn Declaration on Disasters and Disabilities (2007). The main focus on the conventions is protecting and promoting the rights of the specific groups of people they cover. However aspects of disaster risks which have direct implications on the people belonging to these groups may not be explicit to lead towards the required actions.

2.3 Global Agreements for addressing disaster risk reduction

The Hyogo Framework for Action (2005) is a 10-year plan to make the world safer from natural hazards and was endorsed by the UN General Assembly following the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction and incorporates gender and social vulnerability concerns into proposed actions. The Beijing Agenda for Global Action on Gender-Sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction (2009) and the Manila Declaration for Global Action on gender in Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (2008) address gender issues in disaster risk reduction and related sectors.

2.4 Gaps in policy and practice in addressing vulnerability in disaster risk reduction

The most recent global discussions on a post-2015 Development Agenda have highlighted disaster risk reduction as fundamental element in the effort to build resilience and sustainability. It is now recognised that sustainable development goals are threatened by the lack of disaster risk reduction and the failure to build the resilience of communities and nations. Climate change, has also been identified as contributing to the increasing intensity and frequency of disasters. Population pressure and rapid urbanisation combined with high population density or human settlements in high risk areas, are often associated with a higher number of deaths and injuries as well as physical damage measured in monetary terms. The experience of implementing the Hyogo Framework since 2005 has also confirmed that disasters are intrinsically linked to development choices and approaches (5AMCDRR 2012).

Gaps in policy and practice exist both at the level of integrating disaster risk reduction into development planning and in including social vulnerability issues into disaster risk reduction. The discourse on more inclusive disaster risk reduction strategies tends to focus on building the resilience of vulnerable groups. Though it is acknowledged that the context in which vulnerable groups live is critical and that there are many social, political and economic factors that conspire to perpetuate their vulnerability, this thinking is not often reflected in the planning or in the implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies.

3 | Key Actions for a Post-2015 agenda

The discussions on the post-2015 framework for DRR have begun and are ongoing. The outcomes of the consultations carried out till May 2013 in the Asia-Pacific Region can be summarized under the following broad key messages (UNISDR, 2013).

- Building on the HFA for a new framework for DRR (HFA2)
- Integrated planning and action for disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainable development
- Local level action

- Turning vulnerability into resilience
- Strengthening bottom up and multi-sectoral/multistakeholder engagement
- Risk governance and accountability
- Knowledge-based decision making

This background paper, taking into account the preceding analysis of gaps in policy and practice, looks at what can be done to enable the actors (national and local governments, civil society including representatives of vulnerable groups, the international development actors and the private sector) to ensure that the proposals for Post-2015 Framework for DRR and the implementation processes are made inclusive.

3.1 Integrate the UN's Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights into disaster risk reduction

This is an overarching message. Exclusion and discrimination in disaster risk reduction and poverty eradication initiatives are largely a result of cultural, traditional and other practices that are based on the idea of stereotyped roles for women and men, and disempowering attitudes and practices towards some social groups. The UN's Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights recognize that vulnerability is a structural issue and calls for a transformation of those economic, social and cultural practices that perpetuate it. The Guiding Principles were adopted by the Human Rights Council in September 2012 and should inform the integration of gender and vulnerability issues into the disaster risk reduction framework and activities. In particular it is important that these principles are incorporated into all policy and legislation that seek to create an enabling environment for integrated planning of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development.

Resilience has been explained as "the ability of a system or of people to absorb shock and to adapt to the situation that will exist after the shock" (Velasquez, 2013). It is a definition that is gaining currency and which lends itself to focusing on strengthening 'vulnerable groups' whether they be women or children, older people or people with disabilities. The Guiding Principles recognise vulnerability or the existence of disadvantage, discrimination and disempowerment as a structural issue, and takes the focus away from vulnerable groups, to changing established institutions and traditional practices, and guiding the efforts to transform vulnerability into resilience.

The foundation principle of agency and autonomy stresses the right of women and men to make their own decisions. It calls for respect of the capacity of vulnerable groups to fulfill their own potential, their sense of dignity and their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The transformation of vulnerability into resilience requires also that these rights are made visible and safeguarded, and that actors with greater economic, social and political power do not undermine these rights knowingly or unknowingly.

3.2 Strengthen the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA)

Another overarching message is the value of strengthening the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA). The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) aims to facilitate the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into the resilience and sustainable development planning and is a key instrument for integrating gender and social vulnerabilities into disaster risk reduction initiatives.

