

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Post-2015 framework and our stand

Governance is the key to success for effective and sustained disaster risk reduction. Good governance will elevate disaster risk reduction as a policy priority as it will ensure allocation of necessary resources for the purpose as well as accountability.

NIGER DIL NAHAR

THE Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is the first internationally accepted framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) adopted in January 2005 by 168 countries. The HFA outlines five priorities for action, and offers guiding principles and practical means for achieving disaster resilience. Its goal is to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015 by building resilience to nations and communities to disasters. Bangladesh, as one of the most important signatories of this framework achieved significant progress in effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with a special emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and vulnerability reduction.

Bangladesh has made significant progress in achieving most of the HFA targets within the given time-frame of 2015. DRR has become the national and local priority; therefore sectoral policies and legal framework are in place with specific coordination, duties and responsibilities of all actors involved in disaster management. Special emphasis has been given on DRR and CCA issues in the development goals (SFYD and Vision 2020) of the country. To bring the wider stakeholders on board, the national platform for DRR is established. With a paradigm shift from conventional relief and rehabilitation to disaster risk reduction, emphasis has been given on establishing a culture of safety and resilience at all levels of society.

DRR is included in the school

curriculum. The local government has made effective linkages with the public and private organisations engaged in early warning information generation and dissemination; thus institutionalisation of early warning information dissemination has been expanded to community level. However, despite achieving a substantial progress in terms of implementation of HFA, Bangladesh has lot more to highlight in the consultation process to be considered in the post HFA framework.

As the Hyogo Decade comes to a close, the UNISDR is now facilitating the development of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction through a multi-stakeholder consultation process. The consultation process was launched in Geneva in March 2012 by UNISDR. Numbers of issues and elements have started to emerge from these consultations. Main message arising from the discussions so far is that the HFA2 should be built on the successes and lessons learned under the current framework.

Another clear message is the need for a much stronger political commitment with a comprehensive set of accountability measures to monitor and track its implementation. Based on the past learning and experience of HFA implementation, Bangladesh is also facilitating a consultation process at different levels nationally and internationally engaging different stakeholders which undoubtedly brings a good opportunity to consolidate lessons learned to strongly present Bangladesh position in the upcoming global consultation of stakeholders meeting on 19-23 May 2013 at Geneva, Switzerland.

The most important issue Bangladesh can recommend for the post HFA framework is the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change. It is evident that more than ninety per cent of disasters are related to climate events. The post-Hyogo Framework needs to find ways to converge with the development and environment agendas, including in the area of climate change adaptation. Building capacity to deal with climate-related disaster risks will be fundamental to future risk-reduction strategies. Disaster managers cannot continue to develop risk-reduction strategies based only on past trends.

Another important issue is to include DRR in the next development goals framework. This will help strengthen political will and integrate risk management into development planning -- both fundamental and further progress on reducing disaster risk. By mainstreaming DRR into other development goals, we can expect sustainable development in the whole world in general and third world in particular. It should be strongly pointed out that disaster risk reduction has not yet been linked with the MDG and sustainability goals. Disaster risk reduction should also become part of the development goal in the Rio+20.

Enhancing the linkage between DRR and poverty reduction issue require more attention in the post-HFA framework. Poverty reduction has been a priority objective of development of Bangladesh since its emergence as an independent nation in 1971. All development plans of Bangladesh as well as the two poverty reduction strategy papers recognised the importance of poverty reduction but the country fails to establish the nexus between DRR, development and poverty, thus despite notable progress in poverty reduction Bangladesh faces the stark reality that about 45 million of its popula-



Natural disasters have become almost typical of Bangladesh

tion still live in poverty.

Good governance for disaster risk reduction is another issue to be highlighted in the post-HFA framework. Governance is the key to success for effective and sustained disaster risk reduction. Good governance will elevate disaster risk reduction as a policy priority as it will ensure allocation of necessary resources for disaster risk reduction and accountability.

Urbanization is a normal process and it is growing faster than expected. There are more people living in urban areas than in rural areas globally; by 2030 this pattern will apply in all developing regions including Asia and Africa, which adds new dimensions to disaster risk. The post-Hyogo framework must take this new reality into account with a focus on urban planning and building safer cities and Bangladesh can strongly propose that.

Cross cutting issues are not strongly highlighted in the current

framework. It is widely recognised that women of Bangladesh play a crucial role in their family to face the challenges of disaster. They are the first responders at family level in any emergency scenario. But the contributions of women to protect and rebuild their families and communities before, during and after disasters are always unrecognised. Recognising women and children's role in resilience building should be highlighted in the post-HFA framework.

Private sector engagement in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation should be strongly highlighted in the discussion. In most countries, their private sector has been the driving force behind socio-economic development. Private sector can play an important role in disaster risk reduction by investing more in development and humanitarian issues.

Current HFA identifies the need to promote development of risk

transfer mechanisms, including insurance, as a priority action for building resilience of nations and communities to recover after disasters. The 2010 United Nations Climate Change Conference also called for enhanced action on risk transfer and insurance in the Cancun Adaptation Framework. But Bangladesh Government did not achieve any significant progress on risk financing in terms of risk transfer for the disaster affected people.

