ISDR and OAS Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas

Reflection and Analysis Surrounding the Commitments and Initiatives to Support the Implementation of the HFA from a Regional Perspective

A contribution to the preparatory process for carrying out the 1st Session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the discussions for the 2nd Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Full Draft
April 10, 2009

Prepared by Stephen Bender, Consultant

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report uses the HFA reference for organizing the presentation of regional trends, progress, gaps, challenges and opportunities related to HFA and IASP implementation. The report recognizes the acquired commitments by sovereign states of the UN, OAS and sub-regional intergovernmental organizations in relation to convergence and support for their implementation. It has been prepared under the OAS-mandated work as the principle partner in the hemisphere with the UNISDR and towards supporting the implementation of the HFA priorities and strategic objectives and the IASP.

Context

In short, there is convergence, duplication, and divergence surrounding disaster risk reduction policies, programs and projects undertaken by political and technical entities in the Americas. They form part of the underlying risk factors referred to collectively as a culture of disasters by design through development actions. Overall there is progress that varies by sector in DRR but for the most part there are no goals, measurable levels of achievement or coordination between sectors or with CCA; overall there is no momentum for DRR through development. With the HFA and IASP as a backdrop, focal point for implementation and acquired commitment, some regional, sub-regional and national initiatives now focus on vulnerability reduction (reducing the underlying risk factors) as the priority action. If the presentation of DRR does not become part and parcel of the development process there appears to be little prospect for a country to diminish risk to natural hazard events so as to reverse the trends of increased economic loss and impacted populations and environmental resources while continuing to reduce loss of life. DRR simply cannot successfully compete as a special issue along side other special interests.

The HFA and IASP differ yet complement each other in their breath and depth. It is not surprising that the HFA is less specific yet less broad than the IASP. When both HFA and IASP are compared with the emerging approaches at the sub-regional levels, it is clear that in the scope of inter-governmental interplay, the sub-region holds a key position to at once touch directly national policy and practice while at the same time helping to shape sovereign state participation in broader inter-governmental initiatives. And the regional and sub-regional intergovernmental political organizations have exhibited less a propensity to consider or address DRR as a sector, and more ability to convene development sectors to discuss disaster risk reduction issues.

Expected Outcome

For most countries participating in sub-regional intergovernmental DRR agencies and political working committees the trend is reduction of loss of life, but the numbers of people impacted and the economic and environmental assets lost continue to rise. In those countries where federal governments (Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, and the USA), the same trends generally hold true. Changing and evolving approaches to DRR, particularly at the sub-regional level, call for more highly focused efforts on reducing the loss and exposure as part of initiatives using development actions.

Way Forward

The UNISDR and OAS Systems should undertake collaborative efforts to support reporting on the Expected Outcome through the Regional Platform, which can become the convening mechanism, the process and the reporting forum for high level technical consultations with broad participation from government, international development community, business and civil society for benchmarking, monitoring and reporting, shared data base generation, meeting calendar, legal agreement review, clustering of HFA and IASP components to improve DRR and EM, and DRR-CCA initiative review.

SG 1

HFA National Platforms are growing slowly with debate and criticism as to DRR approaches and a lack of coordination with national and specific sector development plans, and a gap in HFA implementation reporting that overly depends on the author of the national report. HFA National Platforms and CCA National Committees are evolving in isolation of one another while perceptions as to the convergence and divergence of DRR and CCA protocols, funding mechanisms and implementation are discussed at several levels. Roles, responsibilities and plans of action often proceed with little consultation and consensus although they are sponsored by the same sovereign states. The onus is on individual governments to assure coordinated compliance with the global, hemispheric and sub-regional commitments and mandates to which they are a party.

Way Forward

The Regional Platform should establish a dialogue with stakeholders at the highest technical level to review draft reports on implementation of HFA and IASP and strengthening their implementation, review agreements on emergency management, review DRR in development initiatives, and review specific sector initiatives.

SG 2

Countries are taking a broader and deeper look at the convergence and divergence of actions in preparing for and responding to emergency situations and the underlying causes and response to natural hazard risk in development, institutional settings and the emergency management vs. reduction initiatives in development. This all is far too broad for effective capacity building under present assigned institutional responsibilities, and owners and operators of vulnerable economic and social infrastructure have little incentive to staff for action because of lack of responsibility and accountability, pressure on budgets, and the lack of a mission statement appropriating the DRR process as their own. Thematic DRR platforms have not prompted a formal call for addressing these two constraints, and sector political response has been modest if not mute. Also under examination is loss-driven and index-driven access to capital mechanisms. There is no reason to believe or hope that IFI, bilateral and NGO support of stand alone, specialized DRR agencies and programs will offer the proper mechanisms or capacity building required for comprehensive national natural hazard assessment, monitoring, and alert initiatives, and risk reduction initiatives through sectors.

Way Forward

Institutional agendas for emergency management and risk reduction must assign priority actions to actors who are present and participating. Where strengthening institutions, mechanisms and capacities at the national level are dependent on external funds, international actors must lay aside avoidance of inclusive sub-regional initiatives and join

emerging risk management initiatives at all levels, particularly those related to capacity building and local multi-sector development activities.