An institutional constraint to mainstreaming a more inclusive disaster risk reduction is the separation of state institutions dealing with disaster risk reduction, vulnerability and the implementation of local solutions, as well as the limited voice of vulnerable groups in the decision making processes of these institutions. The Hyogo Framework has recognised this and has proposed a multistakeholder approach, which has encouraged the establishment of multistakeholder national platforms and HFA focal points. At the mid-term review (UNISDR, 2011), there were 73 such platforms worldwide, and 192 HFA Focal Points. These platforms and focal points have the responsibility to coordinate the contributions of the different institutions, including the representatives of the vulnerable groups and are led by the apex national agency on disaster management. They aim to mainstream inclusive disaster risk reduction into local development plans.

The Mid-term review of the Hyogo Framework for Action (UNISDR, 2011) highlighted that its adoption in the different countries had played a decisive role in making progress in disaster risk reduction, even though that progress has been uneven, and the complexity of disaster risk management continues to pose a challenge to its effective functioning, many countries, including several in the Asia-Pacific Region, have passed national legislation, set up central coordinating institutions and early warning systems and strengthened disaster preparedness and response. However, the review also expressed concerns about the lack of inclusion of social and economic vulnerabilities into risk assessments and early warning systems, the failure to integrate disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and planning at a national and international level, and the insufficient level of implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action at a local level. This observation is re-iterated in the Post-2015 consultation outcomes globally as well as in the Asia-Pacific.

While the success of the Hyogo Framework for Action to date has been that it has set up central coordinating institutions, it is limited by the fact that neither the overall Framework, nor the inclusion of gender and social vulnerability is binding for governments. This means that implementation responsibility of the HFA is very likely to rest in a disaster management agency outside of governments' mainstream planning. It is important that the post-2015 agenda provides incentives to governments to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action at national and local levels as part of mainstream development planning and implementation and for vulnerable groups and civil society to create a demand for its implementation. Gender issues and

social vulnerability needs to be incorporated into all the priority areas of activities of the HFA and governments need to ensure that there are sufficient resources to implement the HFA at a local as well as national level.

The implementation of the HFA at a national and local level, requires a political commitment to allocate resources and to decentralize. Some of this is already taking place, and some governments have begun to decentralize their disaster risk reduction. As the 5th AMCDRR pointed out, decentralization is an essential element of risk governance and local accountability. (5AMCDRR, 2012). However, committing adequate resources to disaster reduction at a local level and prioritizing issues of building resilience to disasters, requires conviction that disaster risk reduction is important for the economy and for the political agenda of the decision makers. Decision makers need to be made more aware that addressing vulnerability at the local level will also have economic and political gains, in terms of reductions in the loss of productive capacity, improved human development and an a potentially increased voter base resulting from local communities' needs being addressed.

Several other factors can contribute to realizing the above messages.

3.3 Strengthen the demand for inclusive disaster risk reduction

Decentralization and support to vulnerable groups at a local level, is connected with the creation of an electoral demand for inclusive disaster risk reduction to ensure politicians and decision makers take it seriously. While it is important to do this more generally, specific focus to strengthen the visibility and the voice of particularly vulnerable groups of people and the different people and organizations that represent them is important. It is observed that where women's organizations and organizations representing persons with disabilities have lobbied for change there has been some success in integrating these issues into local and national plans. There needs to be a mechanism that sensitizes and supports such organizations and groups and enables them to raise their voice; at the same time there needs also to be an obligation for state actors to consult them, and include their representatives in the decision making bodies at all levels. The adoption of "inclusiveness" as a non-compromised principle (5AMCDRR, 2012) can promote and extend support for community led disaster risk reduction, recognizing that communities are not homogenous, and that the principle of inclusiveness needs also to be adopted at a community level as well. Post – 2015 Framework for DRR consultations held in the Asia-Pacific region convey a strong message for mechanisms for formalizing elements of inclusiveness, building in to the progress review and reporting systems.

Inclusiveness needs to be actively pursued since in many countries, women, children, older women and men, women and men with disabilities and other groups, are not very visible and lack political voice due to social and economic disadvantages arising from social vulnerabilities. This is one disincentive for states to invest in disaster

risk reduction policies and practices that address their needs. This is especially so when the state gains legitimacy through patronage politics, and where provision of public goods such as early warning systems, flood control barriers, enforcement of building and planning regulations that benefit the more vulnerable are not seen as bringing the government the votes it requires. There is also a tendency to focus on higher profile, intensive disasters and to provide disaster relief and rehabilitation (private goods) that are likely to bring political kudos or be used as political tools for rewarding supporters. In these situations, the politically irrelevant are overlooked and the more extensive risks of slow onset disasters such as droughts, which affect the poorer and more vulnerable households, receive less political attention.

