Humanitarian Innovation for Child Development

Photo: AIDMI.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

An unprecedented number of people in distress due to the crises triggered by disasters or conflicts have given rise to a series of daunting challenges faced by the global humanitarian system. Children, in particular have been the worst affected demographic group in such crises. The 1.1 million Syrian children registered as refugees with UNHCR Worldwide and 1.5 million children rendered homeless by the Nepal Earthquake of April 2015 highlights the plight of children in humanitarian crises.

Unique and contextualized approaches, grounded in innovative solutions are required to overcome such challenges to safeguard the future of these children. This issue of Southasiadisasters.net focuses on the theme of 'Humanitarian Innovation for Child Development'. An innovation may not solely be a concrete technological entity, it may also be a new idea or approach to tackle an existing problem.

This issue highlights how innovations in planning for humanitarian interventions can have a far reaching effect on improving the effectiveness of such interventions, especially for children. Improved humanitarian outcomes as a result of institutionalizing family planning and vocational training programmes in humanitarian interventions are cited as such innovations. Similarly, newer approaches to planning for safer schools by capturing the perspectives of the children attending those schools is also highlighted.

This issue is a must read for all interested to know more about the humanitarian innovations that can significantly improve child development. ■

– Kshitij Gupta, AIDMI

24 Countries Commit to Implement the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools

The Second Meeting of Safe School Leaders held on 4-5 October 2015 in Tehran, I.R. Iran, called for an accelerated implementation of the political commitment made by Governments to make safe schools a priority as part of national development agenda and disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.

The meeting was opened by the First Vice President of I.R. Iran, Mr. Es'haq Jahangiri, and Ms. Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and reported on progress in implementing the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools. The meeting demonstrated a high level of technical expertise and innovations on school safety being developed and made available to interested Governments through technical cooperation projects, twinning experiences and sharing of good practices on school safety. Experts from the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector also offered a technical package to support Governments in implementing a comprehensive approach to school safety along the lines of the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools.

The High-Level Segment of the meeting confirmed that the political commitment and technological expertise for school safety are available, and called for increased efforts to translate commitments into implementation on the ground. To do so, a better integration and partnership with local communities and local Governments to localize solutions was called for, together with incentives to motivate the private sector, charity organizations and private foundations in supporting the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools.

The experience of Nepal and recent reforms undertaken in the legislative and institutional domain as well as in the reconstruction area following the devastating earthquake of April 2015 served as an inspirational model for other governments to improve school safety coordination, implementation on the ground and preparedness measures for future earthquakes.

The Tehran meeting builds on the outcome of the First Meeting of Safe School Leaders hosted in Turkey in October 2014 that endorsed the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools, adopted the Istanbul Roadmap and constituted the Safe School Leaders group. Solid commitments were secured from Governments and partners to school safety and the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools implementation, including at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (March 2015, Sendai, Japan).

The Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools is a global partnership led by Governments that aims at securing political commitment and fostering school safety implementation globally. The Worldwide Initiative coordinates action among key technical partners to support school safety implementation at the global, regional, national and local levels. It builds on the Comprehensive School Safety Framework and benefits from the support of technical experts from the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector.

The Second Meeting of Safe School Leaders adopted a detailed Action Plan in Support of the Implementation of the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools and welcomed the technical support offered by I.R. Iran, Italy, Mexico, Turkey and Global Alliance members to Nepal, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan and St. Vincent and the Grenadines for safe schools implementation over the coming years. ∎

– **Ms. Christel Rose,** Disaster Risk Reduction Coordination Section, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Geneva, Switzerland

For more information, please visit http://www.unisdr.org/we/campaign/wiss

Disaster Risk Management for Healthy Societies

This briefing note intends to showcase children's perspective on disaster risk reduction, as well as their recommendations on this subject. Through a structured talk, students of the selected schools from Assam, Bihar, Gujarat and Odisha were asked about how disasters are related to their lives and to what extent their school and community are resilient to these events.*

The facilities offered by the schools in a community are essential to ensure children's health. These elements strongly influence the opportunities that children have to a safe education, which in turn can help them live up to their highest potential.

> "I dream of a safe school. My safe school should not be located near the main road. It should not be located near residential area, nor industrial area. My school must have a garden for safe environment and a canteen for safe food".
>
> *– Child at Urdu School, Ahmedabad, India*

Students are aware about the risks that improper infrastructure and inadequate access to basic services imply for their health, as they mentioned the following needed improvements:

A. Minimum Requirements in Everyday Life

1. Access to Basic Services
When it comes to health in general, the first point mentioned by the students was about the drinking water. And in every school and slum, a concern about this issue was raised. It was recommended that a regular maintenance of the drinking water tank is needed to ensure that it is potable and its consumption will not lead to any diseases.

Another matter is related to the toilets, either at home and the school. Many families do not possess toilets and have to go for open defecation (or they use 'Pay and Use' facility for toilets, which is a burden on their tight

Photo: AIDMI.

* This paper was developed by All India Disaster Mitigations Institute (AIDMI) through consultations with 222 children (135 girls and 87 boys) from selected schools in the states of Assam, Bihar, Gujarat and Odisha in India.

budgets). In the schools, children asked for separate toilets for girls and boys, as well as regularly cleaning of them.

Some students and teachers also suggested that the school timing should be reviewed: the classes begin too early in the morning and, because of that, mainly younger children do not have time to get properly prepared before going to school (i.e. undertaking the necessary hygienic activities).

2. Reducing Injury Risks

School's location is a cause of great concern amongst the children both of the schools and slums visited. It happens mainly due to the main roads surrounding the schools and the danger it represents for them. Some students said that the school building should be far from these roads, other asked for road safety trainings so they can feel more confident when in the traffic.

This is a very important issue and, though it is not possible or easy to relocate the building, safety measures should be undertaken to ensure that the problem is addressed, such as retrofitting, installing specific devices and hiring personnel to guide the traffic in the surroundings and help the children.

3. Reducing Illness Risks

The area in which the school is located also have a big impact on children's lives and daily activities. Though the schools' facilities are predominant in general discussions, it is important to acknowledge the development of the region as a whole. Children often mentioned that they face different problems because the schools are located near industrial areas: noise pollution, which disturbs and affects their learning, and environmental pollution, which causes breathing issues, and problems to the eyes and the throat.

Other issues regarding illness risks mentioned by the students are the water logging (in schools and residencies) and the irregular garbage collection (in residential areas). These two aspects of the region's development are of great importance as they are primary causes of epidemic risks. Schools and governments should work together to ensure children's protection from disease and epidemic risks.

B. Minimum Requirements in a Disaster

1. Infrastructure

Children are aware of the infrastructural elements that should be improved in their schools and communities – they are a crucial stakeholder in understanding the main problems to be addressed. In the schools visited, students mentioned issues with water taps, specifically either their inadequate number or their improper installation. For example, during floods, the water taps would get submerged and students would not be able to use them.

Besides that, two components of the preparedness for a disaster were mentioned by the children: fire extinguisher and first aid box. Their

recommendations: (a) every class should have a fire extinguisher, (b) the first aid box should be inspected often and (c) trainings on fire extinguisher and first aid box usage should be conducted for teachers and students.

