An Australian contribution to the UNISDR World Conference and the 'Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction'

Nick Ireland, Save the Children, provides context to the review and recommendation role Australia is playing in the lead up to the new post-2015 international disaster risk reduction framework.

Based on international progress and developments to date, including convergence in major UN-led initiatives, 2015-16 is one of the most important periods for decision-making in the areas of development and emergency policies.

The *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) is an eight-point plan for meeting the needs of the world's poorest. It comes to an end next year and will be superceded by a new post-2015 plan.[1] The *Hyogo Framework for Action* (HFA), the UN-led 10-year global disaster risk reduction strategy, also ends in 2015. A new global climate agreement under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be negotiated in December 2015 and, in 2016, a World Humanitarian Summit will be hosted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Istanbul with the goal 'to find new ways to tackle humanitarian needs in our fast-changing world'.[2] Given the convergence in timing and the challenges that have been presented within each strategy, these four mechanisms can inform one another in more explicit ways, including being sequenced in such a way to do so. But perhaps most importantly, there has been growing evidence-supported recognition that development, disasters, climate change, and emergency response are interlinked in either vicious or virtuous circles.

Thankfully, we have moved beyond the notion that disasters are exogenous. We are coming to an understanding that disasters are endogenous in as much as it is human beings and current development pathways that lead to increased human vulnerability. Of course, while hazards are often natural (earthquakes, cyclones, floods, bushfires, and so forth), how individuals, communities or nations are affected by them is directly linked to the following:

• the vulnerabilities created such as building homes or businesses in fire-prone bushlands or cyclone-exposed coasts contributing to vicious cycles, and

• the ability to foresee, plan for, and respond to them through structural and non-structural means (e.g. land-use planning, building codes, investment in early warning systems, preparedness planning, emergency response and recovery programming), which all contribute to risk reduction and virtuous cycles.

While global processes can seem distant to emergency management in Australia, they are perhaps more interlinked than it might seem. In particular, the HFA is not a framework directed towards the developing world; it is intended for the whole world, rich and poor alike. For example, the vast majority of economic losses due to disaster in 2011 were in Japan, Thailand and New Zealand. The knock-on effects are often global. The 2011 Chao Phraya river floods in Thailand saw a tripling of the price of computer hard drives on the global market (ESCAP and UNISDR 2012).

In Australia, disaster risk reduction developments have followed HFA principles, including in the development of the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*. Additionally, there is a wealth of experience and expertise ranging from the institutionalisation of the State Emergency Services, the *National Emergency Risk Assessment Guidelines*, cyclone resilient building codes, bushfire early warning systems, and world-class research. This includes through the funding of the relatively new Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC) and its predecessor, the Bushfire CRC. Through policy, practice and research, this makes Australia well-placed to continue to improve DRR practices nationally while contributing internationally to helping shape pathways to a resilient future.

The task of reviewing and updating the HFA is the responsibility of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), a UN agency established to drive global risk reduction efforts. This task is, without understatement, a huge one. The stated aim of the new framework, currently being called the 'Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction', is to agree on a new framework that is 'concise, focused, forward-looking and action-orientated'.[3] There are two key underlying components to this work. Firstly, guiding questions centre around looking back at what has been done, what has worked and what lessons have been learnt. These policy-practice-research assessments and reviews will be published in a book alongside the

---

1   United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). At: www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/mdg.shtml.
2   World Humanitarian Summit. At: www. worldhumanitariansummit.org/.
3   United Nations General Assembly, October 2014, Post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction, Zero draft submitted by the Co-Chairs of the Preparatory Committee. At: www.wcdrr. org/preparatory/post2015.

2015 Global Assessment Report (GAR15) and are based on reviewing progress against the HFA indicators, each linked to five Priorities for Action, that have been in place for 10 years. These papers provide recommendations for the next framework based on the scientific, policy and practice evidence collected during this period.

The second part of the HFA review looks at what needs to be done to respond to the emerging challenges of today and projecting the needs for the future. This has been guided by a series of consultations dating back to 2013 involving a cross-section of academics, practitioners and policy makers. Of course both the work looking back and the projections for the future are interlinked.

