



OXFAM



# OXFAM STATEMENT

for the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk  
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The number of people affected by disasters has almost doubled over the past decade and is expected to keep rising.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, reported weather-related disasters have increased by 233% since 1980, where records are available. Smaller, localized disasters continue to account for a large proportion of disasters' total impact, compounded with the fact that 80% of people affected and 83% of people injured are often unreported, much less supported.<sup>2</sup> Intertwined with fragility, conflict, and weak governance, food security crises are becoming more protracted and severe. Over the last decade, there has been little appreciable increase in women's participation or in the inclusion of women's rights issues in peace agreements since UN Resolution 1325 was passed in 2000.

Despite these, the potential for economic growth, wellbeing, and innovation in Asia is realizable more than ever. Asia is young, with the biggest segment of the population being citizens of "productive age". It is a center of commerce and

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The communities living in Ghairung, Ghorka, take part in an Oxfam-funded cash for work scheme to rebuild a 5km trail destroyed by the massive 7.6 magnitude earthquake that struck Nepal in 2015. The trail connects two villages, a health center, and a local market and will benefit 1,140 households. The earthquake left nearly 9,000 people dead and destroyed or damaged more than 850,000 homes. Photo: Kieran Doherty/Oxfam

innovation, especially in the fields of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA). Asia could and must lead the world to a new era of shared prosperity by reducing disaster impacts, holding true to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 call to “Leave no one behind”. Against this backdrop, Oxfam supports the 8th AMCDRR and aims to work side by side with ministers, organizations, and other actors to prioritize the following calls:

## **1. Invest in programs that will make local humanitarian leadership a reality**

The 8th AMCDRR can rally a wide range of actors to support local Asian capacity to both deliver and lead humanitarian response and DRR work. We need a coordinated approach across governments at various levels. National Disaster Management Offices and DRR offices could be strengthened as centers of excellence working alongside their communities. Trained and professionalized, these centers can combine local knowledge with state-of-the-art technology, using inclusive vulnerability and risk assessment applications and tools, and applying the right values and principles of engagement. This reform should place local and national humanitarian actors at the forefront of decision-making for response and DRR work at all levels. AMCDRR should push for the global humanitarian system to be overhauled, advocating with donors, international NGOs, and UN bodies to let local governments, NGOs, and communities lead humanitarian work.

## **2. Promote social protection as an approach to reduce vulnerabilities to risk and foster sustainable development**

In Asia, various models of social protection programs recognize the importance of policies that provide social safety nets and reduce vulnerability to help communities manage a range of risks, including climate shocks, to their livelihoods and wellbeing. In Mekong countries such as Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, social protection can build “anticipatory capacity” by providing social safety net mechanisms to prepare and plan for climate extremes, disasters, and social and economic shocks. It allows communities to deal with shocks and fulfill their basic needs in times of hardship. Social protection, however, should not be a substitute for humanitarian aid when disaster hits, but should be a part of a comprehensive package of response to ensure faster recovery. Governments must use a resilience lens in planning their social protection programs.

## **3. Boost disaster risk financing (DRF) to reduce risks and vulnerabilities, and to protect social, economic, and business infrastructures amid worsening and intensifying disasters**

DRF is crucial in building and promoting resilience, and if complemented with a mix of solutions and political will, has proven to be cost-effective. There must be a concerted effort to invest in research, as well as to develop accountability mechanisms to ensure that DRF will work for the poor and the most vulnerable. Asian ministers can make this a priority across the region.

## **4. Define a clear urban risk reduction agenda**

Poverty and inequality within (and also among) societies, especially in urban areas, drastically affect the impact a crisis will have on a person. More than half of the world’s population now lives in urban areas. By 2020, it is estimated that 1.4 billion people will live in mega-slums.

As the world becomes increasingly urban and unequal, underinvestment in essential services, resilient livelihoods, and social safety nets will be a major cause of vulnerability for poor countries. Lack of dignified jobs will put youth, persons with disability (PWDs), the elderly, and marginalized women at more risk in urban slums, especially during disasters. Lessons can be gleaned from reforms during recent urban disaster responses and recovery in Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Philippines.