In view of this, in 2013 the Bihar government started an initiative to include mock drills and lessons about disaster management in the schools' curriculum. Back then, the scheme envisioned to engage 70,000 schools in the programme, which would also receive first aid and disaster management kits from the government.

Moreover, in 2004, the government of India pioneered a manual on school safety for encouraging schools to include disaster management activities in their activities. It was a handbook for administrators, education officers, emergency officials and schools principals and teachers, which highlighted ideas and steps to create safer schools[1].

2. Taking Initiative

In all consultations realized, students expressed their desire to take part in the school disaster management. The creation of a Volunteers Team for rescue was suggested, establishing

focal contacts among the students and delivering appropriate training to them. It is clear that children are willing to make a difference and help their school and community to better prepare and respond to a disaster - they should be given this opportunity.

Some students also mentioned that information sharing on epidemics is missing (India is currently facing an issue with Swine Flu). They usually are told about the problem or hear it on the news, but they are not specifically taught about how to behave (the dos and don'ts).

In order to encourage children to take initiative, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), main governmental agency for disaster management in India, designed an educational website for children. It encompasses different type of disasters and instructs children on how to plan and get prepared, the dos and don'ts, how to recover and rebuild from a disaster and, finally, how to prepare an emergency kit.

3. External Support
Regarding external support for health emergencies, either during a disaster

> "We need proper drainage systems for water flow during the monsoon to address health issues in our community".
> *– Child at Gomtipur Slum, Ahmedabad, India*

situation or not, children and teachers mentioned that schools should be near to hospital and fire brigade. Some of the schools, especially in the slum areas, are far from the hospital and there is no fire brigade close by. Besides that, it was recommended that a medical centre be set up in the area at the time of an epidemic.

Also mainly in the slum areas, sometimes there is no proper response from emergency service. In such cases, the community would have to take the patient in an auto rickshaw (a common means of public transportation in India) or hire a private vehicle for a high cost to reach the hospital.

C. Food Protection
Food protection was discussed by the students when they suggested the creation of a canteen in the school to ensure safe food. The importance of this recommendation can be shown

through two main perspectives: first, to avoid food adulteration, later, to promote healthy eating.

Malnutrition is a major issue in poorer countries and it is in direct contravention of children's right to food. A "combination of factors such as lack of adequate food and health care and unsafe water and sanitation"[2] are associated to children's malnutrition and these elements must be addressed.

School meal programmes and canteen available in the building are an essential step to ensure food protection and children's proper physical and mental development. The students have already raised this question.

D. Alignment with SFDRR
The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) was finalized at the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction at Sendai in March 2015. The SFDRR is a voluntary non-binding framework that seeks to substantially reduce the impact of disasters on communities and countries from 2015–2030.

To achieve its stated goals, the SFDRR lists out 4 priorities of action. The fourth priority of action of SFDRR entails, *Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better"* in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. All the activities of capturing Children's perspective on disaster risk reduction fall under the fourth priority of SFDRR. By including the voices of children in planning for impending disasters implies better preparedness and the likelihood of "Building Back Better". ■

– Ana Carolina Richter,
AIDMI

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1 School Safety. Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, National Disaster Management Division. <http://www.ndmindia.nic.in/School%20Safety%20Draft_Series1.0.pdf>
2 The Right to Adequate Food. United Nations Human Rights <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet34en.pdf>

Education and Knowledge in Building a Culture of Resilience

This paper was developed by the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) through consultations with 222 school going children from the Indian states of Assam, Bihar, Gujarat and Odisha.

It intends to showcase children's perspective on disaster risk reduction, as well as their recommendations on this subject. Through a structured talk, students of the selected schools were asked about how disasters are related to their lives and to what extent their school and community are resilient to these events.

As sustainability and inclusiveness become familiar tropes in today's humanitarian discourses, the moral and practical imperative of capturing children's perspectives on various humanitarian challenges becomes inescapable. This sentiment is echoed in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). In its four priorities of action, the SFDRR tries to list out the necessary actions required for substantially reducing the impacts of disasters on countries, communities and businesses. The fourth priority of SFDRR is, *'Understanding Disaster Risk'*. This priority of action is aligned to all the efforts aimed at capturing the voices of children on disaster risk reduction. Capturing the perspectives of children on DRR can help in understanding disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability, capacity and exposure which in turn can help in taking appropriate response and preparedness measures.

Children are an important stakeholder group in promoting Education and Knowledge in

Photo: AIDMI.

Building a Culture of Resilience. This is due to two reasons: : (a) children are enrolled in schools, the primary source of information and knowledge, and (b) they play a crucial role in transmitting information and spreading knowledge. The following are children's recommendations on this theme.

A. Learning

Throughout the consultations within the schools and the slum areas, students recommended different activities related to education and knowledge. It was also observed that the children are highly interested in these areas and expressed a desire to learn as much as possible about disaster risk reduction.

> "Why only natural disasters? My friends and I would also want to know about epidemics such as dengue and swine flu. Also we want to know about dos and don'ts during bomb blasts and riots".
>
> *- Children at Asarwa School, Ahmedabad, India*

Aware about the importance of information sharing to reduce disaster risks, the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) has prepared diverse materials and publications targeting different stakeholders. They developed two books for schools students within the state, both in Oriya and English.

Among the suggested activities by the students, there are: (a) creating a library in the school with awareness material and manuals about disaster management in its collection, (b) teaching the students about disasters in general, the different types of hazards and the dos and don'ts for each one of them, (c) bringing a practical approach when teaching about disaster risk reduction, for example through demonstration videos and plays, and (d) including Disaster Management as a separate subject in the curriculum. One common objection by the children is that often they are not taught in-depth about disasters and the approach is very limited. For instance, the

learning boils down to mock drills of earthquake.

Apart from the above cited recommendations, the children also remarked that they are not aware about the standards of a safe building; therefore they would like to learn about building codes and the elements that characterize a safe building. Once the students have this knowledge, they'll able to better assess their own school, demand for changes and suggest amelioration.

Aiming at creating another channel for children's learning, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the main governmental agency for disaster management in India, designed an educational website for children. It encompasses different types of disasters and instructs children on how to plan and get prepared, the dos and don'ts, how to recover and rebuild from a disaster and, finally, how to prepare an emergency kit.

B. Building Safety Together
In all consultations realized, students expressed their desire to take part in the school disaster management. They explicitly stated the will to be part of the school disaster management committee and even came up with the idea of creating a Rescue Volunteers Team, where focal

> "In our community, we need training on Disaster Management because there is little knowledge about that. If we have Disaster Management training, we will be able to respond properly to an emergency situation".
> *– Child at Gomtipur Slum, Ahmedabad, India*

contacts among the students would be defined and would receive specific trainings.

A very interesting recommendation by the students was "Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (HCVA) by Children". They said that they want to learn about each of these topics - what are the hazards the school faces, how vulnerable it is and what are the capacities - to be able to evaluate and understand how their school may be impacted by different disasters. This is one of the most powerful ways to empower students on disaster management and risk reduction. Promoting children's knowledge and awareness about disaster risk reduction is extremely important. This is because the more aware children are about the exposure, the impacts and the ways to prevent or mitigate various hazards, the more resilient their community will become to such hazards.

