

COVID-19 and The New Humanitarian Agenda



The Role of the IHSA Blog Posts Selection – Three key Trends

By Nicolás Caso, and
Susanne Jaspars, IHSA, The
Netherlands

5



Tata Trusts' Covid-19 Interventions

By Nayantara Dutta, Tata
Trust, India

6



Academic Gold Rush and Positionality in Researching a Pandemic

By JC Gaillard, The University
of Auckland, New Zealand

10



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COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan

By AIDMI Team

The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is a joint effort by members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), including UN, other international organizations and NGOs with a humanitarian mandate, to analyse and respond to the direct public health and indirect immediate humanitarian consequences of the pandemic, particularly on people in countries already facing other crises.

It aggregates relevant COVID-19 appeals and inputs from WFP, WHO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF and NGOs, and it complements other plans developed by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. NGOs and NGO consortiums have been instrumental in helping shape the plan and conveying local actors' perspectives, and they will play a direct role in service delivery. NGOs will be able to access funding mobilized in the

framework of this plan and related country plans through partner arrangements with UN agencies, through pooled funding mechanisms, including Country-Based Pooled Funds, and through direct donor funding.

This ensures complementarity, synergy, gaps and needs identification, and a coordinated response. The Global HRP also complements and supports existing government responses and national coordination

mechanisms, with due consideration paid to the respect for humanitarian principles.

The Global HRP identifies the most affected and vulnerable population groups in priority countries, including countries with an ongoing Humanitarian Response Plan, Refugee Response Plan or multi-country/subregional response plan, as well as countries that have requested international assistance, such as Iran. Updates to existing country plans should be initiated to ensure that humanitarian organizations are prepared and able to meet the additional humanitarian needs occasioned by the pandemic. Further updates to these plans will likely be necessary if a major outbreak occurs. In other countries, a humanitarian response plan/Flash Appeal should be considered if they are unable to cope with the emergency. ■

[For more information click here](#)

“The courage and commitment of all frontline workers during the COVID19 crisis is truly inspirational. We must give them the support they need, and ensure their health & safety at this challenging time.”

António Guterres
Secretary-General, United Nations

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The COVID-19 pandemic has been described as the biggest challenge facing humankind. The pandemic and its fallout on health and economic systems across the world have precipitated an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. As the world navigates through the 'new normal' of the pandemic, it is important for the humanitarian systems to re-calibrate their priorities to serve the interests of the most vulnerable and at-risk populations. This issue of Southasiadisasters.net is titled 'COVID-19 and the New Humanitarian Agenda' and explores how the pandemic is influencing and shaping a new agenda for humanitarianism with special focus on response, relief and building back better. This issue touches on several important themes such as use of cash in complex emergencies like pandemics, disaster response during pandemics as well as a compendium of best responses by humanitarian agencies to the COVID-19 pandemic. ■

Why Public Transit is Low on Humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction Agenda?

By AIDMI Team

Public transit—may it be Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) or Metro or Underground on the one hand or auto rickshaw and municipal buses on the other hand—is not yet central to any humanitarian action on long term recovery. Why?

Public transit reduces the social and economic inequality among the citizens to access opportunities. And public transit can do the same in disaster response and recovery. It can reduce inequality between those affected and those not affected as well as those fully or partly affected/ And yet there is limited focus, experience, and plans to reduce risks faced by public transit and build resilience of public transit in India.

What we know are initial plans,



project specific actions, and semi-sectoral thinking on public transit. System wide approach to public transit is low on humanitarian and disaster risk reduction agenda in India.

What can be done about this? And who can lead to fill in this gap? Who will explain what disaster risks public transit in India faces? And how initial and scattered disaster risk reduction measures

can be institutionalized in public transport sector? We have no answer to these questions in public domain.

At what stage and who can include risk sensitivity in public transport project planning? And who is being left out in such disaster risk reduction measures around public transit? Most importantly who and how budgets can be made for the investments in the resilience of public transit? These questions are hardly discussed in humanitarian action, may it be by international NGOs or may it be by a united nations agency.