SG 3

Risk reduction is an increasing visible issue in reconstruction policies, programs and projects, often at the instigation if not insistence of IFIs and international donor, humanitarian assistance and community development institutions. They have set up dialogues and shared experiences, but often outside of the development context. IFIs now report post-disaster reconstruction and DRR grants and lending as a significant part of their portfolio, yet there is no clear understanding of the qualitative and quantitative participation of reconstruction projects in national economies. In the end IFI and donor-driven DRR initiatives may have a demonstrable impact on new economic and social infrastructure risk reduction long before there takes place any substantive risk reduction of existing economic and social infrastructure.

Way Forward

The processes and products coming out of post-disaster reconstruction efforts must be immediately put to use by and for development operations in IFIs, bilaterals, NGOs, national governments and their ministries, business and civil society. Additional DRR guidance for development and reconstruction should be more conditioned as to the specific hazard risk reduction context.

PA 1

Considerable advances have been made to deal with emergency management issues, but making disaster risk reduction a development priority through national, sector and community initiatives is less visible. Risk transfer is being more widely discussed across emergency management-development institution lines, but it too is being pursued without concurrently addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability. The task of investment in disaster risk reduction challenges international and national institutions alike as they must make risk management part of development efforts and avoid using natural hazard risk reduction as a stand alone special interest issue.

Way Forward

The initiatives directly involving sector actors are demonstrating the most efficient and effective means of decentralizing responsibilities, building capacity, providing for dedicated and adequate resources at all levels, implementing successful DRR actions at the local level, fomenting policy and legal frameworks including provisions for civil society participation, and building towards multi-sector HFA National Platform participation and more comprehensive HFA and IASP implementation reporting.

PA 2

There is increasing capacity for integrated natural hazard phenomena monitoring, early warning and alerts, particularly through community based vulnerability assessment and capacity initiatives focusing on, or evolving from, integrated community development programs. But progress on sub-regional and national systems is coming about principally through post-disaster investment in geologic hazard assessment, and climate research including atmospheric and hydrologic hazard assessment supporting climate change adaptation programs. In general neither governments nor their supporters see nor accept

natural hazard information as a public good while generation of much information is often dependent on specific donor and lender financed DRR initiatives. Yet there is no prospect that such activities will ever cover the demand for hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment information once economic and social sectors take on their responsibility for preparing their individual risk management strategies. Almost without exception, no sector has carried out mandated vulnerability and risk assessments of economic and social infrastructure. Presently international vulnerability indexing initiatives using GIS and available national data will help shape future risk management decisions.

Way Forward

Only the economic and social development sectors themselves should and can prepare the vulnerability and risk assessments needed to make their development decisions. This is particularly needed in dealing with community involvement and atmospheric and hydrologic information, and is particularly urgent related to water resource management including trans-boundary, ground and surface water issues related to agriculture, energy, mining, recreation, transportation, and drinking water consumption.

PA 3

The gap between acquired commitments and DRR implementation is a reflection of the risk management views of society. When DRR and education are discussed, the analysis, conclusions and recommendations as to reducing risk are usually quiet general, and rarely include those who actually make decisions about living vulnerable lives. There is no specificity as to the population or societal group, locale or geopolitical setting, goal or objective except for the rather robust area of primary and secondary school curriculum, community-level emergency preparedness and response, and community vulnerability and capacity assessment.

Way Forward

All sectors and relevant settlement organizations must themselves constitute the constituency for the broad public awareness campaign for risk reduction, and access and use hazard information to determine vulnerability and risk as part of their ongoing development function. National and sub-regional DRR education and capacity building strategies emphasis must be put on individual disciplines as a requirement as part of their curricula and practicum. Emergency management as a discipline must continue to develop and expand its education and research endeavors. International programs of all types should support the education of multidisciplinary sector teams on DRR issues.

PA 4

Transformation from an emergency management to a development focused approach to DRR is insipient and difficult to carry forward at the national level as it call into play poverty, gender and highly vulnerable populations targeted in MDG, administrative decentralization, land use management, governance and corruption. The international community now recognizes that repetitive disasters and the underlying risk factors make continued effective emergency management questionable as multiple declarations note continuing vulnerability. DRR schemes at all levels are built along side other special interest and development programs. Financial risk transfer schemes are emerging to protect national fiscal solvency, but vulnerability reduction is a secondary objective.

Way Forward

With the direct involvement of IFIs, bilaterals and NGOs and other agencies of the international development community, risk reduction to natural hazard events must be redefined through development processes including policies, planning, programs and practice. Economic and social sector units in inter-governmental organizations and agencies must demand, support and participate in all facets of natural hazard analysis, vulnerability assessment and risk management. Regional and sub-regional inter-governmental organizations should support legislation, policy and operations reform as needed at the national and sub-national level. For international development assistance policies, programs and projects, the focus must shift from a reference to mainstreaming risk management in development to identifying and making visible the risk to natural hazards present in development actions throughout the sectors so as to reduce vulnerability in accordance with the Expected Outcome of the HFA.

PA 5

Emergency management is the longest standing and most developed disaster risk reduction initiative in the Americas. In most countries there is increasing national institutional capacity to respond to emergencies with international support. The advances in lessening the loss of life in the region are a manifestation of this progress, support and global concern. Given the anticipated needs to deal with now increasing numbers of affected populations, the international humanitarian assistance community is revising its placement of emergency management in the broader disaster risk reduction spectrum. It is calling for more collaboration where there are repetitive disaster declarations and/or where in the foreseeable future countries will be unable to mount sufficient national capacity to lessen the need for issuing appeals for international assistance.

Way Forward

Follow through with the acquired commitments dealing with:

- Full institutional participation as mandated in existing forums,
- Agreement on formal emergency mechanisms,
- As part of the Regional Platform process priorities and initiatives related to emergency management in its varying aspects, and
- Sub-regional and regional technical recommendations as inputs for political discussions on emergency management.

Specialized emergency management entities should demand of each sector at all planning and operational levels the relevant vulnerability and risk information of its infrastructure and associated personnel with priority on critical facilities and life lines.

Closing

In summary, disaster risk reduction in the Americas must become primarily a development demand-driven activity where the existing information, knowledge and expertise are sought and applied by populations for their economic and social infrastructure, even as the supply of information, knowledge and expertise is expanded and supported for emergency preparedness and response.

Introduction

This report uses the HFA as reference for organizing the presentation of regional trends, progress, gaps, challenges and opportunities related to HFA and IASP implementation in the Americas. It recognizes the acquired commitments by sovereign states of the UN, OAS and sub-regional intergovernmental organizations in relation to convergence and support for their implementation. It has been prepared under the OAS-mandated work as the principle partner in the hemisphere with the UNISDR and towards supporting the implementation of the HFA priorities and strategic objectives and the IASP.

This report speaks to mechanisms for implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives and mechanisms for monitoring that implementation. Both types of mechanisms are contemplated in the HFA, the IASP and other OAS resolutions and mandates, and sub-regional intergovernmental agreements. In the first case, the HFA Expected Outcome is quality-oriented and quantifiable; the Strategic Goals and Priorities for Action are suggested inputs supporting the Expected Outcome output. In the case of the OAS, there are both outputs and inputs adopted by the Member States in the IASP. Some are related to overall government actions while others are targeted to specific sectors, hazards, technologies, or operations. And in the case of the sub-regional intergovernmental agreements, the mechanisms for action and for monitoring action take on the specificity commensurate with working with a closely consultative group of governments.

In sum, this report is about acquired commitments and the way forward by national governments and their respective societies in the Americas, with reference to support of the international development and humanitarian assistance communities, IFIs, NGOs, PVOs, business and civil society. Above and beyond the trends, which will be noted below, disaster risk reduction is a complex issue heavily influenced by over forty years of policy and action, a complicated and sometimes confusing understanding of disasters and natural hazard events, and a lack of coherent implementation approaches and reporting. To wit, disaster risk reduction continues to compete alongside other special development issues, and is conditioned by those who know risk, practice risk aversion parochially if held accountable, and control to a great extent the vulnerability of those, such as the poor, the young and women, who have little control over the level of vulnerability that impacts their lives.

Details of HFA implementation at the national level can be found in ISDR reports. There is no specific citation of the more than 30 acquired commitments of the OAS Member States through the IASP and other OAS organ mandates. There exists sufficient coverage of disaster risk reduction issues between the HFA and the OAS-generated mandates, as well as those from the sub-regional organizations, to cover the gaps, challenges and opportunities discussed.

And finally, the report is built on the documentation and discussions of HFA and IASP implementation leading up to, and through the 1st Session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas held March 1-19, 2009.

Context

The circumstances and processes that shape to date the HFA and IASP implementation in the region include:

- the sovereign state as the basic unit of DRR action and monitoring,
- dependency by government in many cases on international assistance,
- the emergence of climate change and climate change adaptation as a development issue,
- the role of the military,
- national security and terrorism response initiatives,
- differing intra- and international views of natural hazard risk responsibility, accountability and ownership,
- international and intergovernmental emergency preparedness and response policies and mechanisms,
- international community's promotion of thematic integration,
- national and sub-national government administration and political opposition,
- multiple public and private entity program and project streams addressing similar objectives (natural phenomena research, event monitoring, alert, emergency preparedness, civil defense, civil protection, response, recovery, reconstruction, DRR, and CCA),
- emergency management as a confining base for HFA National Platforms,
- national budgets and development plans,
- private business risk management strategies in an increasingly global, profit-driven environment,
- national competition for international financial support, and international designation of target countries,
- lack of formal acceptance of natural hazard information as a freely accessible public good,
- lack of clarity on an all hazards vs. single hazard approach, and
- constitutional reform and other legislative initiatives that assign or reassign accountability, responsibility and in some cases financial resources.

In short, there is convergence, duplication, and divergence surrounding disaster risk reduction policies, programs and projects undertaken by political and technical entities. They form part of the underlying risk factors referred to collectively as a culture of disasters by design, principally through development actions. There is overall progress that varies sector by sector in DRR, but for most part at the national level there are no goals, measurable levels of achievement or coordination between sectors and with CCA; overall there is no momentum through development for DRR.

Since 1965, the OAS, through its General Secretariat and organs, has proceeded to create and implement emergency management and vulnerability reduction policies, programs and actions. Since the late 1980s sub-regional initiatives have undertaken disaster risk reduction initiatives, initially focusing on administration of disasters and emergency

management issues. This bias was prevalent until the Cartagena Declaration of 1994 and the emergence of discussion of the disaster-development link.