Photo: AIDMI.

Along with the HCVA by children, it is essential that every school develops its own disaster management plan and shares it with all stakeholders - students, teachers, other employees, families and government.

Back in 2004, in a pioneer initiative, the Government of India launched a manual on school safety. It was a handbook for administrators, education officers, emergency officials and schools principals and teachers, which highlighted ideas and steps to create safer schools and to address students' needs[1].

It is clear that children are willing to make a difference and to help their schools and communities to better prepare and respond to a disaster. As their involvement is missing, a powerful instrument for disaster risk reduction is being underestimated.

Children's voices must be heard, because they do really have great inputs and contributions to make. Besides that, children are proactive and, once they are provided with the means, they lead relevant initiatives and put in practice sustainable development concepts.

C. Empowered Children, Empowered Community
When asked what would be the benefits of their participation in disaster management activities, students answered 'to save ourselves, to be able to help in saving others' lives and to spread the knowledge among the community'.

Children must be involved in the process and take part in the solution; they are willing to do so. Empowered children help the community to develop sustainably, as they are important agents for transmitting knowledge and raising awareness in the community. Government and civil society organizations must develop programmes and address local problems both for children and with children. ∎

– Ana Carolina Richter,
AIDMI

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1 School Safety. Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, National Disaster Management Division. <http://www.ndmindia.nic.in/School%20Safety%20Draft_Series1.0.pdf>

National Relevance of Vocational Education Development in Humanitarian System

One of the biggest challenges ahead of India in the coming years is to find gainful employment opportunities for its millions of young citizens entering the workforce. It is estimated that for providing gainful employment to India's young population, the country needs to create around 1 to 1.5 crore jobs per year for the next decade[1]. This is a historic challenge. India has almost 50% of its population under the age of 24 years and this demographic dividend needs to be effectively utilised for a faster economic growth[2]. Being a young nation, India is almost destined to benefit from a "demographic dividend", which could lead to greater economic development with reduction in poverty and unemployment levels. However, this opportunity cannot be fully realized without developing and improving the vocational education system in the country. Vocational education is the key to resolving this challenge.

Although the government of India's National Policy on Skill Development and initiatives of Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Labour and Employment, including the National Skill Development Corporation have recognized the importance of vocational education for inclusive economic growth, the

Photo: AIDMI.

technical and vocational education system in India till date remains weak and underdeveloped. Nearly 12.8 million new entrants to the workforce are required by different industry verticals in the country while India's education and vocational training system churns out 3-4 million workers, leaving a yawning gap between demand and supply[3]. Only 2 percent of India's labour pool has any kind of formal training, compared to 75 percent in Europe and 25 percent in China[4].

The August, 2014 review visit of All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) team to tsunami recovering coastal India revealed that vocational education development plays a crucial role in economic recovery of the household then so far understood or addressed by the humanitarian system, especially for social and economic inclusion. Vocational education does not normally figure high on the humanitarian agenda but it is this education that has helped families move out of tsunami loss and go beyond pre–tsunami economic conditions to enjoy a better standard of living. The potential of vocational education as a way to overcome humanitarian losses or damage has not been realized. Similarly, the opportunity to engender vocational education programs after a humanitarian crisis is also not recognized.

1 National Skill Development Agency. GOI. (2012) *Address at the Seventh ICA/ World Bank Conference: Employment and Development, November 2012.* Available at: http://www.skilldevelopment.gov.in/node/495

2 Onicra Credit Rating Agency of India Ltd. (2014) *Vocational Training Industry in India: Need for strengthening the Quality & Monitoring Mechanism.* Available at: http://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&cad =rja&uact=8&ved=0CDkQFjAF&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.onicra.com%2Fimages%2Fpdf%2F Publications%2FPulse_TRENDSINVOCATIONALTRAINING%2520IN%2520INDIA_Final%252031.03.2014.pdf &ei=1xc AVPamBcrHuAT6uILYDw&usg=AFQjCNE_WpaUe2BvIwZJGdPtIckN4TfmcA&bvm=bv.74115972,d.c2E

3 ibid.

4 Agrawal. S. (2013) *Skills Development in India: Lots of Noise & fury, but Little Action.* Available at: http://www.norrag.org/ en/publications/norrag-news/online-version/education-and-development-in-the-post-2015-landscapes/detail/skills-development-in-india-lots-of-noise-fury-but-little-action.html

Humanitarian action hardly builds institutions but when it does it rarely builds vocational educational institutions as part of recovery. For example, with tsunami resources, capacity of the Polytechnics in Karaikal could have been easily multiplied to cover more students with new courses. Courses on masonry or carpentry help but only to an extent. Further, the families receive livelihood help but seldom vocational trainings beyond masonry or carpentry. AIDMI team's visit found that it is the "new age" vocational skills that help people move out of poverty and exclusion. These include trainings in nursing, health sector, sales and accounts and para–medics to name a few. During the humanitarian needs assessments, teams must go beyond needs for food and shelter to vocational skills, skills that are in need, skills that will be in need in coming decades. Such futuristic skills assessment is hardly ever done.

The visit instigated further review of vocational education initiatives in the tsunami affected areas from secondary sources, which shows that a large number of vocational education programmes implemented in the aftermath of tsunami have succeeded and can be reviewed to shape national policies and programmes. For example, a review of TRAIDCRAFT project implemented in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and Hand in Hand (HiH) in Tamil Nadu revealed that 84% of (2,778) young people that received skills training in areas such as masonry, welding, garment making and mobile phone repairs found jobs or given job orders; and the remainder are using their skills to pursue self-employment. Such efforts are yet to be recognised and given due importance in the humanitarian thinking and planning. Similarly 1,707 women out of total 2,708 women who participated in enterprise development training in areas such as tailoring, saree printing, candle making, nursing and computer skills started or expanded an existing business and reported improvements in their number of working days, revenue from sales and annual profits due to the training they had received[5]. Such reaching out to women with vocational skills is not common. Such work must be taken up for deeper analysis and study.

The "ILO-ICFTU/APRO – ICTU Project (2005-2009) on Skills Development and Vocational Training for the Tsunami–affected People" in Cuddalore and Nagapattinam districts trained 2,621 beneficiaries, 82 per cent of whom were gainfully employed[6]. Similarly, the People's Development Association (PDA), a Madurai-based NGO, has established two vocational training institutes in tsunami-hit villages. PDA's Anjelo Airoldi Industrial Training Institute—established at a cost of Rs. 1 crore at Prathabaramapuram village near Nagapattinam with financial assistance from the workers of the Voestalpine, a multinational steel company from Austria—provides formal courses in welding, automobile mechanism and electrical works to students of the tsunami-hit villages[7]. Again, such efforts have widespread use and application to other states and disaster events such as in recovery in Uttarakhand after 2013 floods.