The above are the questions that India needs to address as it moves to invest larger amounts for longer period in public transit in the coming decade. ■

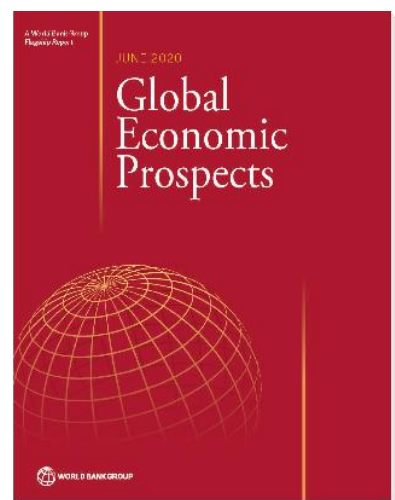
FLAGSHIP REPORT

Global Economic Prospects, June 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has, with alarming speed, dealt a heavy blow to an already-weak global economy, which is expected to slide into its deepest recession since the second world war, despite unprecedented policy support.

Beyond the current steep economic contraction, the pandemic is likely to leave lasting scars on the global economy by undermining consumer and investor confidence, human capital, and global value chains. While policymakers' immediate priorities are to address the health crisis and moderate the short-term economic losses, the likely long-term consequences of the pandemic highlight the need to forcefully undertake comprehensive reform programs to improve the fundamental drivers of economic growth, once the crisis abates. ■

“World Bank. 2020. Global Economic Prospects, June 2020. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33748> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.”



[For more information click here](#)

Cash and COVID-19: Three Features

By AIDMI Team

As the Indian economy flounders towards a recovery after weathering the shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown, there are important lessons to be drawn. One such lesson is the link between Cash and COVID-19. On a cursory glance, cash and pandemic response may yield limited links, but when looked at with care the links and gaps between the two are striking. And for most poor and vulnerable citizens in India, this gap is very important for their survival. Research has shown that cash in hand during emergencies can give the necessary confidence to the people to deal with the uncertainties that lie ahead. With the benefit of hindsight and the emerging empirical evidence, the following three features on the relationship between cash and pandemic response stand out.

One, the migrant workers would have benefitted the most if the

cash was made available to them when in lockdown or in camps or in transit or when on their way home or when they reached home. Not having cash made these workers in the cities so helpless, hopeless and susceptible to exploitation. "We could see food four feet away but we could not buy and eat the food for hours, days without cash in our pocket" said a construction worker in Ahmedabad. These workers had unpaid salaries to their credit but no cash.

Two, cash and COVID-19 have now opened more possibilities in cities and towns than in rural areas. At least cities and towns could have offered cash relief to the affected workers. As a city-based banker said, "in towns we could have opened short time bank accounts for the workers to receive relief cash. We could have found a way to identify them and fulfil Know Your Customer (KYC) details. But we did not". Not only

did the workers remain without cash but the system failed in expanding financial inclusion.

Three, cash worked better for small and medium enterprises than for rural agriculture labour or farmers. When cash was made available to SMEs they jump-started the business activity in terms of buying new stock, paying loans, investing in sanitisation soaps and so on. "As the entire system was closed, we had no access to cash during lockdown. When cash was available, we were able to revive the critical activities of business and start recovery" said a provision store owner in Rajkot city.

The above three are key areas for research not only in India but in South Asia to understand the overlap and gaps between Cash and COVID-19, which could inform our response to future pandemics and emergencies. ■

Act Now for 2030 Agenda

By AIDMI Team

"Sadly but truly COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to accelerate the 2030 agenda if we act now" said Mihir R. Bhatt at World Humanitarian Forum Webinar on Leaving no one behind - supporting humanitarian responses in the times of COVID.

All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) participated in "World Humanitarian Forum Webinar: Leaving no one behind - supporting humanitarian responses in the times of COVID" on June 4, 2020. The other panel members were: Gabriella Waaijman, Global Humanitarian Director, Save the Children International; Steve O'Malley, Head of Office, South Sudan, UNOCHA dedicated COVID-19 coordinator; Jonathan Brooker, Director, Solidarites International UK.

The Chair, Sean Lowrie, said that localization is here and time has come to make it work well.