Some countries have now broadened, deepened and furthered the emergency management and vulnerability reduction agenda in the hemisphere, often using participation in sub-regional inter-governmental organizations and their associated disaster risk management specialized agencies. The sub-regional inter-governmental agencies have proven to be close enough to governments to help identify and propose action on national issues but large enough to act on inter-governmental issues and provide an economy of scale in support of collective action by the countries with the support of the international community. They are forming de facto sub-regional platforms.

With the HFA and IASP as a backdrop, focal point for implementation and acquired commitments, some regional, sub-regional and national initiatives now focus on vulnerability reduction (reducing the underlying risk factors) as the priority action. With varying levels of policy support, such initiatives are making more visible the breath and depth of individual country and sub-region vulnerability, existing capacity for risk reduction, and the need for structural, financial and operational change in the way the built environment comes about.

Moreover, without progress on vulnerability reduction, particularly by specific sectors dealing with specific natural hazard vulnerability issues linked to specific target groups, the MDG will not be met, poverty will increase and increasing economic losses and exposed populations will continue.

But lack of follow through by national governments to specifically mandate risk reduction sector by sector and funding shortfalls of national and sector budgets for counterpart participation in international agreements have brought about relatively little investment in DRR. This reflects in part the outcome of conditioning by the international development community: if it is worth doing it will be supported externally. In some cases, there has been little national government interest in DRR initiatives, monitoring, evaluation, mapping, data collection, all of which are part of a national government apparatus.

The UNISRD and the OAS have touched the sectors and their policy, planning, and projects at varying levels in both the public and private spheres through their engagement with governments (which as sovereign states initiated such endeavors), business and civil society: the former more generically through the HFA, facilitation, and geographic and thematic platforms; the latter through resolutions by the OAS General Assembly, Permanent Council, SEDI, and technical assistance. Moreover, the regional political authorities are highly relevant to addressing IASP and HFA implementation and a regional hemispheric platform process.

The more recent efforts of international organizations, including those at the sub-regional level, reflect the use of a somewhat limited power of convocation with the development

community, particularly the business community, to use both economic and social development actions to address risk reduction, the only truly viable risk reduction alternative. An invitation is also being extended as well to specialized emergency management institutions with varying degrees of response. At present, then, there has been created a space for DRR at the national level and beyond that covers initiatives from natural hazard event research through reconstruction following declared disasters to national budgeting for DRR.

At the international and regional levels, IFIs, bilaterals and NGOs are holding discussions but they are constrained both internally and externally by to the heretofore presentation of the disaster-risk link as one of "mainstreaming." These institutions are being told that risk to natural hazards is an issue that has to be brought into development discussions when actually the risk issue has been there all along but has not been identified, made visible, nor acted in a manner sufficient to significantly reduce the vulnerability of populations and their related economic and social infrastructure.

In the area of risk transfer, IFIs, governments and private risk management partners are experimenting with natural hazard event-driven access (parametrics) to reconstruction capital as a complement to the traditional country access based on economic loss. To date, neither approach has dealt in any depth with the issue of accompanying financial risk management with physical and economic mitigation as a prerequisite for qualifying for access.

Making disaster reduction a development issue by specialized "disaster" or DRR agencies, conferences and declarations has solidified institutional presence in national societies. But using the term "disaster" and focusing on disaster events has also:

- Reinforced the use of the word "disaster" to describe the actual natural hazard event and not necessarily the impact or outcome of the event's impact, thus making everything a disaster to the rather obvious disinterest, avoidance and perhaps relief of those in the development community.
- Left in many cases unclear for whom was the event a disaster, who gained from creating/maintaining the vulnerable situation and why, and what are the consequences for the losers and winners after the natural hazard event.
- Created in some instances the de facto policy of holding harmless (except perhaps for the threat of financial loss) those who own and operate vulnerable economic and social infrastructure in both the private and public sectors.
- Obscured the fact that humanitarian assistance and emergency management, and the attending disciplines, are legitimate professional endeavors with growing challenges and resource needs, but who are also competing for funds and opportunities that are legitimately development issues (exposure to natural hazard events).
- Spawned competition to manage recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction funds which often constitute a surrogate for, if not the actual, national development agenda.
- Put forward the issue of the vulnerability of critical infrastructure and its role before, during and after an emergency situation, but in such a way that it mirrors

the tragedy of the (environmentally speaking) "commons" where all benefit during an emergency but there is no specific assignment of responsibility and accountability for protecting the inter-related components.
- Limited the exploration of the many paths available to effective risk reduction of those most vulnerable and least able to bring political, economic and institutional weight to bear to reduce their vulnerabilities and cover their losses.

If the presentation of DRR does not become part and parcel of the development process there appears to be little prospect for a country to diminish risk to natural hazard events so as to reverse the trends of increased economic loss and impacted populations and environmental resources. DRR simply cannot successfully compete as a special issue along side other special interests. Such an approach will not generate the necessary resources to address existing vulnerability and avoid future risk. Substantive assessments such as Hot Spots, IDEM and CAPRA, and post catastrophic event analysis are confirming not only the present vulnerability and risk around certain elements and process in society, but also the likelihood of increasing vulnerability. And unfortunately the prospect is that continuing losses will substantiate this analysis and assessments.