Organisations working in tsunami affected areas have not only found the provision of vocational education useful for restoration of livelihoods and income but also in promoting social ties within and neighbouring communities. For example, the provision of vocational training for tsunami affected youth can also be used to prevent separation from their communities, and to reduce their vulnerability to under–age recruitment and other forms of exploitation[8]. But such examples are hardly ever captured or used to develop humanitarian response. Thus, the use of social protection programmes and NGO networks to deliver skills training to micro-enterprises and vulnerable households has some potential, and can be scaled up[9] to meet the growing unemployment challenges in India. ■ **– Mihir R. Bhatt**

5 TRAIDCRAFT (n.d) *Supporting tsunami affected communities (women and young people) in Tamil Nadu.* Available at: http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/international_development/overseas_programmes/Completed_projects/south_asia/tamil_nadu_tsunami

6 ILO (2012) *Independent Evaluation of the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme for India: 2007-2012.* Available at: http://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=16&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CDwQFjAFOAo&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ilo.org%2Fwcmsp5%2Fgroups%2Fpublic%2F---ed_mas%2F---eval%2Fdocuments%2Fpublication%2Fwcms_191678.pdf&ei=B6n9U-ydL4KOuATw8IK4Ag&usg=AFQjCNG3tHjEp8Ef5J2hjR0mnkcGmVEDwA&bvm=bv.74035653,d.c2E

7 K. SUBRAMANIAN (2008), *Frontline. Rebuilding lives.* Available at: www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2425/stories/20080104242509800.htm

8 Dammers Chris et.al. (2008) *Save the Children Alliance, Tsunami Response Programme in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Somalia: Mid-Term Evaluation Report.* Available at: http://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCMQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.alnap.org%2Fpool%2Ffiles%2Ferd-3643-full.pdf&ei=u6f9U92pHYK9ugTcmoKYBQ&usg=AFQjCNEJpY1q0HNIJSpej4Y0lAjlzMDQtg&bvm=bv.74035653,d.c2E

9 The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited (2013). *Skills Development in South Asia: Executive Summary.* Available at: www.britishcouncil.org/sites/britishcouncil.uk2/files/south-asia-skills-report-summary.pdf

Kochi: Agenda for Sustainable Urban Development

Kochi – "the queen of Arabian Sea", like any other modern city in the world, has also created awesome urban structures — clusters of tall buildings in CBD, roads filled with heavy traffic, high rise apartments and extension of urbanization to the suburban areas. However, these "developments", have also had an unprecedented impact on the nature.

The time has come to ensure that our cities remain sustainable homes for their inhabitants. A greater emphasis should be on developing economically and environmentally sustainable cities.

Local Self Governments like us, are usually preoccupied with issues such as house provision, public works, transport system, education and health care. But, it is vital to have an insight into the wider and long term perspectives that support the viability of their cities.

The 74th amendment [2] 12th schedule to the Constitution of India resulted in increased roles for the municipalities in every state in India, where they have been perceived to be great contributors to the social and economic development of the country, as they are the level of government that is closest to the citizens. The eighteen items stated in this schedule do not include "Climate Proofing", which plays a major role in coming days. We need a paradigm shift, combining urban design with adapting to climate change.

Climate Change is one of the most pressing problems of this age. Cities, especially fast growing cities in developing countries, are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Kochi, is not an exception. Policy makers have to facilitate adaptation to vulnerabilities arising out of climate change like adverse impacts on water resources, increased frequencies of extreme weather like droughts, floods, cyclones, storm water surge, rise in sea levels and human health. Climate responsive activities should be planned and measures should be undertaken, mainstreamed for maximizing benefits/impacts. Therefore, Climate Change needs to be looked at as an important component of the second generation of urban reforms in India.

Possible Climate Change Impact on Kochi

Change in Temperature

Kochi started experiencing an increase in the Mean Annual Temperature. Various studies indicate that the temperature may rise to very high levels in the near future.

Change in Rainfall

Kochi experiences change in precipitation pattern. We receive more short spells of intense rainfall during the South–West Monsoon Season than the earlier times. More intense period of rainfall could imply greater risk of flooding as well as jeopardize the system functioning according to rainfall pattern.

Sea Level Rise

Global Projections of climate change indicate that the average sea–level will rise significantly by 2100.

Though it is a distant threat, we need to evolve strategies to mitigate the possible crisis that the city may face in the future. (2nd National communication to the United Nations frame work convention on Climate change, released by MOEF highlighted the crisis to be faced.) Likelihood of Sea–Level rise in the Cochin area is very high. Sea–level in Cochin area may rise by 0.33 mm.

Implications:

Change in Temperature

- An increase in evaporation
- Over exploitation of ground water resulting in its depletion.

- Higher demand for electric power.

Change in Rainfall
- Will significantly affect city's water systems, drainage and waste disposal.
- An increase in flooding and erosion.

Sea Level Rise
- Will increase coastal flooding
- Will increase saltwater intrusion in both surface water & ground water
- Will increase the extent of water logging
- Epidemic outbreak.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND ADAPTATION MEASURES
Relevant Climate Impacts Adaptation Measure and Strategies
Change in temperature may lead to Water shortage: Decrease in ground water level.

Measures taken: Effective green planning for the city; proper water harvesting – ground water recharging/water auditing; use control and restrictions.

Coastal Flood/Flood due to Extreme Rain
Strategies: Enhance flood defenses such as sea walls, protection of coastal wetlands (as buffers) Use of more sustainable designs and materials in the making of ferries & jetties. New design concepts in construction especially that of the roads and bridges. Improve drainage infrastructure, Provision of storm water utility system as per standards Make climate change assessments a requirement for all new development.

Conclusion
Leadership: If cities want to be sustainable and resilient against climate change, then their leaders will have to involve the community to translate this vision into a reality.
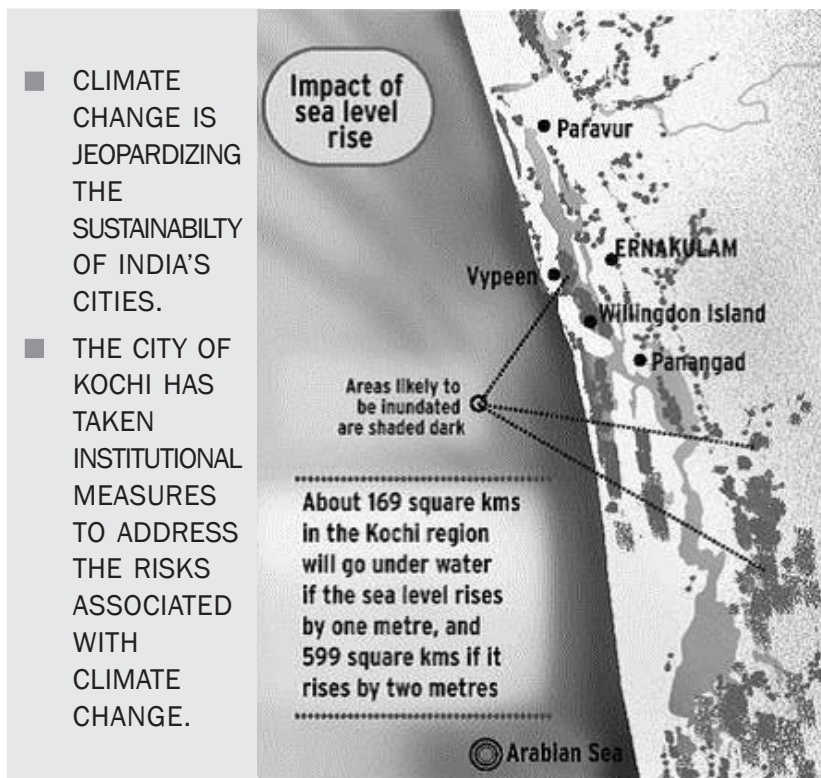
The local self-government department (LSGD) has the statutory
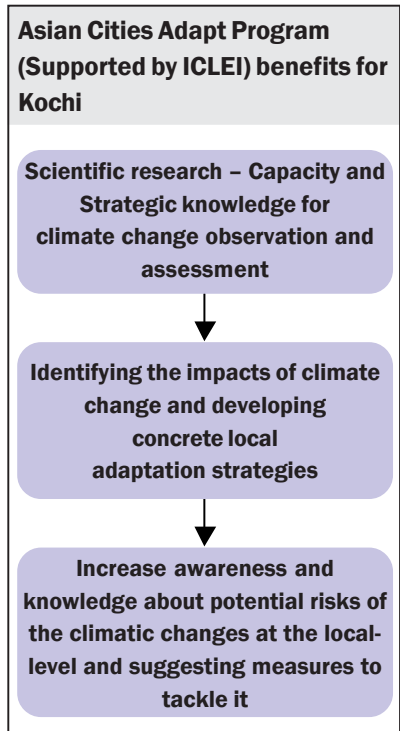
authority to coordinate and direct the resilience planning and implementation efforts with relevant officials, semi–official, and non–governmental agencies operating there. Capturing local communities' interest and involvement could be one of the responsibilities of the policy makers.

