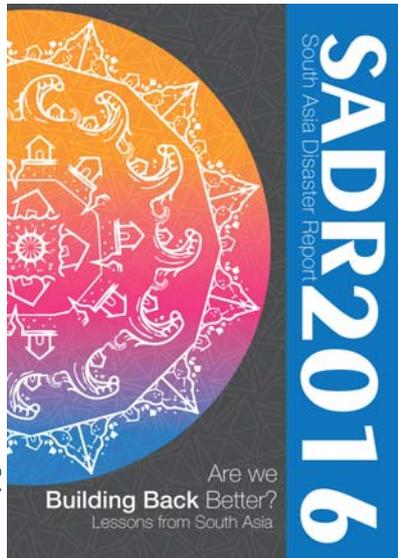


# Regional Capacity Development: Five Action Areas

Asia's regional capacity must be urgently enhanced to implement Asian Regional Plan (ARP) for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) better and faster. The following are some of the key areas that have emerged from the recent South Asia Disaster Report (SADR) 2016 published by Duryog Nivaran (DN) and focus on the principle and practice of *Build Back Better* (BBB).



## Limited Sources of Funding for CSOs

Firstly, there is limited direct investment by donors and authorities in local civil society organisations (CSOs) in the region. According to the State of Civil Society Report (2015) published by Civicus Global Alliance it was found that only about 1% of all official aid, and an even smaller portion of humanitarian assistance, goes directly to the global south or to CSOs working at local level.

It is these organisations that reach out to communities and local institutions; it is these organisations that innovate and invent; and it is these organisations that leverage social capital of the victim and at risk communities. They are also the first responders and take the greatest risks. With adequate financial support from donors, local organisations in the urban and rural, as well as desert and delta areas of India can turn the many social challenges of this country into opportunities for transformation.

Investing in local organisation capacity is paramount in South Asia. For, a lot of donors cite the lack of trained manpower as one of the greatest challenges in providing funding to front line NGOs and CSOs. Given the potential for transformation and disruptive social change that such CSOs hold, perhaps it is time to fund capacity development for such organizations.

## The Need for Resilient Water Resources

Secondly, big dams in Asia can be a serious threat. On September 20, 2017, a Rs. 389 crores dam near Bhagalpur in Bihar collapsed 24 hours before its inauguration by the Chief Minister of the state.

This incident has raised grave concerns about the status of safety and security of these dams in the region.

South Asia actually has a lot of potential for hydropower. More than

400 dams are planned or under construction China, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bhutan. As the region is geologically young the potential for earthquakes is heightened. Earthquakes pose considerable risk to dam infrastructure and downstream communities.<sup>1</sup>

The existing dams in India and other South Asian countries need to be audited for their safety, retrofitted for their sustainability and also be debated upon for their suitability. Towards this end, a lot of capacity building is required not only for dams but other water resources as well as for the larger agricultural sector in South Asia for effective disaster risk reduction. What is missing is what can be called micro-history of risk in water and agriculture sector.

## The Role of Faith Based Organizations

Thirdly, given the hold of religion over the masses in the global South and South Asia in particular, Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) have a big role to play to Build Back Better (BBB) in South Asia.

At a recent Asia Pacific wide event attended by over 100 leaders in Colombo titled: Localizing Response to Humanitarian Need: The Role of Religious and Faith-based Organisations demanded more investment in building capacity for inter-faith humanitarian action so as to reach the victims effectively and urgently not only after a disaster but

<sup>1</sup> Earthquakes, Dams and Water in South Asia, <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/earthquakes-dams-water-south-asia/>



also between two disasters. Work of CARITAS Nepal in earthquake recovery was presented at the above event and it showed that inter-faith work can reach out to all at risk.

**Promoting Lateral Learning for DRR**

Fourthly, there is limited investment in learning, from ongoing DRR activities in South Asia, especially learning among highly motivated learners and practitioners who may be from the civil society or local authorities. Also learning at scale remains a challenge in South Asia. Asia Pacific Network (APN) has initiated learning activities around

climate risk in the region. Similarly, the work of Saleemul Huq in delta areas in Bangladesh also shows that investment in local capacity to learn has large and long term gains for the communities. In fact there is an increasing demand from Africa to learn from Indian and the South Asian experience as the above photo shows the intern from Africa at AIDMI learning local DRR planning.

**Sustainable Livelihoods in the face of changing Technology**

Fifthly, there is a need to reconcile livelihoods in South Asia, especially the non-skilled one's with pace of

technology change and automation. The nature of work—employment and livelihoods—are going to rapidly change worldwide with the rise of robotics and digital economy and "block chain" as well as deskilling and de-capitalisations of work at the lowest level of income in almost all countries in Asia. Efforts are needed to not only build capacity to restore livelihoods and work but in fact to take a leap ahead into the future of just and decent work after a disaster.

H.E. Paolo Gentiloni, Honorable Prime Minister of Italy in his recent visit to India in October 2017 mentioned new thrust to Italy, The EU, and India agenda. He emphasised to build capacity of India in such a way that it can lead several, if not many, Asian countries to face global challenges of risk reduction and resilience building.

By addressing the aforementioned five areas, India and South Asia can indeed lead the way in tackling the challenges of risk and resilience for others to emulate. ■