Gabriella Waaijman, Global Humanitarian Director, Save the Children International argued that INGOs have real conflict in deciding who to help and how as this pandemic unfolds.

Stephen O'Malley pointed out that COVID-19 has tested every aspect of humanitarian action.

Jonathan Brooker suggested better and faster collaborative initiatives to have better and faster impact of COVID-19 mitigating measures. ■

The Role of the International Humanitarian Studies (IHSA) Blog Posts Selection – Three Key Trends

By **Nicolás Caso**, Co-editor of the Humanitarian Blog selection; and **Susanne Jaspers**, IHSA board member (Secretary), and editor of [humanitarian blog selection](#)

This article presents three key trends in the first four months of the humanitarian blog posts selection from IHSA: the combination of Covid-19 and other disasters, racism and decolonization in humanitarian aid, and the disproportionate effect on migrants, displaced and refugees.

[IHSA](#) is a network engaged with the study of humanitarian crises; whether caused by disaster, conflict or political instability. Humanitarian studies is concerned with how humanitarian crises evolve, how they affect people and their institutions, communities and societies, and the responses they trigger. We offer a meeting place for people involved in humanitarian studies to debate their insights and understanding of humanitarian crises, in dialogue with policy actors and implementing agencies.

In addition to the humanitarian blog selection, IHSA has created a humanitarian organizations database, a humanitarian blogs database and also organizes the World Conference on Humanitarian Studies every two years.

The humanitarian blog posts weekly selection – Three Key trends

In the blog post selection, we aim to provide an easily accessible overview of the rapidly changing thinking on humanitarian consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, and to highlight crises that would otherwise be pushed away. Every week, IHSA’s team makes a selection of humanitarian blog posts from more than 70 different sources to reflect the key issues and trends of the week,

highlighting issues in disaster preparedness and response, migration and displacement, famine and food crisis, politics, human rights, and aid policy and practice. We strive for global south voices and multiple language sources (English, Spanish and French) to bring out the diversity of humanitarian studies and humanitarian scholars. In the last four months, we have detected the following three key trends:

When Covid-19 and other disasters collide

So far, the most-read entries have been related to the outbreak of Covid-19, its impacts in developing countries and how it overlaps with other crises. For many countries, Covid-19 comes on top of conflict, disasters like drought and floods, and climate change. This makes people more vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19 and the response more challenging and complex.

Localisation, racism in humanitarian action and the need to decolonize aid

The necessity of greater localisation, and the strong re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement after the killing of George Floyd, triggered a series of posts that highlighted the racism, discrimination and injustices present in the humanitarian sector. Humanitarian aid is still a long way from implementing the localisation agreed on at the Humanitarian Summit of 2016. Lately we have also observed, read and shared many posts related to the need to decolonize aid and humanitarian studies. Covid-19 has not only highlighted inequalities in societies everywhere, but also within the aid sector and in how research on humanitarian issues is done.

Disproportionate impact on migrants, displaced people and refugees

Many blog posts also reflect on the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on migrants, displaced populations, and refugees. They covered the heightened risk faced by those living in overcrowded camps, due to the difficulties of social distancing and hygiene measures, but also the increase in deterrence measures and suspension of asylum and resettlement procedures in Europe and the US. For many in the informal sector, the lockdown policies themselves caused the crisis, drastically reducing income (lost work and closure of markets) and their ability to access food.

In the coming months, we aim to continue our selection of Covid-19-related blog posts but also expand the number of posts on other humanitarian issues. ■



Tata Trusts' Covid-19 Interventions

By *Nayantara Dutta, [Tata Trust, India](#)*

Mr. Ratan N. Tata believes that the Covid-19 crisis is one of the toughest challenges the human race will face, and that urgent emergency resources need to be deployed to cope with the needs of fighting it. Tata Trusts accordingly has taken up a multi-pronged intervention to support India.

The Trusts are donating to State Governments and individual hospitals Personal Protection Equipment, including coveralls, N95/KN95 masks, surgical masks, gloves and goggles. Thus far, PPE supplies have gone out to about 31 states and Union Territories. These supplies were airlifted for country-wide deployment with the support of Tata International Limited.