Civil society actors and the international development community have an obligation to support strengthening the voice and increasing the visibility of disenfranchised or marginalized women, men and children. The media can be an important ally in making this happen.

3.4 Carry out education and training

Visibility of vulnerability can also be increased through the education and training of professionals, officers of state and non-state institutions engaged in disaster risk reduction, delivering services and social protection, the general public and the media. Disaster risk reduction is popularly seen as requiring 'technical' solutions and is based on some 'stereotyping' of vulnerability and 'victimising' of vulnerable groups.

For instance, the ideology of patriarchy that is prevalent in much of the Asia-Pacific, permeates social and political institutions, reinforces gender inequality, and is a disincentive for women to participate in decision-making. Literature on disaster risk reduction addresses the issue of gender inequality, and points out while women are disproportionately affected by disasters, their contribution to risk management and recovery is substantial. However, the formal mechanisms often portray them as 'victims'. This not only undermines the variety of roles that women and women's organizations can and do play in disaster risk reduction, and in post-disaster situations, but stereotyping women and men in this way also overlooks the issue of post-traumatic stress for men (which often results in violence against women, suicide, alcoholism and drug abuse) and marginalizing those men with special needs. Men also become vulnerable because in trying to live up to their reputation as stereotypical breadwinners in the context of declining traditional livelihoods, they may engage in risky livelihood activities (UNISDR, 2012a).

There is also considerable stereotyping of 'disability'. The shift from a medical to social model of disability has led to the understanding that people are "disabled by society, rather than by their own bodies" and in 2001, WHO developed an International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) which integrates the medical model (disability as a medical issue) and social model

(disability as a social construct) to recognize that people are disabled both by the interaction between their health condition and the environment. (WHO, 2001). This approach culminated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) which has been signed by 37 countries in the Asia-Pacific region and ratified by 24. Advocacy from the disabled community in China has changed attitudes towards people with disabilities in that country. Yet there are other countries in the region in which social responsibility for disabilities has yet to take root.

Education and training activities on inclusive disaster risk reduction needs to sensitise professionals working in related fields to these stereotypes. They also need to recognize the value of local knowledge and initiatives and to understand the need to evaluate proposed interventions in terms of their differential impact of proposed solutions on women, men, boys and girls, and various social groups. It is also important to educate and train the media to move beyond the dramatic sensationalisation of disaster situations, to providing more responsible coverage.

Education and training can also help mitigate some of the information asymmetries that create disincentives for some groups to act or to participate in disaster risk reduction initiatives. Groups that have little or no access to information about disaster risk reduction processes remain unaware of their rights, or of practical issues such as disaster mitigation construction standards and processes. This could leave them vulnerable to the rent seeking behaviors of contractors and their political allies. Better access to information on disaster risk reduction and early warning, an understanding of the global instruments that governments have signed up to and greater access to knowledge about local and national level policy making can strengthen the bottom-up engagement that the Yogyakarta Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction adopted by the Fifth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction calls for (5AMCDRR, 2012).

3.5 Develop systems of accountability

Education and training for increasing awareness of the importance of inclusion among the different stakeholders are intrinsically linked to systems of accountability, since accountability is not possible without the awareness, and the implementation of systems of accountability in themselves generate greater knowledge of processes.

The recent post-2015 discussions have identified low levels of accountability for integrating gender and social vulnerabilities into disaster risk reduction policies and processes as a major challenge, globally and in the region (5 AMCDRR, 2012; UNISDR 2013; UNISDR, UNDP and IUCN, 2009). This is not surprising given that there is a low level of accountability for disaster risk reduction itself, as extensively elaborated in the mid-term review of the Hyogo Framework for Action (UNISDR, 2011).

The Declaration adopted by Governments at the Fifth Asia Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction has called for defined targets, indicators and monitoring

mechanisms that monitor impacts as well as outputs and the establishment of follow-up mechanisms that keep track and monitor commitments. These targets, indicators, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms need to incorporate gender and social vulnerability issues, and involve the participation of women, men, children from vulnerable groups. The recommendations for increasing accountability in the Hyogo Framework for Action, falls short of explicitly integrating gender and social vulnerabilities. The first step in achieving accountability then, would be to ensure that the standards and targets set for monitoring the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action are gendered and inclusive.

