



## ISSUE BRIEF

### International cooperation in support of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction

#### Ministerial Roundtable

##### I. Stock taking

International cooperation on disaster risk reduction is far more recent and modest than most other forms of international cooperation beginning only in the late 20th century when the UN General Assembly designated the 1990s the International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction. One core reason for low international cooperation is that the international community has not yet fully grasped that it has been not just natural hazards but risky development practices that created the kind of heightened disaster losses the world has faced this century.

Spurred by the shock of the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, countries came together three weeks later in January 2005 in Japan for a scheduled conference and agreed on the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* (HFA). The main progress made in the HFA implementation has been qualitative, introducing the needed government institutional arrangements, legislation and planning, which is fundamental to the quantifiable reduction of disaster risks in the future. This crucial first stage has been a major shift in mindset from increasingly disaster prone, non-sustainable development investments, to an understanding that for development to be durable it must be able to withstand the threats posed by natural hazards.

Both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the HFA emphasized the significance of multi-lateral and multi-level cooperation and partnership among government and non-governmental actors. Both called for not just governments but also private sector and civil society organizations to work together for sustainable development. This movement towards multi-stakeholder partnership is a profound shift in the architecture of international cooperation. Past success and lessons learnt both underlined the fact that the understanding and action of non-governmental actors, especially in the private sector, will largely determine the level of disaster risk resilience in the years to come.

Quite a number of international cooperation institutions have begun to turn their attention to disaster risk reduction. From financial institutions such as the World Bank, to forums like the G20 and private foundations such as the Rockefeller Foundation, have created dedicated initiatives and programmes around disaster risk reduction. A number of UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations have taken actions to integrate disaster risk reduction into their development programmes, for example, through the 2013 *UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience*.

A number of attempts have been made to highlight the need for more international cooperation. In 2011, the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction recommended targets of 10% investment from all humanitarian aid, 1% of all development assistance, and 30% of climate change adaptation funding for disaster risk reduction. Efforts were made by several countries to meet these guiding targets. But there is currently no authoritative data or any systematic tracking of international cooperation, partnerships or funding/ investments for disaster risk reduction.

## **II. Overview**

International cooperation and global partnership for development and disaster risk reduction is critical given challenges like climate change, environmental degradation, financial instability, transnational health challenges, food insecurity or fragility and conflict. Its importance and prominence has been long established as explained in the section above. Cooperation and partnerships will be core to the success of implementing international agreements like a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction working with national and local level action.

International cooperation and partnership have not scaled up sufficiently. Early international cooperation focused more on international aid and a transfer of resources and technical know-how rather than mutual learning and sharing of experiences. In successful cases, international cooperation has involved institutional and organisational development, reciprocal communication and all parties learning through the process of international cooperation. International cooperation needs to be viewed as a mutually beneficial exercise between partners, for the purpose of enhancing their capacities to pursue their development goals. It should be a mutually empowering experience and include a wide variety of actors from the grassroots to the national and international level.

In the context of the implementation of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, the importance of continuation and strengthening of international cooperation and partnership has emerged prominently in consultations and deliberations. The key questions have been:

- (i) What are the key priorities where international cooperation in disaster risk reduction can make a big difference?
- (ii) What kind of mechanisms need to be put in place or further built on to facilitate the process of international cooperation and partnership?
- (iii) How can international cooperation and partnership facilitate sustainable support for disaster risk reduction?

The year 2015 is a significant opportunity with the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, sustainable development goals, and climate change agreements to create coherence across international cooperation mechanisms. Stakeholders have presented various suggestions and ideas in this regard, including by aligning goals, targets and indicators across the frameworks or at the very least ensuring that no contradiction exists across them. Synchronizing the review mechanisms and time periods is another. And, most important is to design and implement international cooperation and partnerships that mutually support the global agreements.

### III. Way forward

The implementation of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction will require strong commitments from all partners in a number of areas:

1. Collaboration and cooperation in science and technology for data, information and knowledge sharing: Each country has different technical experience to share. For instance, a country beginning to suffer from greater tropical storms might learn from another country's experience where tropical storms are frequent, with tropical risks being well managed. Countries are at varied level of science and technology development. A strong cooperation is needed for partnership and collaboration in use of science and technology through technology transfer, capacity building, sharing information and collaborating for risk assessment, early warning, geo-spatial information and so on.

2. Global/ regional cooperation and partnership to support implementation: Countries are at varied level of capacity to manage and reduce their disaster risks. Disaster-prone developing countries, in particular least developed countries, Small Island developing States, and landlocked developing countries, and Africa, warrant particular attention in view of their higher vulnerability and risk levels. Developing countries require enhanced means of implementation through provisions of finance, technology transfer and capacity building. At the same time, existing multilateral and bilateral development assistance programmes, development policy and programmes of all states, regional and international organizations need to incorporate disaster risk reduction considerations.

3. Trans-boundary cooperation: Disasters don't respect borders. Tsunamis, earthquakes, floods and storms often strike multiple countries, thus some of the effort expended in reducing disaster risk – such as on early warning systems – are sometimes implemented more efficiently by several countries working together. Regional and international cooperation must address trans-boundary risk issues more effectively and adequately through regional/ international agreements.

4. Cooperation within the UN system: For coherent and coordinated action for disaster risk reduction through the *UN Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience*, all United Nations System entities need to promote the optimum use of resources and support developing countries, at their request. States and regional and international organizations should foster greater strategic coordination among the United Nations, other international organizations, including international financial institutions, regional bodies, donor agencies and nongovernmental organizations engaged in disaster risk reduction.

5. Promote the emerging architecture of international cooperation: As an increasing number of developing countries reach middle income status, partnerships is the key rather than traditional ODA relations. As a consequence, south-south, or 'triangular' cooperation are growing in importance. These emerging international cooperation in addition to the cooperation from developed countries have proven to be key to reducing disaster risk and there is a need to strengthen them further.

6. Existing mechanisms such as the global, regional and national platforms need to be continuously strengthened to generate and sustain the political commitments. The state led

monitoring and review process also needs to be strengthened for periodic review of the implementation of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

In September 2015 Heads of State and Heads of Government will also meet in New York and agree on new goals for sustainable development. They represent the highest-level system of international cooperation and partnership setting global development goals for the second time, and will likely be establishing a tradition that will last for a long time. In addition, later in 2015 the world will gather together at COP21 to find solutions to climate change.

With so many large and sophisticated institutions forming the infrastructure of international cooperation, the world today has, for the first time, the capacity to rise to a challenge as complex as disaster risk reduction. The opportunity to link and synergize the outcomes whether they are goals, targets, priorities and policy measures must be harnessed. What is needed is a more harmonized and coordinated effort to achieve risk resilient development and investment, in the spirit of international cooperation and global partnership for sustainable development.