At this point in time in the Americas, reviewing implementation of the HFA and IASP is necessarily about gaps between what sovereign states have agreed to do and what has been achieved. For the most part, the context in which sovereign states positioned themselves to address disaster risk reduction was not to create DRR as a sector or a competing special issue with all its national, sub-regional, regional and international trappings. The HFA and IASP in and of themselves are good self-guidance and instruction for acting on risk reduction and monitoring (or at least periodically reporting) the impact of the actions taken in society. The countries have put forth no significant contradictions or diversions in these two approaches to risk reduction.

The HFA and IASP differ yet complement each other in their breath and depth. It is not surprising that the HFA is less specific yet less broad than the IASP. The HFA went as far as it could go given the ISDR constituency. The same can be said about the IASP and the OAS constituency. When both HFA and IASP are compared with the emerging approaches at the sub-regional levels, it is clear that in the scope of inter-governmental interplay, the sub-region holds a key position to at once touch directly national policy and practice while at the same time helping to shape sovereign states participation in broader inter-governmental initiatives. And the regional and sub-regional intergovernmental political organizations have exhibited less a propensity to consider or address DRR as a sector, and more ability to convene development sectors to discuss risk reduction issues.

In the broadest sense, there has been progress in HFA and IASP implementation, particularly in dealing with emergency situations and reducing loss of life, but at a great price in time. It is sobering to recognize that since 1965, a date commensurate with the modern LAC development movement, more than half of the vulnerable population and infrastructure has come into being in the region, regardless of the location, severity or frequency of natural hazard events. Many of the disasters that have occurred over the past forty years were the result of known vulnerability but inaction. There is now

increasing vulnerability as a by-product of the very development actions addressing other vulnerabilities.

Vulnerability to natural hazard events is a principal but not the political priority cause of harm to populations and their associated built and natural environments. But natural hazard events are more readily understood and are one of the vulnerabilities most susceptible to societal action through day to day interaction of civil society, business and industry, culture and education, arts and sciences in concert with the governments' very efforts toward betterment. Development is and should be about filling gaps between what is needed (or desired) and what exists.

The discussion on the HFA Expected Outcome is straight forward. It is not surprising at this point in the evolution of DRR implementation that the HFA elements receiving the most discussion are Strategic Goal 1 and Priorities for Action 1 and 4.

This report necessarily focuses most heavily on gaps, challenges and opportunities in the public sector and the links with the international community, business, civil society, and NGOs both domestic and international.

Expected Outcome - The substantial reduction of disaster losses in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries

Relative to the HFA Strategic Goals and Priorities for Action, the Expected Outcome has been paid the least amount of attention in respect to monitoring and reporting, yet it is the sole output component of the HFA, and the only component where measurement in quantifiable terms is fairly straight forward and achievable.

For most countries participating in sub-regional intergovernmental DRR agencies and political working committees (ACE, CAPRADE, CEPREDENAC, and CDERA) the trend is reduction of loss of life, principally through larger and more effective emergency evacuations and humanitarian assistance. But the numbers of people impacted and the economic and environmental assets lost (declared and undeclared) continue to rise. In those countries where federal governments with strong state (or provincial or regional governments) such as Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, and the USA, the same trends generally hold true.

Changing and evolving approaches to DRR, particularly since 2004 at the sub-regional level, call for more highly focused efforts on reducing the loss of social, economic and environmental assets, and lessening the population at risk as part of national, sub-region and regional initiatives using development actions. This has allowed countries to concentrate efforts on their national strategies and plans, guide international assistance to top priority, mandated actions, and make more efficient reporting processes. But to date loss has not been incentive enough to undertake the necessary actions to reduce risk.

It is note worthy to mention at this point that by and large HFA reporting by individual countries makes little note of the acquired commitments made through their participation in the OAS. Countries do make some reference to their acquired commitments to sub-regional inter-governmental commitments. But in both cases national reporting reflects a lack of internal consistency and continuity in both emergency management and disaster risk reduction through development efforts.

The majority of acquired commitments found in the OAS IASP were adopted by the sovereign states prior to their adoption of the HFA. The HFA reporting initiative of the UNISDR System draws attention and can be used to identify progress on specific policy, program and project initiatives by sector called for by the IASP. Here to fore that type of information has gone largely under reported, perhaps because of lack of implementation, or lack of stakeholder participation in the reporting process. And the Regional Forum can become the much needed space and dialogue on development-based priorities for DRR in order to move forward the adopted agendas by both the public and private sectors in all their facets.

The Way Forward

First and foremost, countries with the support of all actors must document their national (and hopefully sub-national) trends in loss of life and of social, economic and environmental assets. Sub-regional organizations should strengthen their efforts to assist in registering and reporting natural hazard events, declared disasters and economic losses which can be used to strengthen reporting on HFA, IASP, and sub-regional and national action plan implementation. The UNISDR and OAS Systems should undertake collaborative efforts to support reporting on the Expected Outcome through the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas.

The Regional Platform can become the convening mechanism, the process and the reporting forum for high level technical consultations with broad participation of established inter-governmental forums for HFA Expected Outcome benchmarking, monitoring and reporting with a shared set of baseline assessments for individual and joint documentation and publication. Both the UNISDR Americas and OAS/INDM have a vested interest in leading, encouraging, and dialoguing with its constituents (UNISDR National Platforms and designated INDM NOFPs, respectively) to assess progress towards implementing the HFA Expected Outcome and OAS acquired commitments. These and other international and sub-regional entities are the planks that already exist from which the Regional Platform is made and upon which needed processes must be supported. The Regional Platform can discuss the policy and strategy for technical management and operations of DRR.