The Trusts implemented a community outreach to induce adoption of health practices in rural areas to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The exercise is expected to have reached about 21 million people in 21 states. The campaign, "", ranges from video messages in the country's languages, even dialects, short animation videos and info graphics to audio messages, and SMS based messaging. For wider deployment by any interested

organisation, the Trusts have made publicly available through social media about 300 such videos and audio messages in different languages and even dialects. The practices promoted include technique of hand washing, importance of social distancing, respiratory practices, early recognition of COVID-19, and protocols for self-quarantine for returning migrant workers.

As we enter July, it is clear India will need more healthcare infrastructure, and healthcare professionals trained to deal with this pandemic.

Tata Trusts has already upgraded four government hospitals, two in Uttar Pradesh and two in Maharashtra, into Covid-19 treatment centres. The facilities, including both in-patient and out-patient wings, are permanent and will enduringly enhance health care in their locations. In Maharashtra, the hospitals are at Sangli and Buldhana, and in Uttar Pradesh at Gautam Buddha Nagar and Gonda. Each hospital has critical care capabilities, minor operation theatres, basic pathology and radiology, facilities for dialysis and blood storage, and telemedicine units.

To boost frontline healthcare staff, the Trusts and the Tata group have tied up with Christian Medical College (CMC) Vellore and Care Institute of Health Sciences (CIHS) Hyderabad to assist health care professionals, nominated by hospitals, augment skills in critical care in the management of Covid-19. The curated 22-hour on-line training is provided free of cost. Thus far, the programme has covered 173 private and government hospitals across 19 states. The training aims to meet the need of additional healthcare professionals by acquainting them with the fundamental principles and practices of critical care.

Besides these overarching interventions, some Tata Trust portfolios have mounted targeted interventions. The Crafts portfolio's Antaran programme has connected artisan families with customers online to help them tide over the lockdown. It helped about 1500 families to do business worth about Rs.58 lakhs. The Elder Care portfolio's Elder Spring helpline in Hyderabad is helping senior citizens by facilitating the delivery of essentials like medicines, groceries, green groceries, passes for their care givers. ■



Photo credit: www.tatatrusters.org

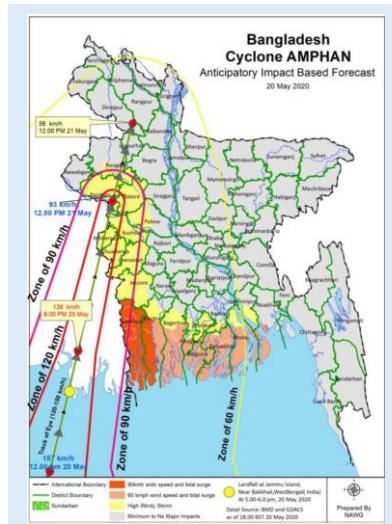
Cyclone Amphan in West Bengal and Bangladesh: Impact and Agenda

By Mihir R. Bhatt

The IPCC SREX Report, “Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation” has clearly indicated more number of cyclone as climate changes.

The Bay of Bengal is no stranger to tropical cyclones. From 1999 Super Cyclone to Cyclone Nargis and from Cyclone Phailin to Cyclone Sidr, the Bay of Bengal has been called a hot-bed of tropical cyclones in the region by scientists and meteorologists alike. As India was reeling under a nationwide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more bad news came her way. Cyclone Amphan made landfall on the eastern coast of India on May 20th, 2020 and battered the Indian states of West Bengal north parts of and Odisha before moving onto Bangladesh. The cyclone tore into West Bengal and killed 72 people. It affected 7 districts badly, viz. South 24 Paraganas, North 24 Paraganas, East Medinipur, West Medinipur, Howrah, Hooghly and Kolkata, with damages also reported in the district of Birbhum. The storm has left thousands of people homeless, washed away bridges and swamped low-lying areas.

