



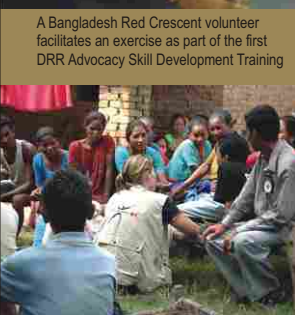
Actively Advocating Risk Awareness

The International Federation's Strategy 2010 calls for intensified advocacy efforts. Increasing effective advocacy to address DRR issues and to influence the actions of key decision-makers and communities is a key component in Building Safer Communities in South Asia.

National Societies in the region use the vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA) tool to work with communities to identify their capacities, risks that they face and actions that are required to build a safer community. At times issues are identified which are beyond the capacity of the community to solve alone. Advocacy skills are needed to raise awareness and to engage local government and multi-stakeholders on supporting appropriate interventions.

To strengthen the VCA process, and in response to a number of evaluations and reviews, the South Asia Regional Delegation (SARD) designed a three-day DRR Advocacy Skill Development Training course. The first training was held in January 2008 in Bangladesh for Red Crescent staff and volunteers from around the country. A range of recent VCA reports were used as a basis for identifying advocacy issues for the participants to work on.

Some of the issues chosen by participants to develop an advocacy plan for were: improving a community's access to government livestock services, sensitizing communities about the risk associated with losing soil (through soil cutting/removal) and persuading local government to enforce river erosion polices, creating awareness about the importance of adopting safe shelter measures and persuading stakeholders to invest in constructing more shelters. Through the training participants were also inspired to pursue advocacy initiatives aimed at creating awareness about vulnerable groups that are often most adversely affected by disasters.



Taking the DRR Agenda Forward

In 2007 the International Federation launched a global alliance on Risk Reduction. The aim of this alliance is "to do more and to do better" in building "safer, more resilient communities". The result will be an increase in disaster risk reduction programming of 30% in 20 risk prone countries by the end of 2010.

Following the International Federation's global position on disaster risk reduction the South Asia regional Building Safer Communities initiative will continue to draw together and share regional experiences to create synergies with a wide variety of DRR actors and networks. A key outcome of this process in 2008 will be a standardised Red Cross Red Crescent risk reduction training curriculum. This will be made available to all movement partners and external organisations in order to build the skills of DRR practitioners to more effectively serve communities and empower them to save lives and safeguard livelihoods.

In DRR programming there will be an increased emphasis on:

- Awareness and adaptation to climate change
- Integrated long term programme approaches including: CBDM, health, water and sanitation, psycho-social support, shelter and livelihoods
- Monitoring and benchmarking of DRR programmes and the continued use of the VCA to map the vulnerability and capacity of communities in South Asia
- Providing more space for women's active engagement in all aspects of DRR programmes will remain a key focus
- Focusing on the needs of vulnerable groups in DRR programming
- Collecting baseline information for the development of a regional strategy and DRR framework

In the face of increasing regional challenges, the International Federation will continue to foster knowledge sharing, advocacy and relationship building with communities, governments, donors, academic institutions and local and international NGOs. Partnerships and collaboration aimed at advancing the DRR agenda will continue with DIPECHO, DFID, Swedish Red Cross Society, ADPC, the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Change Centre and other partners in order to link DRR with community development programmes.

The mainstreaming of DRR is an ongoing process as disaster management, development practitioners and organisations adjust their organisational culture and skills towards incorporating long term disaster risk reduction strategies. There are many challenges and opportunities in mainstreaming risk reduction in South Asia. Through working together effectively on DRR at the global, regional and local level much can be done to facilitate the building of safer communities. In addition, significant contributions will be made to realizing the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies promotes the humanitarian activities of National Societies among vulnerable people.

By coordinating international disaster relief and encouraging development support it seeks to prevent and alleviate human suffering. The International Federation, the National Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross together constitute the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

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BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE RISK, BUILD CAPACITY AND SAVE LIVES IN SOUTH ASIA



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



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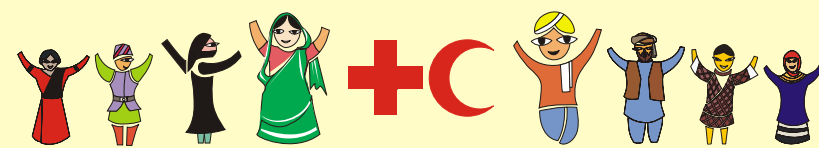
Disasters are occurring with increased frequency in South Asia. Pictures of those struck by disasters in South Asia such as the Orissa supercyclone, the Gujarat earthquake, the Tsunami, the Pakistan earthquake, Cyclone SIDR and the recent 2007 floods were beamed around the globe and shocked millions of viewers.