The Regional Platform should lead the way for the following dialogue and monitoring initiatives:

1. The creation of a common and shared data base that includes data directly related to the HFA Expected Outcome. Such a data base will be useful to not only the countries, but also their partner donors, IFIs, bilaterals, NGOs, and the private

sector. Such a data base is not an attempt at an enforced common reporting form, an idea mentioned by both governments and donors alike to facilitate a more efficient manner in which to monitor activities and their results. But whatever shared common programming, monitoring and evaluation system that might come about, it will need a shared data base from which to draw its information.

2. The creation of a shared, common meeting calendar. A once-yearly meeting of national and international entities from both the public and private sectors can propose and discuss temporal frameworks for meetings, programs, projects, training courses, and evaluations one to three years out. These would include not only national and sub-regional, but also regional and international activities.
3. A yearly review of sub-regional and regional emergency management agreements, approaches and implementation.
4. A periodic review of collaboration and coordination of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation initiatives including a yearly hemispheric session between HFA National Platforms and CCA National Commissions.

To respond to changing and evolving approaches to DRR, the Regional Platform process should lead the regrouping of HFA and the IASP components for the second half of the HFA implementation period. Applicable components should be clustered around the following the areas on a priority basis:

1. A collaborative multinational response to emergency management,
2. Vulnerability reduction to natural hazards through development mechanisms, and
3. Improved reporting on the HFA Expected Outcome.

If there is a demand for a Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, it is precisely along the lines of the UNISDR and OAS/GS agreement for the two organizations to bring a call for, and a detailing of, action and monitoring based on inter-governmental commitment. In the Americas there is no existing forum that can discuss, monitor and push for implementation of these commitments with the participation of civil society and business interests in the way the Regional Platform can bring this about. The UNISDR system with its Support Group, and the OAS with its IACNDR and INDM, need a broader forum with the participation of, but not the governance by, sovereign states to push forward an agenda on emergency management and disaster risk reduction in and through development with business and civil society.

The principle task of the Regional Platform is to engage government, the international community, business and civil society in such a way that the direction, coordination, follow-through, monitoring and reporting of disaster risk reduction of specific populations and their related economic and social infrastructure is in compliance with acquired commitments including the HFA Expected Outcome and the IASP.

Strategic Goal 1 - The more 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

In the Americas, the Cartagena Declaration made it clear that disasters in the strictest use of the word are development problems. Strategic Goal 1 is the most development-oriented element of the HFA even as it mentions specifically only sustainable development. It is complemented by the IASP, which includes multiple OAS Member State initiatives for risk reduction through development actions.

The number, breath and strength of HFA National Platforms are growing slowly. In many countries there is both debate and criticism within the National Platform as to DRR approaches, and there is also inter-governmental debate. Also at the national level, there is evidence of a lack of coordination with national and specific sector development plans. There is in some instances a gap in HFA implementation reporting in coverage (national to local, governmental to private, NGO to for-profit business). Coverage of HFA implementation depends greatly on the breath of representation in the National Platform and the institutional author of the national report.

In many cases the national HFA National Platform and CCA National Committee are evolving in isolation of one another, and in isolation of other national groups dealing with the ENSO phenomena and environmental degradation. This is manifest most often in competition for leadership in community-level vulnerability reduction to atmospheric and hydrologic hazards initiatives and the related funding mechanisms.

Specialized sub-regional agencies for emergency management and DRR are transitioning and evolving and this impacts sub-regional intergovernmental organizations as well as their international counterparts. The international community is dealing with balanced support between offering models including VCA initiatives and respecting sub-regional policies and processes.

Most significant is the presence of de facto sub-regional platforms formed by the intergovernmental political organizations and its specialized sector agencies. The present leadership at the sub-regional with support from regional entities is pushing for policy change and effective actions through using development actions for natural hazard vulnerability reduction that put emphasis on the poor starting at the local level.

But there is not always a consensus, nor a coherent national policy shaping the country's position in respect to emergency management agency and DRR in development. This is manifest among other ways in the lack of coordination at the interface of science and emergency management operations, governance and political opposition, and in effective vulnerability reduction through development planning and investment.

Countries individually and collectively are discussing a variety of approaches for covering disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and vulnerability reduction. Life

safety, livelihoods and environmental protection are most often cited as priorities, as well as the requisite avoidance of overlapping, duplicating and paralleling institutional efforts.

When considering DRR and CCA, to date the preference has been to call for their simultaneous integration into sustainable and safe development practices without examining in depth the convergence and divergence of their respective risk management mechanisms. Specific international mandates such as the Work Programme of Nairobi and the Adaptation Policy Framework (APF) from the CCA process are not used or considered as tools by those setting the DRR agenda and vice versa with reference to HFA. There is reference to DRR as a tool of CCA. The opposite might also be considered where CCA is a specific subset of atmospheric and hydrologic events and conditions as DRR aims to reduce emergency situations and the need for declaration of a disaster. The implications of a lack of a coherent policy on atmospheric and hydrologic hazards and associated risk management are only now being explored, as are perceptions as to the convergence and divergence of DRR and CCA protocols, funding mechanisms and implementation. It is worth adding that CCA has elicited and gathered resources where DRR has failed to do so. And finally there may be no need for a call for cessation of development funding in favor of CCA or DRR, but rather recognize and use all development initiatives as mechanisms for DRR and CCA implementation.

National goals and measures for progress on DRR implementation are usually qualitative and rarely quantitative. While "win-win" strategies are called for and proclaimed, development processes always produce local and national winners even as losers impacted by natural hazard events abound as disasters are declared. Presently, DRR action plans are seen sometimes as a discrete part of national development plans; monitoring and evaluation are sometimes part and parcel of their design and execution. As such, process and product indicators covering management and results (impacts and effects, respectively) are sometimes included.

Various inter-governmental forums and specialized agencies including those related to the national ministries with their respective declared roles, responsibilities and plans of action often proceed with little consultation and less consensus although they are sponsored by the same sovereign states. The onus is on individual governments to assure their coordinated compliance with the global, hemispheric and sub-regional commitments and mandates to which they are a party.

The Way Forward

The HFA and the IASP offer broad guidance and often specific guidance which participating sovereign states have adopted. Growing out of these acquired commitments the use of a Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas is valuable and necessary. The UNISDR and the OAS/GS can use its power of convocation to create a space and a place complementary to formal inter-governmental discussion. All stakeholders in DRR can participate in a well defined agenda of a Regional Platform. The Regional Platform is not a funding mechanism although successful execution of its

agenda can lead to broader and deeper support to national, sub-national and regional initiatives.

To begin, the Regional Platform through the UNISDR and OAS/GS with support of the INDM should establish a dialogue with the following stakeholders at the highest technical level to review their draft reports covering implementation of the HFA and IASP as a support mechanism to their formal reporting process:

- Sub-regional political organizations,
- Sub-regional specialized disaster management agencies,
- Regional and sub-regional sector-specific inter-governmental organizations,
- UN specialized agencies,
- OAS specialized organs,
- International NGOs,
- Sub-regional civil society associations and networks,
- Regional and sub-regional business (by sector) associations and professional societies.

Second, the Regional Platform should be used for convening consultations at the highest technical level with PAHO, REDLAC, regional and sub-regional inter-governmental organization and emergency management agencies representatives, OAS and UN specialized agencies, NGOs and the private sector for:

- Preparing recommendations to be forward to the OAS Committee on Hemispheric Security (CHS) and the IACNDR on modification and adoption of the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Case of Emergencies and other legal frameworks,
- Guidance on the operation of the Inter-American Fund for Emergency Situations (FONDEM),
- Suggested agenda items and technical support for action by the IACNDR, and
- Migration issues related to declared disasters owing to natural hazard events.

Third, the Regional Platform should be used for convening consultations at the highest technical level of regional and sub-regional inter-governmental forum representatives for:

- Strengthening natural hazard disaster risk reduction as part of sub-regional and sector development goals and strategies,
- Strengthening HFA reporting from a national rather than an institutional perspective,
- Strengthening HFA National Platform and CCA National Commission collaboration, and
- Strengthening HFA and IASP implementation as part of attaining MDG.

Fourth, the Regional Platform under the leadership of the INDM should be used for convening consultations at the highest technical level of sub-regional and regional inter-governmental forum representatives and the international community for:

- Prioritizing DRR initiatives, minimizing duplication, and maximizing access to international support,

- Reviewing approaches and experiences for including DRR in sub-regional and national and sector development plans,
- Reviewing DRR-related information and community of practice networks,
- Reviewing HFA implementation with inter-governmental forums for harmonization with MDG, SIDS/CCC, Mauritius Strategy, IPASD, APF and other commitments and in anticipation of further acquired agreements including the legally binding provisions of COP 15,
- Reviewing mandated action areas including;
    1. early warning systems
    2. public awareness and dissemination of information
    3. building codes
    4. land use management
    5. land use planning
    6. land tenure and registration
    7. ecosystem management and protection
    8. risk transfer strategies
    9. national contingency plans and funds for pre-and post-disaster situations

Fifth, the Regional Platform should be used to convene in concert with the appropriate regional and sub-regional specialized sector organizations high level technical workshops covering natural hazard risk reduction in the following areas:

- Health
- Tourism
- Water resources
- Agriculture and food security
- Energy
- Transportation

Strategic Goal 2 - The development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels, in particular at the community level which can systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards

Issues of stagnate or declining levels of development and increasing levels of risk are making more obvious the increasing challenges to dealing with exposed populations and increasing economic losses. This situation is prompting countries and sub-regional organizations to have a broader and deeper look at the convergence and divergence of actions in preparing for and responding to emergency situations, and the underlying causes and response to natural hazard risk in development. These situations are provoking an examination of institutional settings and the differences between emergency management coordination and the coordination of risk reduction initiatives in development. Part of this examination is the accompanying discussion of institutional and professional roles and responsibilities. There is some discussion as to the usefulness of naming a high level risk management official and how that position would function as greater accountability and responsibility is taken on by the actual owners and operators of vulnerable economic and social infrastructure. The same is occurring on the subject of

naming a single agency as responsible for risk reduction of critical infrastructure or a collection of economic and social infrastructure items. In some instances, these and other discussions have led to changes in policy and legislation change including constitutional reform to reorient and reassign responsibility and accountability for disaster management and disaster risk reduction.