This needs to be reinforced through greater demand for inclusiveness from vulnerable groups, through their organizations and their political representatives. A political analysis of disaster risk reduction would suggest that responsiveness to this demand will be highest in greater in democratic political systems, and where power is decentralized. There are greater incentives to provide public goods when politicians face demands from a broader electorate, and at the local level decision makers and service providers are closer to the populations they serve, and are exposed to the same disaster risks (Williams, 2011). But decentralized decision making can always be overridden and undermined by more powerful interests at the centre, and this needs to be guarded against.

It is also possible that politically powerful groups and business interests could, through their lobbying power, political donations and position in patronage networks enjoy special access to natural resources, and engage in practices that create disaster risk for others. The economic growth process itself can create or exacerbate vulnerabilities as the rights of vulnerable groups conflict with what corporations may see as their rights or the “rights” of capital, but along with rights come duties. The 5th Asia Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and other regional platforms have raised the issue of the private sector’s role in disaster risk reduction and climate change. It is important that the private sector integrates disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation into all their business activities, and that governments provide a regulatory framework and effective oversight to monitor and ensure private sector accountability. This might seem to be politically costly, but in the long run bad practice could increase disaster risks for the wider population.

The Yogyakarta Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia and the Pacific 2012 calls for ‘two-way accountability’ i.e., a government’s accountability to its citizens and also citizens’ accountability for their disaster risk reduction and climate change actions. Education, training and awareness raising is critical as is a follow up mechanism to ensure that commitments are met. In a highly commercialized and competitive, neo-liberal global and regional context, a reclaiming of values that underpin non-market based economics e.g., reciprocity, collectivity, solidarity and harmony with nature, may also be necessary.

3.6 Generate and use disaggregated data

One of the overarching constraints to designing, planning and implementing an inclusive disaster risk reduction strategy is the lack of disaggregated data. The lack of disaggregated data constrains the ability to develop targets and indicators for more inclusive disaster risk reduction, to monitor progress and to engender accountability. The current statistical system produces data on four basic indicators – number of disaster events based on type of natural hazards, number of disaster deaths, number of persons affected in disasters and the economic losses in disasters. Disaggregated data are available at the source, but these are not captured by the statistical systems of the countries and are lost in the process. It is possible to collect the disaggregated data at the source and compile and analyze them at the national level without any significant additional efforts and expenses (UNISDR, 2012a). If decision-makers are to be convinced, it is important to have data that will explicate more clearly the economic and political costs of disasters. This means knowing how disasters affect different voter groups, and what costs are incurred not just in terms of loss of assets, but also in terms of the costs of providing services to disaster victims and loss of livelihood.

In addition to disaggregating data, it is also important to disaggregate language. Many of the statements emerging from the regional discussions talk about ‘people’, ‘communities’ ‘citizens’ and ‘households’ and this obscures the differences within these groups which are not homogenous and which are subject to intra-group power asymmetries. Disaggregating language across all documents will contribute greatly to keeping gender and social vulnerabilities in focus.

3.7 Develop a political commitment to inclusive disaster risk reduction

Finally, there needs to be a political commitment to align all development activity in a way that reduces disaster risk, especially for vulnerable groups. Political commitment implies the support of a broad range of civil and community leaders at all levels of society, this includes leaders in government, the public sector, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, religious leaders and other influential citizens at national and local levels. To align development activity appropriately so that the risks of natural hazards, especially for vulnerable groups, are reduced, means eliciting political commitment at very different levels. At the macro level this would mean garnering support to a critical assessment of a country’s growth strategies, a rethinking of the economic growth model and the role of private capital, and the ability to align the sustainability and development agendas. Here, political commitment will have to come from the highest level of decision making. However, it is also important that advisors, technocrats and officers working in the bureaucracy at all levels take greater responsibility to evaluate and assess options using more sustainable and inclusive criteria and advise decision-makers of the pros and cons of the different paths of development. Academia and the media also have the responsibility to open

up the debate and to foster discussion on how inclusive disaster risk reduction can be achieved within the overall sustainable development debate.