South Asian National Societies are working with communities so that post-disaster pictures will increasingly show a different story: no longer heart-breaking images of vulnerable families suffering from the loss of loved ones, but images of well-prepared, resilient communities working together in the face of natural hazards, of survivors in cyclone shelters amidst complete devastation, of islanders with shelters safe from tidal surges, and of communities using first aid skills to save lives.

Reduce Risk Now



Disasters are both a humanitarian and a development concern. Disasters increase poverty by disrupting the progress made through long-term initiative. An integrated approach to reducing vulnerability and disaster risk in both emergency and development programmes builds safer communities. Households and communities with sustainable livelihoods, access to health care and community-based disaster management programmes not only are less susceptible to the devastating effects of disasters but are able to recover faster.



building safer communities in South Asia

Building Safer Communities logo:

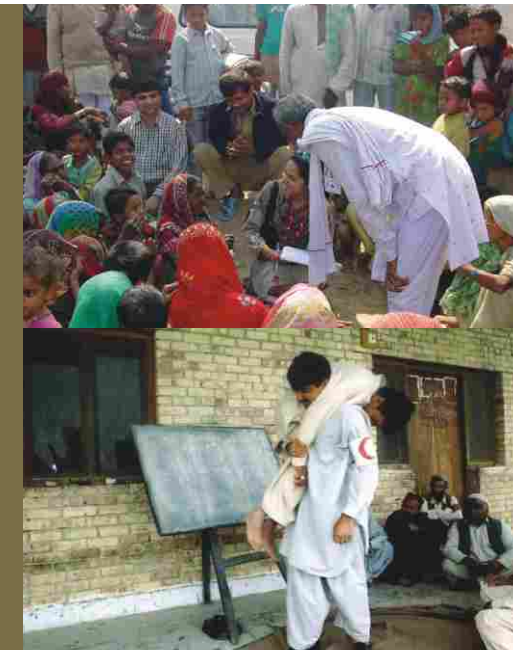
This logo was specially created for the Building Safer Communities initiative in South Asia. It is representative of the eight countries in the region namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka which are covered in the programme. The logo shows that even amidst diversity, communities in the South Asia region are working hand-in-hand with one common objective – Disaster Risk Reduction.

National Societies Contribute to the Hyogo Framework for Action

The Red Cross Red Crescent responded to 278 disaster events in 2004. This figure climbed to 482 by 2006, a trend that is predicted to continue. The number of disaster events and the people affected by disasters is rising rapidly – from around 70 million per year in the 1970s to approximately 213 million per year in the 1990s. This is exacerbated by a range of underlying risk factors such as climate change, environmental degradation, rapid population growth and unplanned urbanization. These risks pose extraordinary challenges for both rural and urban communities in South Asia.

In 2005 governments, practitioners and academia came together to work on a global plan to limit the adverse impacts of hazards on communities. The result was the Hyogo Framework for Action, which is a global framework for the development of policies, strategies and practices to do everything possible to protect lives, limit damage and strengthen the capacity of communities and societies to recover quickly from natural disasters. South Asian National Societies have been working on disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes for many years. The following examples illustrate how these programmes are contributing to the priorities outlined in the Hyogo Framework:

- Afghanistan Red Crescent Society's training of 300 staff and volunteers in community-based disaster preparedness, a pilot project on early warning systems in Badakhshan province and the establishment of disaster response units in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.
- The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society's Cyclone Preparedness Programme involving 34,000 volunteers who saved thousands of lives during the recent Cyclone Sidr; the earthquake preparedness, response and school safety programmes in 20 urban communities; a range of Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM) programmes that include disaster preparedness, livelihoods and climate adaptation elements, shelter maintenance and empowerment of women.
- The Indian Red Cross Society's CBDM projects including flood mitigation projects in Assam and Bihar, drought mitigation project in Barsi, Maharashtra, and the Orissa disaster mitigation project, the use of Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (VCA) and risk awareness raising activities.
- The Nepal Red Cross Society's community-based disaster preparedness programme is building resilience in 24 districts. It has a number of programmes: such as the school-based risk reduction programme, the Kathmandu Valley earthquake preparedness programme, community-based first aid, the community-based water and sanitation programme and the community-based development programme. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) awareness activities include a radio show, street theatre, peer education and the publication of DRR materials.
- The Pakistan Red Crescent Society's earthquake recovery programmes focus on 'building back better', with water and sanitation, Community based first aid (CBFA), use of VCA, long term approaches to livelihoods and the formation of a PRCS disaster management working group (DMWG).
- The Maldives relocation of tsunami-affected communities onto larger, higher and better resourced island homes, the development of an integrated approach to disaster management including first aid, drug awareness, dengue and chikungunya awareness, water safety, tree plantations and raised earth platforms.
- The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society's tsunami recovery programmes emphasise 'building back better', with long term approaches to livelihoods, CBDM, water and sanitation, risk awareness raising and safety in schools.



This readiness to reduce the impact of disasters and, where possible, predict and even prevent disasters is central to the work of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and its member National Societies. Following the Federation's ten year strategy 'Strategy 2010' to reduce disaster risk by responding to local vulnerability and in order to contribute to building a safer south Asia, the International Federation is working towards developing risk reduction initiatives in Bhutan.



Our Experiences Shows that Reducing Risk Works

The commitment to build safer communities has been reinforced in the International Federation's Global Agenda (2006-2010) that calls for increased action with vulnerable communities to reduce disaster risk. The 2007 Well Prepared National Society survey indicates that 60% of South Asian National Societies are proactive in DRR and have linked response and recovery efforts towards long-term DRR programming. Over the last six years the International Federation and National Societies in Bangladesh, India and Nepal have been engaged in a two phase DRR programme supported by the Department for International Development (DFID). This programme has improved the resilience of more than 260,000 people in 35 communities through 25-small-scale mitigation projects, livelihood promotion schemes and community awareness and training programmes. Monitoring reports from the 2007 regional floods indicate that the adverse impacts of flooding were significantly less in communities where the DRR programme was implemented. For example, when small villages in the Bardiya and Banke districts of Nepal were struck by raging flood waters, community members trained in CBDM led the systematic evacuation of people and necessities from their villages, saved ten people from flood waters using a rope and inflatable tube and gave first aid to 35 villages. In one village, they used money from a revolving fund to pay for maternity care in a makeshift camp for the displaced. Many similar success stories illustrate the positive results of the programme and the urgent need for increasing community resilience in the face of disasters. Some key lessons from the DRR phases I and II are:

- Scaling up community based DRR takes time and capacity – a long term developmental approach and sustained investment is required
- Clarification of the DRR concept and strategies is crucial for effective advocacy and programming
- There is a need to better capture the impact of DRR programs and cost/benefit data
- Follow up is required to ensure the sustainability of the programme beyond the life of the project
- DRR programmes are implemented by the community to meet needs that they have identified. This approach requires a change of mindset by humanitarian organisations and the communities themselves



Regional Cooperation Can Save Lives

South Asian National Societies are committed to coming together as a region to share knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels in South Asia. With support of our partner national societies like the Swedish Red Cross Society, DIPECHO and DFID, National Societies are working together to build safer communities.

To support working together effectively in DRR the International Federation has launched a regional DRR initiative in South Asia. This initiative titled Building Safer Communities and the biannual Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG) are instrumental in facilitating knowledge sharing, advocacy and coordination with partner national societies, governments, academic institutions, public disaster management authorities, private institutions, developmental NGOs and the UN system. This regional initiative links to the International Federation's global strategy to reduce disaster risk by responding to local vulnerability and aims to harmonise and share RC/RC DRR systems and tools with other DRR actors and stakeholders.

As part of this initiative the focus of the regional Disaster Management Working Group in 2007 was to facilitate a paradigm shift from a short-term relief mindset to a long-term DRR approach. A spirit of collaboration was evident as representatives from partner national societies, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), ProVention, and the Secretariat joined South Asian National Societies to build a common understanding and share knowledge on DRR. The impact of this can be seen in the emergency appeals launched by the Nepal Red Cross and the Bangladesh Red Crescent in 2007; these appeals incorporate not only response but also long-term DRR activities.

Additional outcomes in 2007 were the endorsement of the DMWG by the Secretary Generals of South Asian National Societies. They also pledged their commitment to an integrated programming approach for building safer communities.