While it's important for city leaders to lead the charge, it should never be forgotten that successful projects of sustainable change and development rely on local communities being fully involved in the process and taking ownership of it. Change and real resilience has to be community–led and community–specific. There should be multi–level participation, involving national, state, and city–level governments, as well as multi–sectoral participation including sectors such as infrastructure and services, urban planning, transport, disaster risk reduction, and housing and construction. ■

– Bhadra B,
Deputy Mayor, Kochi Municipal Corporation, Kerala

Asian Cities Adapt Program (Supported by ICLEI) benefits for Kochi

Scientific research – Capacity and Strategic knowledge for climate change observation and assessment

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Identifying the impacts of climate change and developing concrete local adaptation strategies

↓

Increase awareness and knowledge about potential risks of the climatic changes at the local-level and suggesting measures to tackle it

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■ CLIMATE CHANGE IS JEOPARDIZING THE SUSTAINABILTY OF INDIA'S CITIES.

■ THE CITY OF KOCHI HAS TAKEN INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH CLIMATE CHANGE.

Impact of sea level rise

• Paravur

ERNAKULAM

Vypeen •

• Willingdon Island

• Panangad

Areas likely to be inundated are shaded dark

About 169 square kms in the Kochi region will go under water if the sea level rises by one metre, and 599 square kms if it rises by two metres

◎ Arabian Sea

Population Growth, Disaster Risk and Possible Way Ahead in India

India, set to become the world's most populous country in the next decade, is gradually moving towards population stabilizations. The 2011 census data shows several positive trends with regard to population growth. The percentage decadal growth during 2001–2011 has recorded the sharpest decline since Independence. The national level Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined from 2.5 to 2.2 during 2001–2011. However, low fertility has not resulted in improved maternal health, due to early marriage and childbearing and closely spaced births. India's growing population continues to be the cause of concern for policy makers and civil society.

In India, as per Census 2011, adolescent population (10–19) is 253.2 million and that of the youth (15–24) is 231.9 million, constituting 20.9% and 19.2% of the total population respectively. Close to half the women are in the reproductive age group. The population momentum, due to the large base of young people in the country, is estimated to contribute to 70% of the population growth. Repositioning family planning as a health and development issue could contribute to designing programs that address adolescents' and youth's reproductive health and family planning needs along with a decline in fertility.

Globally, if voluntary family planning is used to its fullest potential and all unmet needs are met, then contraceptive use can avert well over half of all maternal deaths. This finding has profound implications for policies on maternal health and child survival and emphasizes the urgency of meeting the contraceptive needs of an estimated 32 million women in India whose needs are still unmet.[1] Again

access to family planning can reduce infant mortality by 10% and childhood mortality by 21%.[2] Family Planning therefore is a key intervention to prevent maternal, infant and childhood mortality.

Beyond health, there are many far–reaching, catalytic effects of women being able to take control of their fertility. At the household level, families are able to invest more of their scarce resources in the health and education of their children. Girls from smaller families are more likely to complete their education and fewer children enable women to seek employment, thereby increasing household income and assets. Improvements in reproductive health and access to family planning can benefit the economy by improving general health and reducing fertility. Family Planning would therefore enhance the capacity of our government to improve human capital, reduce poverty and hunger and enable communities to maximize their use of **natural resources** and adapt to the consequences of **climate change and environmental degradation.** Studies have shown that improved access to family planning can be a valuable tool in slowing global warming.

The failure or inaction to provide access to quality family planning services has a very high price in terms of individual and family health and well–being, and to the country's economic development. Population Foundation of India (PFI), in collaboration with Centre for Public Affairs and Critical Theory (CPACT), Shiv Nadar University, is currently estimating the cost of inaction linked to family planning. Costs are being measured in terms of not only the number of men, women or families affected, but also their overall

wellbeing, their ability to continue the education of children and participate in the workforce, their overall earnings, use of health services and ensuring sustainable environment as there are often complementarities among different actions. Health interventions may have consequential benefits for education, environment and economic productivity.

The study will provide an estimate of the costs of not developing appropriate policies and implementing family planning strategies that result in loss of social, economic, health, education and environment outcomes for the population in India. By highlighting the costs of inaction, the study will better inform the advocacy efforts and provide evidence to strengthen and give priority to family planning within the country's political and social agenda.

Providing universal access to good quality family planning services and information would result in fewer unintended pregnancies, improve the health and well–being of women and their families and slow population growth, **all benefits to climate–compatible development.** Repositioning family planning will require an increased investment for addressing the family planning and reproductive health needs of adolescents and youths, delaying the age at marriage, delaying age at first pregnancy, promoting spacing between births, improving quality of care of family planning and reproductive health (RH) programs and prevention of sex selection. ■

– Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director, Population Foundation of India, New Delhi

1 DLHS, 2007–08
2 Cleland J. et al. 2012. Contraception and Health. Lancet 2012

ALNAP Urban Response Community of Practice

The Urban Response Community of Practice (CoP) is an online shared–learning and information tool developed by the Active Learning Network for Accountability (ALNAP) and Performance in Humanitarian Action. It aims to engage with and bring together all those who are interested in or working on urban humanitarian issues; linking together students, humanitarians, donors, urban designers and other stakeholders in urban response.

The CoP has over 1375 members, with representation across six continents and over ninety countries. The membership is made up of a diverse range of people with differing professional experience. Just under 65% of all members are humanitarians currently or formerly working in/on urban crisis at field level or HQ level. A further 15% of members identify as being researchers or having academic interest in urban issues, while the final 20% is made up of a mix of non–humanitarian urban experts, donors and students. The CoP also hosts a sub–group focused on learning around the urban aspects of the recent Ebola crisis in West Africa, called 'Ebola in Cities' (https://partnerplatform.org/alnap/urban–response/ebola-in-cities), where a further 170 members are discussing issues ranging from quarantine to community engagement and working with local government.