## **5. Push for transboundary DRR action plans in Asia to respond to protracted conflict and displacement**

Around 1.5 billion women, men, and children—equal to half the world's poor people—are living in areas affected by fragility, conflict, or large-scale violence in the world today. Sixty-five million people have been forcibly displaced by conflict, persecution, or human rights violations—the highest number since the Second World War. Asia is not immune to conflict, which threatens the safety and resilience of millions of poor and vulnerable people. Oxfam calls on governments to scale up and accelerate peacekeeping mechanisms and humanitarian response across borders, and find a strategy to address transboundary risks arising from forced migration (due to climate change and others) and displacement, which can lead to further conflict. Greater leadership is required in Asia to advance policies and mechanisms that assist displaced people. To assure and sustain the progress of the Sendai Framework, it is vital that governments take steps to reduce exposure and vulnerability, prevent the creation of new risks, and tackle underlying drivers of risk, including poverty and inequality, climate change, unplanned and rapid urbanization, and poor land management.

## **6. Identify how international frameworks can be concretely integrated and financed**

The Delhi AMCDRR Conference recognized the need for coherence among and integration of international frameworks such as the Sendai Framework, SDG 2030, and the Paris Agreement. But little analysis was undertaken to find out how the integration would work, who would be responsible, or how to bridge the gaps within these frameworks. It was also not clear which money was available for accomplishing the integration or for funding the Asia Regional Plan. Between 1991 and 2010, only 0.5% of international aid has been spent for DRR and disaster preparedness. Funding from the OECD DAC countries on DRR ranged between 2.9% and 6.2% of total humanitarian spending over the past five years, increasing incrementally over the period. The 2018 AMCDRR is a chance to push for more international financing for DRR.

## **7. Focus on executing the Sendai Framework instead of getting drawn into unremitting planning**

The initial Asian Regional Plan has an outlook of 14 years and an operational plan for two years. But there is a tendency to get caught up in details: continuously updating strategies or making new ones instead of helping communities to implement the Plan and just plug holes along the way. Holding governments accountable for actions taken based on the Plan is crucial.

## **8. Ensure that governments and other bodies are accountable for DRR**

DRR action plans should contain accountability and transparency mechanisms that allow citizens to monitor, evaluate and report on the progress of the implementation of the Sendai Framework at local and international levels.



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Ambitious and integrated national targets must be based on specific country contexts and measurable by publicly accessible indicators and milestones through reporting platforms. Governments must also set a clear timeline for fulfilling the Sendai agreements. All of these will enable citizens to track progress, ensure that governments deliver on commitments, and hold them to account when they fail.

## **9. Safeguard the interests of the most vulnerable people, especially women and girls**

Sendai action plans must be implemented together with those most at risk and must begin at the community level. The participation and leadership of vulnerable and marginalized groups—especially women, PWDs, youth and the elderly—in the design and implementation of DRR action plans will guarantee that policy and systems reflect the needs, priorities, and capacities of those most affected by disasters and climate change. The specific needs of women and girls must be prioritized in DRR policies and processes.

## **10. Integrate disaster risk reduction into CCA and development strategies**

Governments in Asia must synchronize Sendai action plans with SDG 2030 and the Paris Agreement. Sendai plans must be woven into the programs of various branches of governments and threaded through policy debates around agriculture, development, public health, and investments in disaster-proof infrastructure, among others. DRR and CCA should have adequate appropriation in the budgets of governments. National strategies need to be translated locally, backed with sufficient funding.

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### **References**

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and DARA. (2014). Saving lives today and tomorrow: Managing risk of humanitarian crises. <http://www.unocha.org/saving-lives/> (citing OCHA, Overview of Global Humanitarian Response 2013 at Mid-Year (2013), docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/MYR\_2013\_Overview\_of\_GHA.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). (2011). Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2011: Revealing risk, redefining development (p. 37, Box 2.4). Geneva: UNISDR. [http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2011/en/bgdocs/GAR-2011/GAR2011\\_Report\\_Chapter2.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2011/en/bgdocs/GAR-2011/GAR2011_Report_Chapter2.pdf).

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**Signed:**

**Asia Resilience Hub**

**Oxfam in Asia**



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