The global discussions are identifying emerging risks from climate change, population pressure and rapid urbanisation, which are associated with increasing intensity and frequency of disasters. This implies that disaster risk reduction is no longer a community, national, or regional issue, but one which all the countries in the world need to take responsibility for. Unsustainable consumption has consequences not just in the country in which it takes place, but on other countries, in particular on their vulnerable citizens. So it is important that political commitment at a national level in the Asia-Pacific countries is supported by a stronger global and regional consensus to supplement (if not replace) income and economic growth measures of development with broader indicators of human well-being. Asia-Pacific governments should demand that their counterparts in other parts of the world and in the international community, including the international financial institutions, “rethink the prevailing economic model” and look towards a change in the paradigm in 2015.

At a more micro level, political commitment could be about challenging the social institutions and traditions that perpetuate vulnerability, and keep some groups disadvantaged. For example, a political commitment to the Millennium Development Goal 3 on promoting women’s equality and women’s empowerment is easier to implement when the indicators are about equal access to basic services such as education, or health, or even jobs. It would be much harder to elicit a political commitment to challenging the patriarchal systems of society because most men and women participate in a patriarchal system without even consciously being aware that such a system exists. It is this lack of consciousness that makes it harder to recognize male dominated institutions and male centered worldviews, to act on eliminating socially rooted gender discriminatory practices and to make changes to what is often considered a natural order of being.

4 | Summary of Recommendations

Recognising that there are a number of global instruments, national legislation and institutional procedures which if followed will no doubt lead to a more inclusive disaster risk reduction and sustainable development agenda post-2015, this background paper has provided a rationale for some specific actions, also based on the post- 2015 consultation outcomes in the Asia-Pacific region, as summarised below.

4.1 Implement the UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

- 4.1.1 Recognise that vulnerability is a structural issue and not an attribute of vulnerable groups
- 4.1.2 Safeguard the rights of vulnerable women and men to participate in decision-making that affects their lives

- 4.1.3 Ensure that vulnerable women and men will have access to information that enable them to make informed decisions, irrespective of their level of literacy
 - 4.1.4 Transform vulnerability into resilience by recognizing the capacity of vulnerable women and men when programming development and disaster risk reduction interventions and providing support (financial and technical) to enhance and utilize their capacities.
- 4.2 Strengthen the Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the post-2015 context
- 4.2.1 Make the HFA2 more binding on governments
 - 4.2.2 Make 'inclusivity' more binding within the HFA2
 - 4.2.3 Ensure sufficient resources and capacities to implement the HFA2 at the local level
- 4.3 Strengthen the demand for inclusive disaster risk reduction
- 4.3.1 Adopt 'inclusive' as a non-compromised principle in HFA2
 - 4.3.2 Strengthen the participation, visibility and voice of vulnerable women, men and children and the organizations that represent them
 - 4.3.3 Ensure that these groups are consulted
 - 4.3.4 Highlight the political capital in these groups
 - 4.3.5 Support organizations working with them and for them
 - 4.3.6 Use the media for raising awareness and creating accountability
- 4.4 Carry out education and training (of professionals, officers of state and non-state institutions engaged in disaster risk reduction, delivering services and social protection, the general public and the media)
- 4.4.1 Challenge gender and other stereotypes
 - 4.4.2 Reduce information asymmetries by providing practical information and information on the rights and obligations of citizens and governments
 - 4.4.3 Recognise and harness local knowledge

- 4.4.4. Evaluate the impact of interventions on vulnerabilities of women, men and children
- 4.5 Develop a system of Accountability
 - 4.5.1 Initiate targets, indicators, monitoring and follow up mechanisms for inclusive disaster risk reduction
 - 4.5.2 Strengthen the accountability mechanisms in the Hyogo Framework for Action to explicitly mainstream issues relating to vulnerability of some women, men and children.
 - 4.5.3 Foster a commitment to accountability, both from government but also from other actors including the private sector and the communities.
 - 4.5.4 Introduce systems to monitor the actions of all actors (government, non-state, private sector, civil society) so that they will not exacerbate disaster risk.
- 4.6 Generate disaggregated data and disaggregate language to capture varying social and community groups
- 4.7 Engender a political commitment
 - 4.7.1 Obtain political commitment at the highest level, but also among mid-level politicians and decision makers
 - 4.7.2 Critically assess economic growth strategies at all levels for inclusiveness
 - 4.7.3 Lobby to reduce global actions that can lead to disaster risk at a local level
 - 4.7.4 Lobby for a change in the development paradigm which is inclusive, which does not contribute to risk accumulation and creating new risks
 - 4.7.5 Strengthen capacities at a micro level to challenge social institutions that perpetuate horizontal inequalities and dis-empower some groups.

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