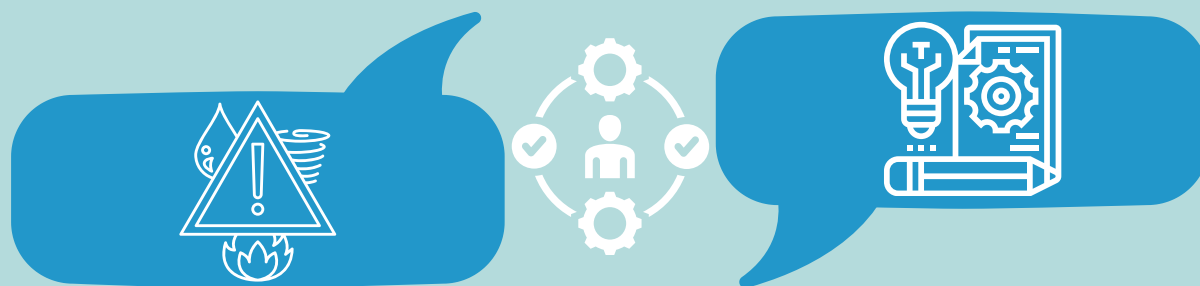


Synergy and alignment between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in NAPs



Outcome Article

The Durban Forum on capacity-building, annually held under the Subsidiary Body of Implementation in June, serves as a crucial gathering for stakeholders worldwide to address pivotal issues in climate-related capacity building. This year, the 12th Durban Forum extensively examined "opportunities and challenges for enhancing capacities for formulating and implementing National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)".

To follow up on the fruitful discussions held at the forum, the Durban Forum Deep Dive – an annual webinar organized by the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB) – centered on a key topic identified: the synergy and alignment between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in NAPs. The webinar, moderated by PCCB member Hayrapet Hakobyan, delved into the crucial role of capacity-building in advancing our understanding and practical approaches in this field. The outcomes of the 2023 Durban Forum Deep Dive are as follows.

Panel discussion

How well are countries integrating DRR in their NAPs? How does the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) promote such synergies?

Panelist Dr. Animesh Kumar, Head of UNDRR, first described the challenges in the field of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation based

on working experience in the Africa and Asia-Pacific regions. He emphasized that there was a significant finance gap, with an estimation of between 194 and 366 billion dollars per year, and that the number of NAPs across the globe is still insufficient, with every one in six countries not having one.

As for integrating DRR in NAPs, Dr. Kumar discussed the need for integration at three dimensions: planning, institutions, and monitoring and evaluation. For the planning stage, he provided examples from the Pacific, where countries have developed Joint National Action Plans (JNAPs) that combine disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Some countries, such as Cook Islands and Tonga, subsequently repurposed their JNAPs as their National Adaptation Plans. Furthermore, the Pacific region has developed a regional framework that promotes integrated approaches, focusing on strengthening integrated adaptation and risk reduction. This approach recognizes the complementary nature of these two fields.

Regarding the second dimension of institutional integration, Dr. Kumar highlighted that national platforms for disaster risk reduction have been established in many countries, fostering multi-sectoral coordination. Some countries have shifted the responsibility for disaster risk reduction to the head of state's office to improve coordination across ministries.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, as the third dimension of integration, he provided the example of the Sendai Framework and the Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement, showcasing the potential for closer collaboration.

Dr. Kumar also mentioned that there is growing recognition of synergies between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation indicators and targets at the global level. Initiatives like the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) drew on indicators from the Sendai Framework, showcasing the potential for closer collaboration.

Dr. Animesh Kumar's insights demonstrated the need for and progress toward greater integration between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in policy, institutions, and monitoring. These efforts aim to maximize resources and enhance resilience to climate-related risks and disasters, ultimately contributing to more effective and efficient responses.

What strategies can be employed to effectively integrate indigenous knowledge into disaster risk reduction and national adaptation plans, particularly in the context of the Pacific islands? What capacity gaps and needs exist?