Accessible through ALNAP's Urban Humanitarian Response Portal (http://www.urban–response.org/), the Community of Practice is a platform for sharing new learning and events, asking questions, and continuing discussions after webinars and other events. Any member can post to the Community, via either the email (urban–response@partner platform.org) or the Community of Practice website. Members are encouraged to start discussions, share urban resources, talk about their experiences and let others know about new initiatives, documents and events related to urban humanitarian work. Recent posts have included sharing learning about urban crime and security as well as the recent Nepal earthquake, questions around IDP data and compilations of urban resources, and sharing upcoming events such as courses about urban disasters at Harvard and Fordham Universities this summer, and the upcoming ALNAP–hosted online consultation around urban issues for the WHS. ALNAP also produces a monthly 'Resource Roundup', informing members of new urban resources, events, videos and initiatives.

As part of ALNAP's ongoing work on urban response, the Urban Response Community of Practice seeks to foster a dialogue between urban stakeholders of all kinds– humanitarians and non–humanitarians alike – and together are helping to strengthen practice and learning of urban humanitarian issues. Those wishing to join the Urban CoP can do so via https://partnerplatform.org/alnap/urban–response/join. We hope to see you there!■

– Leah Campbell, Researcher, ALNAP

ALNAP Urban Response CoP Membership June 2015

CHS Alliance: Ten Actions to Strengthen the Relevance and Effectiveness of Humanitarian and Development Action

The CHS Alliance, launched in June 2015 in Nairobi as the result of a merger between the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) International[1] and People In Aid[2], is today one of the largest and most diverse networks of organisations committed to improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian and development action.

At the core of the Alliance's purpose is the promotion of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)[3], the result of an extensive and inclusive development process, conducted together with the Sphere Project and Groupe URD. By applying the CHS, an organisation becomes accountable for the quality of its work to the people it aims to assist. While the Standard has already grown in popularity within the humanitarian sector, its approach is largely inspired by approaches used in development work, and thus appropriate for aid programmes in general.

We don't just have a moral obligation to be accountable to communities affected by crisis or poverty, we also have a responsibility to ensure our actions are effective and deliver programmes and services that have a measurable impact. Moving forward, here are ten actions and attitudes we believe can truly make a difference in the quality of programmes aid organisations develop and implement:

1. **Take a stance:** Accountability is a bottom-up process, but change in attitude and practice usually only happens if it is endorsed, practiced and encouraged at the leadership level.

Photo: ACT/DCA/Shikhar Bhattarai.

2. **Internalise the link between accountability and quality:** Too often, accountability and quality are treated as separate processes. To establish the link between the two, the CHS should be incorporated into existing policies, procedures and handbooks to the point where it becomes invisible.

3. **Stop assuming:** Aid organisations need and employ experts. However, expertise in terms of what is truly relevant or sustainable most often resides with those who are on the receiving end of our services. Why don't we systematically double-check with them if we've got it right?

4. **Listen and (inter)act:** It's good to listen, but the people who talk to us also want (and have a right) to know what actions we have taken as a result of our discussions.

5. **Link humanitarian and development programmes:** Ensure long-term risks and opportunities to strengthen the resilience of communities affected by crisis or poverty are taken into account.

6. **Measure progress:** We work with limited resources, and need to demonstrate progress and impact, as well as understand when and why things work or don't in order to make the most of what we have.[4]

7. **Care for your staff:** If we want staff to apply the commitments of the CHS in their interactions with communities, organisations need to make sure they themselves apply it to their staff.

8. **Keep up with the world:** The world keeps changing and that

1 For more information, visit: http://www.hapinternational.org/
2 For more information, visit: http://www.peopleinaid.org/
3 For more information, visit: http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/
4 The CHS Verification Framework can be used for monitoring and evaluating your organisation's performance against the CHS. For more information, visit: http://chsalliance.org/what-we-do/verification

includes staff and the people we serve. Mobile phones are now widely used on a daily basis because they make life easier. Can we afford not to build on this as we deliver our programmes?

9. **Be honest and share learning:** In a culture where everyone needs to shine in order to receive the next grant, we need to be more honest about failure, and move from identifying lessons to truly learning them.

10. **Find a common language:** Communities affected by crisis or poverty shouldn't have to deal with different and complex systems to share their feedback or concerns. Could aid organisations not harmonise their language and systems (and possibly merge them), using the CHS to get there?

To find out how the CHS Alliance can help you put these actions into practice, visit www.chsalliance.org. ■

– **Michel Dikkes,** Quality and Accountability Officer and **David Loquercio,** CHS Alliance, Switzerland

Corporate Social Responsibility and Disaster Risk Management & Reduction in Bangladesh

Disaster management and reduction have multidimensional aspects. Sustainable disaster risk reduction cannot be achieved in isolation. Disaster management is followed by disaster reduction which is in fact everybody's business – consequently public, private and corporate sectors have an important role to play at every single stage in their entire value chain, particularly in disaster risk reduction in relation to risk transfer under the programme of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

According to UNISDR, disaster risk transfer is defined as the process of formally or informally shifting the financial consequences of particular risks from one party to another whereby a household, community, enterprise or state authority will obtain resources from the other party after a disaster occurs, in exchange for ongoing or compensatory social or financial benefits provided to that other party. *Risk transfer must also be used to promote risk reduction activities.* Risk management and risk reduction strategies, includes risk sharing and transfer mechanisms such as insurance which is for low–income households in developing countries is often called micro–insurance. Apart from micro insurance, public private partnership

and social funds might be alternative options to be considered as an important risk transfer and reduction mechanism.

Bangladesh has made considerable and significant development gains over the last 10 years, with economic growth averaging 6% for the last decade, poverty decreasing from 40% in 2005 to 24.7% in 2014 and achieving five out of eight of the MDGs. All of this progress has been achieved in the face of considerable vulnerability and exposure to natural and human–induced hazards. In fact between 1990 and 2008 Bangladesh incurred an average annual loss equal to 1.8% of the GDP due to natural disasters and was considered fifth most natural disaster prone country in the world (World Risk Report, 2012). This progress is a testament to the innate resilience of the Bangladeshi people, who continue to make developmental gains despite living with disasters and climate risk [Source: Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh].

Bangladesh Bank's CSR mainstreaming campaign in Bangladesh's financial sector has enthused all banks and financial institutions into a broad range of

direct and indirect CSR engagements including humanitarian relief and disaster response; widening of advancement opportunities for disadvantaged population segments with support in areas of healthcare, education and training; 'greening' initiatives arresting environmental degradation, and so forth. In FY 2014–15, Bangladesh Bank has sanctioned tk 51.3 million from 'Bangladesh Bank Disaster Management & Corporate Social Responsibility fund'.