In addition to the loss and damage to life and property, the cyclone has also had an adverse impact on access to food and water as well as livelihood and shelter security. This is the context of the humanitarian needs post the cyclone that need to be addressed. The political leadership’s ability to prevent and address the humanitarian



[UN Bangladesh Situation Overview](#)

crisis has been hampered in many areas due to divergent political agendas and pressures. Due to limited resources and demand for COVID-19, unfolding crisis the norms to safeguard need more attention and support. Due to multiple crisis ongoing is the ability to not leave anybody behind is affected. The ability to move and plan for delivery of relief as well as ending needs is affected. And thinking about invest in humanity is adversely affected.

The fiercest cyclone to hit West Bengal in the past 100 years, Amphan also wreaked havoc in Odisha damaging power and telecom infrastructure in several coastal districts. Close to 6 lakh people were evacuated from Odisha and West Bengal. According to various reports, Cyclone Amphan has caused damages of over US\$ 13 billion, making it the costliest cyclone ever recorded in the North Indian Ocean, surpassing the record held by Nargis.

The historic city of Kolkata has also suffered the brunt of the cyclone. Flooded streets, uprooted power and telephone cables have left the city without power since the last 3 days. Taking cognizance of the widespread damage done to the state, the Chief Minister of the state of West Bengal, Ms. Mamata Banerjee announced compensation of Rs 2.5 lakh for the families of those killed in the cyclone. Banerjee also announced a relief package of Rs 1,000 crore after meeting members of a task force formed to assess relief work needed in the aftermath of cyclone Amphan. Similarly, National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Fund, Kolkata police, fire services and West Bengal state police are in the throes of relief and restoration efforts.

In terms of early warning, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) said on Thursday that the India Meteorological Department’s (IMD) “climatological intelligence” was accurate and helped in saving lives while minimising damage. IMD used a doppler weather radar (monitoring tool for severe weather) on the east and west coasts to come up with an accurate cyclone track with near-accurate wind speed and landfall point predictions.¹

Officials in Bangladesh too feared that Amphan would be the deadliest cyclone since 2007 Sidr Cyclone which killed over 3,500 people in the country. Heeding early warnings from India’s weather department, Bangladesh

¹ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/wb-odisha-flooded-as-amphan-wreaks->

[huvoc/story-uvKKGxeCxxkJS2PRiGFYZP.html](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/wb-odisha-flooded-as-amphan-wreaks-uvKKGxeCxxkJS2PRiGFYZP.html)

evacuated 2 million people to 12,000 cyclone shelters. The number of casualties from the cyclone are 12 in Bangladesh, while the economic impact is estimated to be US\$ 1.5 billion.

The repeated cyclones that strike India and Bangladesh, represent a unique opportunity for collaboration and cooperation. Important lessons on early warning, evacuation, response, restoration and mitigation from both sides of the border can help in improving the preparedness against future cyclones. It is also an important pre-requisite for securing and protecting the ports in the area that can bring phenomenal economic benefit to the region.

The All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) has worked in the delta areas mainly evaluating important development and humanitarian initiatives. A rapid interview of individuals engaged in humanitarian action and previous disaster risk reduction

activities indicated need for food, water, shelter, and livelihood in addition to basic needs and participation. It is this participation of affected population that this time attracted attention. Five demands came up clearly in this rapid review.

The need to provide the affected population with important useful and usable information to let them understand the cyclone, impact, link with COVID-19 ongoing efforts, and opportunities or solutions was clear. This includes women and children.

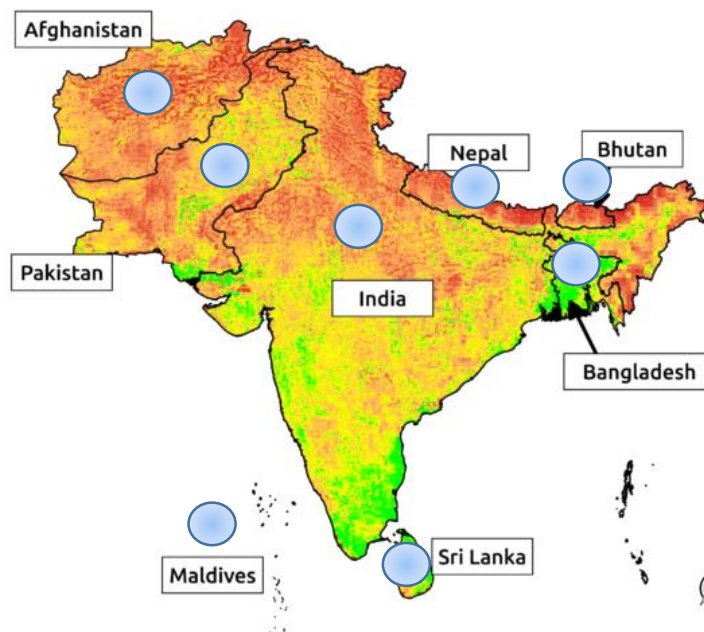
The need for affected population feedback on alternatives and decisions has come out. This includes the low-income fisher and other communities.

The above two needs by and from affected population have come up in the affected districts.

The cyclone has compounded the miseries of those reeling from the effect of the nationwide lockdown. The governments in the affected areas will have to navigate the twin challenges of disaster response with pandemic response in the wake of the cyclone. Most importantly, they need to focus on livelihood recovery for their poorest citizens who have borne a disproportionate brunt of the lockdown as well as the cyclone. For instance, torrential rains after the cyclone may cause widespread flooding in the cyclone affected areas. Therefore, the state governments should plan for better response and protection of crops in the area.

As India is battered by one crisis after another, it is important for the political leadership of the country to take lessons from previous disasters and calibrate the responses to help the country's most vulnerable and marginalized citizens. ■

Mapping of South Asian Countries' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic



South Asia Map Source: <https://www.drishtiias.com/images/uploads/828sm-830x587.png>

Accelerating Disaster Risk Reduction: Policy & Practice Change to Empower Local Community Partnerships

By Richard Johnson (Bath Spa University, UK);
Jagdish Chandra Kuniyal (G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment, India);
Kesar Chand (G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment, India); and
Esther Edwards (Bath Spa University, UK)

Disaster Risk Reduction: Policy Perspectives

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) goals are well established in the policy landscape. Internationally, the UNDRR 'Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030' (SFDRR) is the key pivot driving efforts to stem disaster losses via a targeted approach. India, a signatory of the SFDRR, has adopted a hierarchical governance structure, principally comprising National, State and District disaster management authorities. They bring a strong focus on prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, relief and recovery. In this regime, communities are both recipients of a prevailing training ethos and, to a lesser (yet growing) extent, owners in the DRR process.

Current international debates in DRR call for greater local empowerment, particularly in regard to: (1) incorporating local knowledge; (2) including vulnerable stakeholders; and (3) delivering genuine local/partnered governance approaches. India has made a high-level commitment to this international DRR localism program, for example, via The Indian Prime Minister's ten-point agenda (2016), reiterated in the 2019 Indian National Disaster Plan¹. Fulfilling this agenda however, is the substantial opportunity and challenge facing policymakers and practitioners in India today, and has national (i.e. NDMA) target delivery dates for 'capacity development' as soon as 2022.

Disaster Challenges in the Indian Himalayan Region

The Indian Himalayan Region is deserving of special attention in

these transitions, given disaster statistics reveal a concerning trend of increasing event occurrence, injuries and fatalities and socio-economic impacts and costs. For example, in the period 1980-2015, countries comprising the wider Hindu Kush Himalaya accounted for 21% of global disasters, and 36% of all major events were in Asia². Within these data, India registers 438 significant climate/ hydro-meteorological/geophysical events and 140,292 fatalities. This reflects increases in population and infrastructure exposure and vulnerability as well as increasing hazard frequency and magnitude in many cases. However, at the same time, local knowledge of mountain environments and existing disaster adaptations, alongside a strong willingness amongst local communities to forge partnerships, offer policy makers and practitioners valuable tools to reduce disaster losses.

Recommendations for a Step-Change in DRR in the Indian Himalayan Region

- (1) Revise State and District disaster management plans to accelerate local 'capacity development'. The key is to widely establish and operate Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) (and urban equivalents), alongside existing village level institutions.
- (2) Implement comprehensive awareness campaigns involving all stakeholders, to enhance understanding and engagement with VDMCs.
- (3) Capture the diversity of local knowledge using systematic government and citizen-science led approaches to identifying, recording, storing, analysing

and openly sharing local knowledge of hazards and disaster risk adaptations. These should develop pathways for upscaling and mainstreaming, including a greater emphasis on the use of technology (e.g. digitisation of records and social media).