Panelist Mr. Taloiburi started by addressing the policy frameworks and structures that support the inclusion of indigenous and traditional knowledge in decision-making for sustainable climate action and disaster risk reduction, emphasizing the importance of indigenous and traditional knowledge in regional strategies, such as the 2050 strategy for the Pacific, and ensuring their commitment to the use of such knowledge. He suggested implementing innovative regional approaches like the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (FRDP) that prioritize the documentation and use of indigenous knowledge to enhance resilience. Such an operational framework should incorporate specific action points in organizational strategic plans that focus on climate, disaster risk information, and the rights and needs of vulnerable communities.

Mr. Taloiburi also stressed the importance of meaningful engagement of communities and indigenous voices from the early stages of planning for NAPs and DRR. This includes building trust with residents through face-to-face engagement, addressing language barriers and cultural biases, and regularly gathering indigenous knowledge.

As for integration of DRR and NAP at multiple levels, the following steps were proposed: First, existing integration efforts in various sectors should be assessed. Then, future efforts should focus on sectors that are already integrating indigenous knowledge and highlighting them as examples. Next, a three-tiered approach should be adopted at the national, sectoral, and community levels, including planning, investments, and practices, to promote integration.

In summary, Mr. Taloiburi elaborated on integrating indigenous knowledge into DRR and NAPs in the Pacific from several perspectives, including creating supportive policy frameworks, operationalizing regional strategies, engaging communities effectively, and promoting integration at multiple levels.

How can we leverage the existing bodies of research and knowledge to enhance the synergy between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation at both the theoretical and practical levels?

Panelist Dr Bayes began by sharing experience of the cyclone early warning system in Bangladesh. He emphasized the importance of investing in forecasting capabilities and communication channels, training local volunteers to assist in evacuation and preparedness efforts, and ensuring community awareness and understanding of early warning messages.

Dr Bayes then moved to address infrastructure and structural mitigation. He deemed it valuable to implement structural mitigation measures like cyclone shelters and embankments to protect the increasingly vulnerable coastal communities from flooding and cyclones, and to utilize infrastructure to provide essential services such as food and shelter to those seeking refuge during disasters.

As for preparedness and resilience at community level, he emphasized a gender-sensitive disaster management approach and inclusive strategies for all community members, especially for children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

Dr Bayes also highlighted collaborations between local authorities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners to enhance disaster risk reduction and adaptation strategies. He promoted active community-based participation, knowledge and experiences exchange with other regions and nations, and regular review and update of disaster management plans and infrastructure.

The case study from Bangladesh shared by Dr Bayes demonstrated how research can be translated into practice to reduce disaster-related deaths and enhance community resilience. The key takeaway is that the practical application of research and the implementation of adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures require a combination of effective policies, structural interventions, community engagement, and continuous improvement to enhance resilience and reduce the impact of climate change on vulnerable communities.

What innovative approaches can be implemented to enhance capacity-building efforts that bridge disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation at both the academic and practical levels?

Dr. Kumar emphasized the importance of having the right data in place to understand the full spectrum of Loss and Damage. There's a need to strengthen efforts to collect comprehensive data on losses and damages related to climate change and disasters. Initiatives like the Loss and Damage tracking system can provide valuable data to help guide decision-making.

In addition, building the capacity of countries is crucial to ensure they have access to the right tools, guidance, and knowledge to develop integrated policies. Dr. Kumar gave the examples of UNDRR's Comprehensive Risk Management Program to help countries develop integrated plans, policies, tools and thought leadership programs, such as the one on integrating DRR and Adaptation, to support capacity-building efforts.

Dr. Kumar also highlighted the importance of identifying common bases for implementing DRR and Adaptation actions. He provided an example of early warning systems, which can serve multiple purposes, including adaptation, risk reduction, and minimizing loss and damage. It's essential to identify these common areas to avoid duplicating planning processes and funding requests.