Realizing the importance of DRR, gradually corporate sector in Bangladesh has started to bring the disaster risk and reduction issue in strategic management and is increasing the productivity level in their value chain system. This sector has become active in increasing opportunities under CSR programmes of disaster management, nutrition, education, renewable energy, health and vulnerable communities of the country. Not a single group or organization can undertake all aspects of disaster risk reduction. It requires a joint and united response from the government, international agencies, embassies and mostly from the corporate sector. ■

– **Ms. Sumaya Rashid,** Country Director, Social Responsibility Asia (SR Asia) Bangladesh

Bridging the Gap between Disaster Response and Government–Led Recovery

The Asia–Pacific is a region of incredibly diverse and dynamic communities and societies, and over the previous decades has enjoyed rapid socio–economic development. It is also a region exposed to multiple natural hazards, from typhoons to earthquakes. When these hazardous events affect vulnerable communities and structures, disasters are unfortunately a frequent occurrence. What can be done to ensure we recover quickly and build back better from future disasters?

The Disaster Scenario: Meeting Immediate Needs

After any large disaster, the immediate effects at the basic personal level include: deaths, injuries, damage to housing, and interruption of safe drinking water and food sources. In the minutes, hours, and days after disasters, the main task of individuals, local governments, civil–society organizations and mass organizations (e.g. Red Cross or Crescent chapters) is to conduct disaster response activities to address immediate disaster effects. These activities, which often occur in the uncertain and highly–dynamic aftermath of a disaster, are the first priority in order to sustain life of those affected.
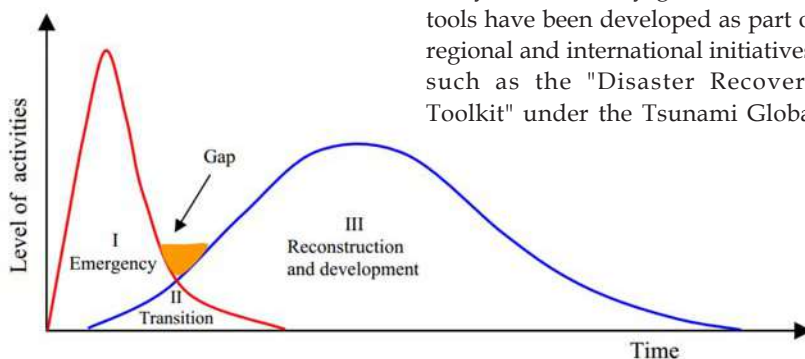

Figure: Implementation phases after disaster and the 'Gap'. Source: The World Bank, 2008: "Managing Post–Disaster Reconstruction Finance: International Experience in Public Financial Management".

What Happens after a Disaster Response?

A common concern for all disaster management stakeholders is how to address the often recurrent 'gap' between humanitarian assistance and post–disaster recovery of people, communities, and economies (see figure). Bridging the gap is a critical issue as it represents prolonged suffering of disaster–affected populations, and a slowed return to socio-economic activity.

For more than a decade, governments and a range of organizations have stepped up to the challenge; through research, practice and application of tools. An important innovation has been the re-focusing on 'early recovery', which deals with the application of development principles to humanitarian contexts, in order to stabilize the post-disaster situations from further deterioration and ensure stronger foundations for full recovery(see UNDP (2012): "UNDP and Early Recovery"). Another key innovation in bridging the gap has been the strengthening of pre-disaster systems and capacities for both post-disaster needs assessment and also recovery planning. Based on experiences of many disasters, key guidelines and tools have been developed as part of regional and international initiatives, such as the "Disaster Recovery Toolkit" under the Tsunami Global Lessons Learned Project, and the "Guide to Developing Disaster Recovery Frameworks" by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery.

Strengthening Pre-Disaster Government Systems for Recovery Planning

Recognizing that national governments are responsible and are a key driver for post-disaster recovery, there is growing consensus that it is a priority for governments to actively prepare for post-disaster recovery (and thereby minimize any future 'gaps'). Already, many governments in the region have enhanced their national systems and capacities for post-disaster needs assessment. Building on the aforementioned innovations and seeking to meet this demand from governments, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) is developing an online resource tool under its 'Ready4Recovery' initiative. The aim of the soon-to-be-launched website (www.ready4recovery.org) will be to offer a practical set of post-disaster recovery options and tools, primarily for national and sub-national governments.

The Way Forward for Government-Led Recovery

Countries in this disaster-prone region have made great strides in improving their capacities across the disaster management cycle, particularly in terms of mitigation and preparedness activities. Building on these achievements and by adapting recovery guidelines and resources can help governments further strengthen their capacities for post-disaster recovery; therefore reducing the 'gap' between response and recovery. ■ **– Gregory Pearn,** Project Manager, ADPC, Thailand

We Need a Reality Check

Bringing frontline perspectives to national and international policy frameworks

Disasters are a global issue. No country is exempt from their impacts and we are increasingly seeing crises cross borders, concerning whole regions and beyond. For example, we have seen floods span multiple countries that share the same river catchment in West Africa. The 2011 floods in Thailand led to drastic economic losses in the US and Europe amongst others, due to disruption in supply chains for global markets, in particular for automotive and electronics industries. Disasters really are a global challenge.

States came together to address the global challenge of disasters in March this year in Sendai, Japan. The World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction brought together 187 states, UN agencies and civil society to negotiate a global framework for how to prepare for and prevent disasters. Similarly states will gather to sign a legally binding document agreement on dealing with the global challenge of climate change, including climate related risks.

However, whilst disasters are a global issue, their impacts are felt at the local level and they cannot be solved simply with "one size fits all" global solutions. Each community will require different strategies to meet the needs of their specific context, otherwise they will risk having no effect, or even, exacerbating risk further. So how can international frameworks, regional agendas, and national policies have an impact at the local level? They must take into account realities on the ground. This includes contexts of poverty, insecurity and informality. It includes living with the constant threat of small scale, recurrent

disasters. This need to understand local perspectives of risk and to consider the local context are just two of the essentials in Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction(GNDR)'s *Reality Checklist: 10 Essentials for Impact at the Frontline* (see image).

At GNDR we have recently piloted *Frontline*, a methodology that captures local perspectives of risk and resilience so that they may be used for local, national and international action and policy monitoring. It starts with individual conversations with

the holders of local knowledge: community members, civil society organisations and local government officers. Each conversation is based on four basic questions:

- What are the threats you face in your community?
- What impacts do these threats have on the lives and livelihoods of you, your household and community?
- What capacity do you and your community have to take action against these threats?
- What factors beyond your control leas to these threats?

We can enhance real impact at the frontline if we:

1 **Understand local perspectives of risk**
Listen and understand the experiences of people most at risk

2 **Consider the local context**
Recognise the real life challenges of fragility, insecurity, and informality

3 **Leave no one behind**
Ensure the inclusion of all groups, particularly those most at risk

4 **Collaborate**
Work with and across all groups and levels

5 **Mobilise local resources**
Build on existing capacities, knowledge and other sources of resilience

6 **Align across policies**
Ensure coherence across development and climate change activities

7 **Hold people to account**
Ensure accountability to local communities

8 **Learn from the past and look to the future**
Learn lessons and recognise future trends to inform recovery and development planning

9 **Be environmentally aware**
Recognise, protect and strengthen the functions of ecosystems

10 **Recognise the potential of civil society**
Actively work with civil society to achieve these essentials

Image: Reality Checklist: 10 Essentials for Impact at the Frontline.