Australia is formally represented in the Post-2015 Framework for the Disaster Risk Reduction dialogue through the Attorney-General's Department with the support of the Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade, which combines overseas experience and expertise. However Australian input has and continues to be broader since academics and practitioners engage in multiple aspects of this large and complex process. This includes providing input papers to the GAR indicator review process and highlighting progress in Australia made against the HFA priorities for action (such as Dufty 2014a, b, Ronan *et al.* 2014). Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) provide input to the Australian Government consultations both individually as well as through the Australian Council for International Development, the peak body for Australian-based NGOs. In addition, Australian universities have taken lead authorship roles of policy-practice-research assessments and reviews in important HFA Priority Area Core Indicator areas through summary 'background chapters' that will accompany the GAR15 report. The BNHCRC has been named by the UN Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR) Program as the IRDR national committee for Australia. Thus, IRDR meetings in London and Paris are a prelude to the second of two post-2015 framework planning meetings at the UN in Geneva, called PrepCom2.

It is important to recognise that the establishment of the HFA has greatly contributed to progress in making individuals, communities and nations safer in a hazardous world. This includes a significant worldwide reduction in deaths in storm-related disasters (UNISDR 2011, 2012) and many other indicators of progress. It is equally important to understand that disasters continue to have significant economic impacts on rich and poor countries alike and that future projections point towards an unavoidable increase in disaster events. Therefore, against the backdrop of the many developments, the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction should be welcomed but its success not taken for granted as considerable investments are still needed to keep ahead of increasing risk domestically and internationally.

Australia has the ability to punch above its weight on the global stage demonstrating significant developments in research, policy and practice. Given the nexus between DRR policy, practice and research, the Bushfire CRC, and now the BNHCRC, is an international exemplar in bringing together those in

each of these areas quite explicitly. We should continue to share such developments with others and keep our horizons broad, both for our needs domestically as we also try to contribute on the international stage.

The following section has summaries of two of the formal background papers reviewing progress towards *including disaster risks concepts into school curriculum and training programs* and *informing populations about disaster risk*. The third paper is an example of an input paper which examines the adoption of social media platforms for disaster risk reduction awareness campaigns which contributed to the finding of the paper on informing populations about disaster risk. As Australians continue to learn to co-exist with fire and the many other hazards that threaten our communities, the lessons we have learnt on public awareness and integrating DRR into curricular globally can and should assist us here with pathways for improving on our own policy, practice and research. These background papers and their associated input papers are good examples of where stocktaking on global progress toward HFA indicators provide us with an increased body of evidence which if used, can contribute towards making Australia a safer place.

References

ESCAP and UNISDR 2012, *Reducing Vulnerability and Exposure to Disasters, Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2012.*

Dufty N 2014a, *Progress made with early warning systems in Australia since 2005, Australian Journal of Emergency Management, vol. 29, no.4, pp. 43-47.*

Dufty N 2014b, *A review of progress in the integration of disaster risk reduction into Australian school curricula programs and materials. At: http://works.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent. cgi?article=1065&context=neil_dufty.*

Ronan KR, Petal M, Johnson VA, Alisic E, Haynes K, Johnston DM, Handmer J, Towers B, Davie S & Ireland N 2014, *Hyogo Framework for Action Thematic Review: Priority for Action (PFA) 3 – Core Indicator (CI) 2: School curricula, education material and relevant training including disaster risk reduction and recovery concepts and practices. Input Paper prepared for United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015. CQUniversity.*

UNISDR 2011, *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, chapter 2, p. 1.*

UNISDR 2012, *'Disaster in Numbers': Source of data: EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED.*

UNISDR 2013, *From Shared Risk to Shared Value –The Business Case for Disaster Risk Reduction. Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.*

About the author

Nick Ireland is Save the Children Australia's Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Manager. He is the co-chair of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Disaster Risk Reduction working group and a steering committee member of the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector.