

## Roundtable

# HARNESSING SYNERGIES BETWEEN ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: PERTINENT ISSUES, SUCCESS CASES AND THE WAY FORWARD

## 1 Context

There has been a growing consensus among scholars and practitioners on the synergies between disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA). IGES has begun scoping research on how best to operationalise this synergy in actual practices on the ground. To feed into the IGES research, the participants discussed the current conceptual understanding on synergies and the differences between CCA and DRR and evaluated the current experiences of operationalising these synergies between DRR and CCA in actual implementation. They also discussed existing bottlenecks and the way forward for harnessing these synergies, and identified crucial policy relevant research questions to be addressed in this field. The session followed a round table open discussion format.

In the context of climate change, disaster risk reduction (DRR) has been considered as a climate change adaptation (CCA) option by few scholars. In other contexts, DRR has also been seen as a way to sustainable development. There is ample evidence that the linkage between climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR) has been the subject of intensive formal and informal debates at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) as well as the adaptation implications of extreme events at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The 'Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters' identified climate change as one of the threats to the world's future and identified DRR planning as one of the key points of entry to tackle such climate change threats (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2005). In the words of the Hyogo Framework of Action: "Promote the integration of risk reduction associated with existing climate variability and future climate change into strategies for the reduction of disaster risk and adaptation to climate change, which would include the clear identification of climate related disaster risks, the design of specific risk reduction measures and an improved and routine use of climate risk information by planners, engineers and other decision-makers." Climate change necessitates taking another look at the existing disaster risk reduction approaches due to the new risks brought by climate change and due to the problems in the existing risk reduction approaches, including changes in the hazard profile and its interaction with the dynamic vulnerability and risk profiles of countries. There has also been an increase in disasters undermining the disaster management capacities of countries especially in managing extreme events (e.g. Bangkok floods, Typhoons Bopha and Haiyan that hit the Philippines, and Bangladesh floods).

The present day disaster risk reduction planning largely aims at reducing the current disaster risks, i.e. those risks emanating out of current hazards and vulnerabilities. Often, these risk assessments heavily rely on the historical data of hazards at a given location. However, the future is not always a repetition of the past. Moreover, assessments from historical data often fail to look into future vulnerabilities and risks, and hence cannot incorporate them in terms of added strength in the plan. In addition, the current static disaster risk management plans may fail to take into consideration the ever-changing hazard and vulnerability profiles of countries and regions.

### Expected outcomes

1. Current conceptual understanding behind CCA-DRR linkages are shared
2. Current experiences in operationalising the synergies between DRR and CCA are discussed
3. Bottlenecks and way forward for harnessing the synergies between CCA and DRR are identified

## 2 Structure

The session followed a roundtable discussion format inviting relevant participants from the pool of ISAP participants. The session had a moderator who is well versed with the subjects of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Following the opening remarks, the facilitated group discussion followed. The facilitator posed a series of questions for a round of 10-15 min discussion. The following questions were discussed in rounds.

## 3 Schedule

Duration	Question
10 min	<b>Opening and introduction to the session:</b> The facilitator provided the context and objectives of the session, and showed the list of questions to be discussed.
10 min	What are the synergies between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction?
10 min	What these synergies mean for DRR and CCA planning and processes and what indicators will help capture these synergies? [Each participant may want to provide an example project and list some indicators that helps in attributing the project effectiveness in terms of CC and DRR]
10 min	To what extent these synergies are being captured in the ongoing interventions in CCA and DRR?
10 min	What bottlenecks are limiting the full realisation of these synergies and how they can be overcome?
10 min	What are the important policy research questions to be addressed in this area and what methodological approaches could be utilised for this purpose?
15 min	Q&A if any and wrap up

## 4 Summary

### Overview Presentation

Prabhakar SVRK, IGES made an overview presentation on the synergies between climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR). He emphasised that both the CCA and DRR communities have the same aim of reducing vulnerabilities and risks and increasing resilience but they achieve these objectives through different interventions and by keeping different time scales in view. To



this extent, the text of the Hyogo Framework of Action and several other negotiation texts under UNFCCC differ in the way they recognise and interpret disaster risks emanating from climate variability and change. He indicated that most CCA projects consider traditional DRR measures as CCA interventions, while mainstreaming CCA into DRR entails that the future risks and vulnerabilities are taken into consideration while designing the current DRR interventions. The current project-level experiences suggest that the DRR elements are often comprised of infrastructure interventions and related to vulnerability assessments and disaster management plans. Climate change adaptation interventions are often related to livelihoods and strengthening related social and economic elements. Concepts such as redundancy or precautionary actions may need to be viewed with more caution since they entail higher costs that may not appeal to most policymakers. Often, there is limited interaction between CCA and DRR communities leading to a lack of mutual understanding on the issues concerned.

### **Roundtable Discussion**

The roundtable discussion focused on the following four important questions: a) what are the synergies between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, b) to what extent these synergies are being captured in the ongoing interventions in CCA and DRR, c) what these synergies mean for DRR and CCA planning and processes and what indicators will help capture these synergies; and d) what bottlenecks are limiting the full realisation of these synergies and how they can be overcome.

During the discussion on the questions, Taka Hiraishi, IGES noted that the reason why the term 'disaster' was omitted in COP texts under the UNFCCC was because its focus was on anthropogenic climate change. He added that the term 'redundancy' was also negative sounding and a different word should be used to describe precautionary actions in climate change adaptation planning.

Soojeong Myeong, KEI noted several commonalities between DRR and CCA and stressed that synergies of both approaches would reduce overlaps and result in cost-saving. For example, risk and vulnerability assessments applied for CCA could also be applied to DRR. She emphasised the need to raise awareness among stakeholders.



Paul Ofei-Manu, IGES mentioned that an interagency coordinating body at the national level would help bring DRR and CCA communities together. Education is also important.

Taka Hiraishi from IGES reiterated the point on cost-saving, adding that donors would likely only have one pool of money for DRR and CCA. The two should not be viewed as separate. He emphasised that there is only one climate, one set of damages, and one set of victims. He also noted the need for practitioners to consider dynamic changes and actions in response to climate change.

Taisuke Watanabe, JICA encouraged participants to think about the various points where DRR and CCA can create synergies. For example, at the project level, in flood control design for DRR, climate change would need to be considered. He added that at this point the interaction between DRR and CCA is limited. He also noted that one of the main criteria for project funding selection for JICA is cost rather than determining whether a project is DRR or CCA.

Premakumara Jagath Dickella Gamaralalage, IGES shared his city level experience working in Cebu, the Philippines. He noted that DRR drew more interest and familiarity from city officials because it was more immediate, while CCA was more difficult to understand due to its complexity and longer time frame. City officials are not only looking at CCA and DRR issues, but also at other vulnerabilities like poverty, he added. For the case of Cebu, he noted that DRR plans are in place because of floods and typhoons without strong consideration for CCA.

Participants noted that under the UNFCCC's NAP process, particularly the NAP Global Support Programme, officials from LDCs involved in DRR and CCA are currently being brought together and trained to develop their countries' NAPs.

Puja Sawhney, IGES noted that Pacific Island countries have been developing Joint National Action Plans on Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change (JNAPs) which consider both CCA and DRR. The Pacific experience would be a valuable example.

## 5 Key Messages

**The roundtable discussion clearly indicated that there are several synergies between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and that the recognition of these synergies requires that both communities come together and work closely. Several interventions such as early warning, weather and climate forecasts, risk and vulnerability assessments, financing, institutional coordination and education can lead to both climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction synergies.**

**There is a need to recognise that there is one climate, one set of damages and one set of victims and any hair-splitting in terms of near-term changes and long-term changes would also lead to division of stakeholders on these lines, leading to undue competition and thinning of resources that could have been invested in actions that will have climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction synergies.**

**Emerging lessons indicate that local governments often do not understand climate change adaptation, even if they have perfected the art of disaster risk reduction in most parts of Asia. Hence, translating CCA language in a way that is understandable to DRR community could lead to holistic risk reduction strategies.**