Frontline can then gather thousands of these individual conversations together into local, national and global databases. This information can then be disaggregated and analyzed by gender, age, location and socio-economic group, amongst other factors. The data is available online for all to access in an open source tableau. At the local level, the consultations facilitate community reflection, resulting in wide dialogue and partnerships, and provide valuable evidence to guide local budgeting and action planning. At the national and global level, Frontline data can be used to create more appropriate and effective national policies and plan, ensuring that local realities are both understood and considered. Over time it can also be used to provide a more realistic snapshot of progress in the post–2015 frameworks, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the upcoming UNFCCC Climate Change Agreement.

Frontline has been piloted in 14 Latin American countries and has collected the voices of more than 13,000 individuals. The results from this data highlights the complex, multi-hazard and insecure realities that people face at the local level, with people often prioritizing small scale recurrent threats over large scale crises. It shows that increasing access to knowledge and resources, enhancing local governance, maintaining law and order, building on local innovations, and reducing poverty are critical actions to address the diverse range of threats communities face. But for each community and for each country, Frontline is highlighting different priorities. We now hope that national and global decision makers will pay attention to these local voices and capacities, and use it to shape appropriate policies that will build local resilience to the global threat of disasters. ∎

– Lucy Pearson,
Advocacy Coordinator, GNDR, UK

CULTURE AND DRR

On Living History and Cultural Dynamic

A Not so Simple Story: Ritual Survival and Cultural Embedding

Trichur, 1990s: Among shelves of glittering bell–metal, we find this rough-cast brass, weighing a couple of kilos. It's upper surface marked by the Vaishnava *Sankha* and Sakta *Khadga,* its sides briefly ornamented, slit, and rattling with concealed metal pellets. It's a *cilampu,* the shop keeper explains. It is used by *veliaccapatus* to invoke the presence of the Goddess as they enter into trance/possession.

Cilappatikaram, the first great classic in Tamil narrative poetry tells of a married merchant couple Kannaki: the "Girl" and Kovalan. He is for a while enchanted by a beautiful dancer & wastes his fortune. The couple decides to make a new beginning & together travel to Madurai in Pandya country. Kannaki offers Kovalan one of her marriage anklets to sell. Concealed in the finely beaten gold are gem–stones as is usual in marriage–anklets of the time. The anklet is so finely worked that the jeweller suspects it is stolen from the palace. Kovalan is executed.

At this point the story takes an unexpected turn, and you can sense the emotion build.

Kannaki, the faithful wife is so outraged by this injustice that she tears off one of her breasts and casts it at the evil city. Madurai goes up in flames. She reveals herself as the Angry Goddess and disappears, dancing, into the jungles of the Western Ghats.

While the 7th–8th century narrative–poem in builds still earlier sources, perhaps; & possibly alludes to tribal affiliations from the Nilgiri; the Kannaki cult itself survives in Sri Lanka as Pattini; the chaste "Wife" Goddess, confirming links to the great shrine–cult of Bhagavati at the ancient port–town of Kodungallur.

The *cilampu* in its present robust form references the earliest known jewel found presently in peninsular India. Classicism, text, cult–nexus, all converges on ritual emotion to form a living form in material culture.

How we got here, 2 more Points of View, & a Way Forward?

Most of us arrive at this complex dynamic we call our culture by a series of disconnections and self–corrections. It is the price we pay for being both Indian, and cosmopolitan or global citizens.

European "high" art was actually only finally disconnected from material culture 200 years ago. With further industrialization 19th century, material culture declined into "craft" or "handicraft". An Independent Indian government's attempt to integrate, document, and offer free design–assistance to master–artisans came to an end 45 years ago. Modernism meanwhile taught us how to appreciate structural simplicity and to distrust the illusions of depicted reality.

But is there an Indian view of art? And what do the makers have to say?

Visual arts and material culture are not mentioned. But as to poetry, music and all aspects of performance–arts the psychological clarity of 9th–10th century thinkers of Kashmir has not been surpassed. Emotion: rasa is to be distilled from feeling: *bhavana.* If successfully evoked for the viewer–sensitive *rasika,* the experience should finally arouse a sense of the contemplative, inviting introspection. It does this by suggestion: *dhvani.*

Among the disparate groups of makers in this country the earliest and most articulate group refers to itself as *Visvakarmans* according to their founding–father. They are known as the *Pancalas:* since they work with five materials: iron, beaten metals/cast–bronze, gold, stone and timber. In South India they are called *Kammalans.* Their local and seasonal profiles vary widely, both economic standing and status.

Yet this is the community that yields us the great temple–builders and sculpture of Elura, Elephanta, Badami, and the art we know through the Pallava and Cola dynasts. It is this community that yields the *Vastu–silpa–sastris,* and who also regularly transformed South Indian trade–bullion into jewellery. Their work is marked by ritual–transaction from material – gathering & processes through client–negotiation.

To the Vishvakarmans all raw materials is understood to be organic creative and dynamic. It is part of creation itself and con–substantial with the Creator. This is what distinguishes their attitude to life and work, linking them into the wider culture of environment and ecological sensitivity.

For instance all metal is the *svayambhu* or substantial form of the dynamic Goddess [gold alone is Lakshmi]. The forge, kiln and certain tools they work with, likewise. When they view their product–range from the finest to the most basic, it is with their ritual contribution that they identify; this shades into lesser symbolic functions & usages.

Yet from the beginning they have to contest a social classification that sites them with the simplest service–providers.

Meanwhile rapid democratisation sets in. With urbanisation and affluence product–ranges change. New forms arise, and changes in professional attitude.

However, where we came from is as much who we are as where we are going. We are living history moment to moment. Art and material culture at its finest yield us a simple sensuous pleasure; a greater complexity in ways of seeing and sharing the emotions of the makers. And yes, not least a contemplative sense of what it means to be alive in a racing world.

"Makers know the worthy by understanding & handling material; the knowledgeable by receptivity and discrimination; the urban middle class by constant exposure, reminder, and conscious choice."

This was the view of a reflective Finnish designer considering the future, as he looked back at the wreckage left by World War–II. ■

– Pria Devi, Haryana

■ **The meaning of the Cilampu:** According to the poet the Jain prince Ilango Adigal - "the cilampu brings the truth to light"; most spectacularly, as Kannaki breaks open the remaining anklet to reveal her Cola rubies instead of Pandya pearls.

■ **Dating:** The date mentioned is from oral discussion with the late A K Ramanujan. But the standard date still appears according to historian K A Nilakantha Shastri 5th-6th CE; some think even earlier, due to the Cankam geopolitics so intimately described. Eg. Colas, Pandyas & Cenkuttavan the royal cera installer of the shrine, & Gajabahu the royal Ceylonese present at the installation who also introduces the cult to his island kingdom.

Cilampu: Goddess anklet, cast-brass lola lilavati collection, Photo.: Uttam K. Arya.

Implementing SFDRR in Delhi City

The All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) joined Save the Children in Making Schools Safer in Delhi Municipal Corporation, July 24, 2015. As part of implementing the SFDRR, AIDMI reaches out to cities and civil society organisations in India. The event was organized by Save the Children, chaired by Mayor Arya, and hosted by Delhi Municipal Corporation. ■

– Mihir R. Bhatt