

Panel: Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Resilience Building in South Asia

Due to its proximity to almost all hydro tropical conditions - whether they are glaciers and rain catchment mountains and fields linked to water flows or the drainage down to the sea - South Asia has certain risk factors that make it vulnerable to disasters and hazards. The recent mega disasters from the 2004 tsunami to the 2015 Nepal earthquake have caused massive losses to infrastructure, agriculture, livelihoods and livestock and human lives. A World Bank report (2009) has counted these losses worth USD45 billion in terms of infrastructure and assets, in addition 230,000 lives lost during 1990-2008. Pakistan has braced two mega disasters - the 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods with huge loss of life and materials. The region faces hydro-meteorological hazards amid monsoon rains and risks of earthquakes due to large-scale seismic activities (World Bank 2012).

Flooding is the biggest disaster that hits the region frequently. In addition to unusual monsoon rains, other reasons for flooding in the region include land degradation, deforestation, growing ecological imbalance and unplanned urbanisation in the name of development. Climate change and extreme weather conditions are also a trigger that cause disasters and hazards in the region. Climate extremes may, thus, be seen as entry points to examine how institutional structures, decision-making processes and power relations lead to winners and losers in different societal groups.

One-and-a-half year on, the adoption of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) in March 2015, the South Asian governments are supposed to coordinate with each other to develop a regional response in case any disaster hits. The Framework also calls upon governments to set their targets to considerably reduce loss of life and material by taking action as mandated in the SFDRR. Prior to this, the countries in the region had been working to achieve the goals set under the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) from 2005 to prepare communities against disasters. The HFA provided guidelines to the governments to train communities in DRR objectives to protect them from disasters.

The panel would provide a forum to experts from the region to talk about the preparedness and readiness of communities in their respective locales against disasters. They may focus on the following questions:

1. What plans do the respective governments have in line with SFDRR one-and-a-half year on?
2. What national and global efforts are underway to make communities and infrastructure resilient against disasters?
3. What role do political economy considerations play in determining responses to disaster risk?
4. Does SAARC have enough strength to develop a common mechanism for early warning and coordination for a quick response in case of any disaster, especially floods?
5. How could disaster management be protected against the negative impacts following the cancellation of the 19th SAARC Summit?

References

World Bank 2012, 'Disaster Risk Management in South Asia: A Regional Overview', The World Bank, Washington, D.C. USA.

World Bank 2009, 'Why South Asia is vulnerable to Climate Change?' The World Bank, Washington, D.C. USA.

Panel Organisers:

Mr Shafqat Munir, Associate Research Fellow & Head of Resilience Development Programme, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: shafqat@sdpi.org

Dr Imran Khalid, Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Email: iskhalid@sdpi.org

Ms Sadaf Liaquat, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: sadaf@sdpi.org