Further Information & Research Evidence

- Science Policy Briefing Note (June 2020)
<https://doi.org/10.17870/bathspa.c.5036990.v1>
- BSU 'Pathways to Resilience' Project homepage, this includes wider details of the project background, research process, and research insights
<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/projects/pathways-to-resilience/>
- Pathways to Resilience Film:
<https://vimeo.com/285841577>
- NDMA (2019) National Disaster Management Plan, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
<https://ndma.gov.in/en/policy-and-plan/national-plan.html>
- Vaidya, R.A., Shrestha, M.S., Nasab, N., Gurung, D.R., Kozo, N., Pradhan, N.S., Wasson, R.J., Shrestha, A.B., Gurung, C.G., & Bajracharya, A. (2019) Disaster Risk Reduction and Building Resilience in the Hindu Kush Himalaya. In Wester, P., Mishra, A., Mukherji, A., Shrestha, A.B. (Eds.) *The Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment: Mountains, Climate Change, Sustainability and People*. Springer Nature Switzerland AG, Cham., pp 389-419.
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-92288-1>

Academic Gold Rush and Positionality in Researching a Pandemic

By *JC Gaillard*, *The University of Auckland, New Zealand*

As of the 3rd of July 2020, more than 21,000 academic articles, yes, twenty-one thousand (!), have already been published, in English only, on the COVID-19 pandemic according to the Scopus database. This incredible number constitutes the ultimate example of academic 'gold rush'. As such, it deserves some sort of (further) attention...

[Researchers rushing to areas affected by disaster is a common occurrence.](#)

It is often justified by the need to collect perishable data that might be essential to inform both recovery and disaster risk reduction. This is a fair and commendable objective. However, the gold rush becomes problematic when it is motivated by a desire to be the first to publish on the disaster under scrutiny, especially when this quest for publications is driven by personal career goals. It is even more questionable when those researchers flock to places they are unfamiliar with prior to the disaster and extract data through practices that sometimes compromise local cultural norms and values. In fact, the academic gold rush we observe following disasters often mirrors unequal power relations between researchers from places of power and those from peripheries.

[The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously triggered such an academic gold rush.](#) As for all post-disaster research, many of the 21,000+ articles published to date

have been written with the commendable goal to enhance our understanding of a disaster that carries a lot of uncertainty. However, who can assume that the agencies and individuals in charge of making quick decisions to respond to the unfolding crisis will be able to read, understand and tease out useful information of such a flurry of publications? One is therefore to assume that the academic gold rush must also be motivated by personal goals of researchers and those of academic institutions, funding agencies and publishers all together. Researchers are driven by the desire to be the first to publish on a particular dimension of the pandemic, which is seen as a competitive advantage in contemporary academia, while research institutions and publishers encourage scholars to publish on COVID-19 by offering open access to their articles and additional promotion campaigns.

What is different with the COVID-19 gold rush, though, is that, this time, we are all affected by the disaster. Positionality is therefore less of an issue, especially if scholars study their immediate environment or one they are familiar with. This somehow reinforces the legitimacy of many ongoing research initiatives and, hopefully, makes them culturally relevant. However, stronger legitimacy and a better understanding of the context under scrutiny do not lift all ethical issues

that arise when researching amidst and/or following a disaster. These ethical issues include bothering potential study participants while their priority is to sustain their everyday needs and recover from the pandemic, research fatigue if individuals have already agreed to participate in other studies, and failing to report findings to the participants. [Unfortunately, these issues have already been flagged in recent reviews of COVID-19 research.](#)

It therefore seems like a relevant time to reiterate [our recent call for a code of conduct to guide post-disaster research.](#) It is essential that research on COVID-19, as for all other disasters, be driven by a clear purpose that reflects both the knowledge gap and practical needs of the people in-place. To best identify and eventually address this gap, local voices, those of people who are affected and those of organisations that deal with the pandemic, are crucial. Local voices do not necessarily exclude outside support, however this is as long as the former can retain leadership in the research project. Finally, studies on COVID-19 need to be ethically coordinated. This entails coordination between research teams to avoid a duplication of efforts as well as an ethical grounding in the local culture and respect for the everyday priorities of those who are suffering from the pandemic. ■

Humanitarian Needs and Requirements

Since the publication of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) on 25 March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken hold in the 54 countries with ongoing humanitarian crises at varying scale, speed and severity levels. Based on their vulnerability and response capacity, an additional 10 countries were included in this update, bringing the number of countries covered by this plan to 63.