Finally, Dr. Kumar mentioned the growing trend of moving towards integrated approaches where the distinction between DRR and Adaptation is diminishing. This is seen in various sectors, such as early warning systems, nature-based solutions, infrastructure resilience, agriculture, food systems, and environmental sectors. He argued that it is indispensable for international financial systems to recognize and support these integrated approaches.

Dr Bayes highlighted the importance of advancing early warning systems, particularly in coastal countries, and the need for implementing cutting-edge technologies and methodologies. He emphasized the following key points:

First, an advanced early warning system is needed, supported by advanced technologies such as machine learning, artificial intelligence, and deep learning.

Second, he noted the challenges faced by developing countries, including the lack of funding, skills, and tools for improving forecasting capabilities. This underscored the need for investments in meteorological departments and other relevant organizations to strengthen their forecasting capabilities.

Third, he emphasized the importance of channelizing funds, particularly from initiatives like Loss and Damage funding, to empower frontline communities, government officials, and organizations. These funds can provide the necessary resources and training to enhance forecasting and disaster preparedness in vulnerable regions.

Finally, Dr Bayes highlighted the shift from traditional academic research to practical implementation. He emphasized the importance of translating research knowledge, including indigenous knowledge, into practical solutions and strategies that can make a real impact on the ground.

Mr. Taloiburi highlighted the importance of capacity building in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific and shared four points for enhancing these efforts:

First, he emphasized the need for integrated academic programs that blend disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation across various disciplines. This approach promotes a holistic understanding of the challenges and solutions. He mentioned SPC's efforts in developing certificate programs and postgraduate pathways in collaboration with regional universities to provide opportunities for students and practitioners.

Second, he suggested establishing mentoring programs that connect experienced practitioners with emerging professionals. This approach could encourage knowledge transfer and community ownership within the field. He shared examples from the Pacific region where knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer learning were evident during national disaster awareness weeks and regional coordination events.

Third, the importance of forging partnerships between multiple stakeholders is reiterated. Collaborative efforts allow the pooling of resources and expertise for more effective capacity-building initiatives. He mentioned the Pacific resilience partnership and the Pacific resilience meeting as examples of successful collaborative initiatives in the Pacific region.

Last but not least, Mr. Taloiburi highlighted the need to communicate scientific data in an easily understandable and relatable manner to policymakers and communities. He mentioned the development of three-dimensional models to visualize the potential impacts of sea-level rise in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, which will be showcased at COP 28 to convey the scientific findings effectively.

Q&A interactive session

Audience question to Dr Ahmed Bayes: What is the main skill or capacity that is in need to reduce vulnerability and build resilience in the communities in Bangladesh?

Dr Bayes emphasized the success of the partnership and collaborative approach involving government partners, NGOs, and local communities that was applied in Bangladesh. He highlighted the importance of involving the 30 million people living in the coastal communities in Bangladesh, emphasizing that their livelihoods are intricately linked to the ecosystem through activities like fishing and agriculture.

He then stressed the need for a holistic approach that goes beyond infrastructure development, including early warning systems and cyclone shelters, to address the integrated aspects of livelihoods and public health. He underscored the significance of a decolonizing approach, working closely with indigenous and local communities to understand their vulnerabilities and needs. Acknowledging the time and patience required for building resilience, D Bayes expressed optimism and credited the success in Bangladesh to the support of donors, funders, and NGOs who invested in resilience training and alternative livelihood initiatives. Finally, he encouraged the replication of this collaborative method in other frontline communities, expressing confidence in achieving success through continued patience, investment, and collaboration between partners, donors, and communities.

Audience question to Mr. Taloiburi: What are capacities and skills specific to indigenous peoples that need to be strengthened to ensure the alignment and who is better positioned to provide these capacities?

Regarding the capacities and skills specific to indigenous people in the Pacific, Mr. Taloiburi mentioned that the capacity-building focus has been on initiatives like the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance. He emphasized the current emphasis on building back better and infrastructural development to enhance preparedness and resilience against hazards. However, he identified a gap in the need to focus more on the importance of restoration and healing, particularly for communities still striving for self-determination.