The Hyogo Framework is an instrument for a movement towards resilience; therefore, the post-2015 framework needs to be comprehensive in terms of the sequence of actions, selecting the areas that will help most to move others. Being a global leader in disaster management, Bangladesh should make the optimum use of this opportunity and represent the voice of the vulnerable in this global platform.

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LOW CARBON APPROACH

Ensuring environment friendly economic growth

The environment can be protected better and faster if its problems are resolved from roots, rather than just one or two superficial greening initiatives though such initiatives also significantly contribute to a cleaner environment.

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DR Atiar Rahman of Bangladesh Bank, widely acclaimed as 'green' governor, has been working relentlessly yet silently for green banking. Along with inclusion of environment protection clause as a condition of loan sanction, he has been taking various measures to make the Bangladesh Bank itself 'green' by installing more energy-efficient LED lighting, solar panel on the roof of the bank building, and so on. Charity begins at home and that more likely encourages others as it happens in case of banks like BRAC and Mutual Trust. These initiatives and many more were discussed at a seminar on green banking, organised by the Institute of Livelihood Studies, recently.

I would like to say that there are ample avenues to explore in favour of green banking, even more broadly, green economy, and want to share some of my humble understanding that I have got from 'Sustainability in Crisis' conference organised by the University of Cambridge.

It has been widely reported in the academic field that environmental growth is in direct conflict with economic growth unless these two are synchronised. The logic is simple: more economic growth consumes more natural resources that hinder environmental protection, greater economic growth demands

more production that emits more carbon and eventually exacerbates global warming. Likewise, more production as a result of higher economic growth induces more consumption which at one point exceeds the limit of necessity and causes wastage. Thus, in simple logic, the urge of more economic growth ends with the further deterioration of the environment.

But this simple logic does not remain simple when we consider the value of money interest. Profit making organisations always have a target to achieve the profit rate at least more than the interest rate of the economy. More interest rate induces entrepreneurs to make more profit and thus they go for more production and consumers end with a considerable amount of unnecessary consumption. If I say this alternatively, then it will be like less consumption and less production delaying the deterioration of the environment. Less production will be possible if companies have less profit target, and a company may have less profit target if the interest rate in banks is lower.

Therefore, a true environmental growth can have a strong boost by a simple yet too sensitive decision to lessen the interest rate. A single decision like this will minimise many problems related to environment.

As an alternative, without drastic interference to the traditional financial policies, environmental growth can be achieved through apparently

contradictory economic growth when environmental issues are infused with economic issues in a balanced synchronisation. This idea is not too challenging to implement and found, theoretically, possible by many world renowned scholars. The prime concern of the environmental growth currently is to mitigate climate change. The three possible suggestions for this are radical application of environmental pricing, investment to innovate environmentally viable technology, and at the end, behaviour change of mass population.

In favour of environmental growth, the government and its financial institutions may consider working on the first two. For the application of environmental pricing,

it can formulate and implement Environmental Tax Reforms (ETR) as implemented by EU countries such as Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK. ETR is about shifting of taxation from 'goods' (like income, profits) to 'bads' (like resource used, pollution added, waste produced). Similar kind of reform was done before in Bangladesh when VAT was introduced. So, the formulation and implementation of ETR would not appear as an unachievable challenge.

In this case, Bangladesh may be the pioneer among developing countries as no countries other than developed ones have so far implemented ETR. While the third suggestion, i.e. behaviour change of mass population, is beyond the

scope of financial institutions, the second suggestion, that is the investment to innovate environmentally viable technology, is certainly within their scope to promote. The way the leading parts of the world have been shifting towards 'fair trade' policy, 'organic' consumption, 'responsible' fishing and 'child labour' free production for fairer society and protected environment, the same way they would most likely consider to shifting toward products that take 'less carbon' in production as well as create 'less carbon' in consumption.

Consumers of mainly developed countries might look for products with 'less carbon' tag, as many of them are now looking for products with 'organic' or 'fair trade' tags. And for that they are found willing

to pay more which I observed while I was in Europe. For quality production at low cost, Bangladesh has got a large market in developed countries and, for the 'low-carbon' production, Bangladesh could have even larger market if it is well promoted and mobilised.

Full-fledged 'low carbon' production is yet to begin and therefore requires innovative technology for low-carbon production of every possible product. Like agro-investment, the Bangladesh Bank may introduce interest-free finance for low carbon production projects. If it gets success, then it will not only contribute to the environmental growth but also to the country's economic growth by creating export opportunities for 'less-carbon' products to the developed countries.

A plant grows best if it is watered close to its roots, instead of watering on only one or two of its branches. The environment can be protected better and faster if its problems are resolved from roots, rather than just one or two superficial greening initiatives, while I agree that these initiatives altogether significantly contribute to a cleaner environment.

However, the urge is to address the issue at its root for a more effective and efficient environmental growth. Instead of waiting for initiatives from the West, we have to take immediate initiatives because, for the current global warming, Bangladesh will be immediate sufferer for its geographical location. Responsibility for our safety is ours. So we need to undertake environmental growth activities on a broader scale immediately before it appears too late.



Low carbon approach would lead to green economy and sustainable development

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