With the release of the [GHRP May Update](#), COVID-19 financial requirements have risen from US\$2 billion to \$6.69 billion. This significant increase is due to a rapid evolution of humanitarian needs, the inclusion of the additional countries, increased cost of essential health and



other supplies, and air and sea transportation. The additional requirements for the COVID-19-

related emergency response compound the already significant funding gap for humanitarian response plans globally.

In December 2019, the UN projected a requirement of \$28.8 billion in the GHO for its response to humanitarian needs in 2020. Drawing a parallel to the global crisis of 2008-2009, when humanitarian requirements grew by 54 per cent, all indications are that humanitarian needs will increase significantly by the end of 2020 due to the secondary impacts of COVID-19. Including requirements for COVID-19 response, overall humanitarian funding requirements now exceed \$36bn. ■

[For more information click here](#)

SHINE PROGRAM

Let's Incubate Resilience in India

Swiss Re Foundation's SHINE program seeks to support a promising for-profit social entrepreneur with a presence in Karnataka, India, who is trying to address challenges in the areas of Climate Risk Management, Smart Agriculture, Access to Healthcare, or Renewable Energy. The deadline to apply is August 15th, 2020. ■

[For more information click here](#)



SCIENCE POLICY BRIEF

Accelerating Change: Engaging Local Communities in Disaster Risk Reduction in the Indian Himalayan Region



This science-policy briefing paper details the problem of increasing disaster risk in mountain regions alongside a gap in local community engagement. The briefing calls for a shift in emphasis, which fosters inclusive community engagement, and takes better account of local knowledge in disaster risk reduction.

Key Policy-Practice Recommendations:

- (i) revision of State and District disaster management plans;
- (ii) implementation of comprehensive awareness campaigns;
- (iii) programmes to capture the diversity of local knowledge.

[For more information click here](#)

Knowledge Resources for COVID-19 and Humanitarian Agenda

By AIDMI Team

Advisory for Senior Citizen COVID-19

<http://www.aidmi.org/sub-images/KMAM/English.pdf>

Applying IRP Disaster Recovery Tools and Guidelines to Pandemic Recovery

https://www.recoveryplatform.org/assets/publication/Covid19_Recovery/Applying%20IRP%20Disaster%20Recovery%20Tools%20and%20Guidelines%20to%20Pandemic%20Recovery_web%20ver.pdf

Building resilience against biological hazards and pandemics: COVID-19 and its implications for the Sendai Framework

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Editorial Advisors:

Anoja Seneviratne

Director (Mitigation Research & Development), Disaster Management Centre of Government of Sri Lanka

Denis Nkala

Regional Coordinator, South-South Cooperation and Country Support (Asia- Pacific), United Nations Development Programme, New York

G. Padmanabhan

Former Emergency Analyst, UNDP

Dr. Ian Davis

Visiting Professor, Kyoto University, Japan; Lund University, Sweden and Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom and Honorary Visiting Professor; Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), Europe

Mihir R. Bhatt

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Dr. Prabodh Dhar Chakrabarti

Lead Consultant of UNDP in India and Myanmar, and Formerly Secretary NDMA and Executive Director NIDM

Dr. Satchit Balsari, MD, MPH

Assistant Professor, Harvard FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Boston, USA

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author.



ALL INDIA DISASTER MITIGATION INSTITUTE

411 Sakar Five, Behind Old Natraj Cinema, Near Mithakhali Railway Crossing, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad-380 009 India. Tele/Fax: +91-79-2658 2962
E-mail: bestteam@aidmi.org, Website: <http://www.aidmi.org>, www.southasiadisasters.net