Mr. Taloiburi underscored the significance of healthy states of mind in withstanding challenges and adversities, suggesting that practitioners and partners should consider this aspect when discussing capacity-building for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

In response to ongoing efforts to document indigenous knowledge, Mr. Taloiburi mentioned opportunities such as the Pacific Resilience Meeting, which provides a platform every two years for indigenous communities to share their experiences. He noted the recent meeting in October 2023 and highlighted technical working groups that bring together various stakeholders to discuss and document indigenous knowledge and skills. However, he also acknowledged that more could be done to further record and document these valuable insights.

On-the-ground experience sharing

Following the Q&A session, Pamela Komujuni-Kalule from the Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda shared some valuable on-the-ground experiences.

Ms. Komujuni-Kalule discussed the challenges faced by Uganda in integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation efforts. She highlighted the historical struggle of determining what should take precedence – the "chicken and the egg" dilemma. Despite being fully aware of the impact of climate change on Uganda's disaster risk landscape, aligning policies and strategies for both remained a challenge. To address this, Uganda initiated changes to strengthen climate risk governance and disaster governance. Policies, laws, plans, and strategies were put in place to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change.

Ms. Komujuni-Kalule emphasized the importance of coherent policies and highlighted specific changes, such as the introduction of the National Climate Change Act and the National Disaster Risk Management Plan. She then elaborated on the country's approach to the NAPs process, involving a two-pronged strategy where sectors directly impacted by climate change develop sector-specific NAPs. The process emphasizes inclusivity, involving various stakeholders such as government entities, NGOs, academia, and communities. The goal is to create long-term climate adaptation plans using a bottom-up approach, with risk assessments conducted at the local level.

Ms. Komujuni-Kalule emphasized community involvement and awareness, using the national Risk Atlas to identify vulnerable communities. She stressed the importance of enhancing community knowledge about climate change and disaster risks to contribute to adaptive capacity and resilience. While acknowledging ongoing challenges, she highlighted the progress made in integrating DRR into the NAPs process. She discussed the need for greater collaboration, community ownership, and multifaceted interventions to address the diverse livelihoods of communities.

Lastly, Ms. Komujuni-Kalule touched on efforts to improve coherence between DRR and climate change coordination mechanisms, including joint mainstreaming guidelines and collaborative projects. Despite existing challenges, her account demonstrated Uganda's commitment to addressing climate change and disaster risks at both policy and community levels.

Audience question: What capacity-building activities has Uganda done so far with the community to enhance their knowledge about DRR and climate change adaptation?

Ms. Komujuni-Kalule described the capacity-building activities conducted with communities in Uganda to enhance their knowledge about disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The entry point for these activities involves raising awareness about the realities of climate change and DRR through community gatherings, locally known as "barazas" or community forums. These forums, facilitated by local leaders and councils, serve as a platform to mobilize and engage the target communities.

Ms. Komujuni-Kalule also introduced the awareness-building process in Uganda, including discussions on environmental degradation and how certain human activities, such as uncontrolled land use, contribute to challenges like flooding. She emphasized that active participation of community members is vital to help them recognize their role in environmental issues, foster a sense of collective responsibility, and undertake adaptive interventions following awareness-building. For instance, in communities where wetland restoration was implemented to mitigate flood impacts, community members actively engaged in the restoration process. This involvement not only empowered the community but also ensured that they take ownership of the interventions. By linking the adaptive interventions to the community's understanding of their role in environmental challenges, these capacity-building activities aimed to create sustainable solutions while encouraging responsible practices among community members.

Closing

In closing the webinar, Alejandro Kilpatrick, manager of Capacity-building Subdivision in the UNFCCC secretariat, congratulated the PCCB to a successful event and expressed gratitude to the panelists and resource persons for their valuable insights and commitment to the event. He highlighted the depth of the discussion and acknowledged the audience for their pertinent questions. He emphasized that the webinar findings will inform the future work of the PCCB.