Also under examination are mechanisms using loss-driven requests for access to capital (declared disasters and emergency situations) and index driven access to capital (with issues such as conditions precedent, borrowing capacity, risk transfer and catastrophic funds, parametric insurance, etc. as prerequisites). These discussions primarily address mechanisms for financial risk management, but to date they have rarely incorporated issues of concurrent, linked economic and physical risk management. It is also worthy of note that while most DRR initiatives focus on governments and public sector action when most economic and social infrastructure is owned by the private sector.

Capacity building, particularly of qualified staff, in the countries is constrained on two sides. The first constraint are budgets that are too small and even proportionately smaller numbers of staff in the one or two institutions assigned multiple roles covering hazard monitoring and alert, preparedness and response, recovery and reconstruction through to risk reduction in public investment projects. The subject matter and breath of expertise is far too broad for effective capacity building under present assigned institutional responsibilities. The second constraint is that line ministries and private sector enterprises who own and operate vulnerable economic and social infrastructure have little incentive to develop or hire competent staff for emergency management and risk reduction because of lack of responsibility and accountability for designing and carrying through DRR initiatives, pressure on budgets related to profits and deficits, and the lack of a mission statement appropriating the DRR process as their own.

The international development community has made efforts for capacity building through intra- and inter-institutional initiatives in training and pilot studies. But to date most mechanisms for risk reduction have focused on financial risk issues around risk transfer of central governments, lenders, and the underlying credit worthiness and national contingency funds. All of this is well within the recognizable purview of financial institutions and capacity building in physical and economic risk is not seen as an issue. At the local level the concerns have focused on physical and economic risk abatement, starting at the bottom and up through efforts of community development, humanitarian assistance, micro-enterprises, and natural resource management. This is were and by whom most capacity building has taken place to date.

It is recognized that finding the means to underwrite loan project preparation, a critical capacity, is a continuing challenge to governments and IFIs alike. But the increased need for support in this area comes at a time of limited sub-regional and regional organization resources to fund pre-investment studies, targeted priority countries by international donors and agencies, and preferred single country lending by IFIs.

Moreover, thematic DRR platforms have not prompted a formal call for addressing these two constraints, and sector political response has been modest if not mute.

There is no reason to believe or hope that IFI, bilateral and NGO support of stand alone, specialized DRR agencies and programs will offer the proper mechanisms or capacity building required for comprehensive national natural hazard assessment, monitoring, and alert initiatives, and risk reduction initiatives through sectors. It is only through using development institutions, their mechanisms and creating a demand for capacity that strengthening will come about.

The Way Forward

At the institutional level, agendas for emergency management as well as for risk reduction must assign priority actions to actors who are present and participating (through an accepted invitation or their own power of convocation). From now on these processes should be transformed with shared and coordinated efforts using, in particularly, sub-regional forums.

Where strengthening institutions, mechanisms and capacities at the national level is dependent as is often the case on the international community, international actors must lay aside avoidance of inclusive sub-regional initiatives and join emerging risk management in sub-regional development sector DRR initiatives. They might use third party donations (usually trust funds) to finance capacity building and piloting of approaches, as well as generating directly or indirectly programming documentation and borrowers' request for loans in disaster risk reduction.

Local, national and international participation in country HFA, CCA and MDG reporting will assist in focusing related actors to dealing with strengthening institutions, mechanisms and capacity building. Review and revision is necessary of national development organizations' (NDO) role in HFA National Platforms and CCA National Committees, MDG implementation, regional/sub-regional DRR as part of development strategies, and national and sector development plans. Particular attention should be paid to the NDOs' role in redefining community development projects that include DRR. Furthermore, public enforcement of existing legislation pertaining to all aspects of DRR legislation is as necessary as government compliance with sub-regional, regional and global DRR acquired commitments.

In addition, review and update and/or adopt building codes, land use planning regulations, natural resource management strategies, and zoning ordinances as public sector mechanisms for disaster risk reduction. This will enhance institutional strengthening and create a demand for capacity building where none now exists in the development community.

Overall, the four levels of country authority – national administration, line ministries, sub-national administration (including municipalities and other national administrative

divisions), and civil society (including NGOs and the private business sector) must participate in the strengthening of their institutions, mechanisms and capacity. This will permit greater use of natural hazard information in the taking of risk management decisions.

Strategic Goal 3 - The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programs in the reconstruction of affected communities

Risk reduction is an increasing visible issue in reconstruction policies, programs and projects, often at the instigation if not insistence of IFIs and international donor, humanitarian assistance and community development institutions. They have set up dialogues and shared experiences, all beginning a relatively short time ago, and all in a more comprehensive manner than can be said for DRR in the national and municipal development processes. A similar situation is developing around CCA.

This has come about because of international donors' desire to avoid attending to repetitive losses in the same geographical areas with the same populations and associated infrastructure, and the identified opportunity to mandate requirements for building back more safely as a requisite for support (harkening back to the old but grossly disorienting quip about the "window of opportunity following a disaster"). Filling an international assistance gap not addressed by national and international development institutions in carrying out their normal development operations (often by political choice), many international and national humanitarian assistance as well as community development agencies have created and implemented stand alone post-disaster recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction programs. In some instances, recovery and reconstruction have been defined, managed and promoted as the bridge between emergency response and development. The visibility and transparency in these reconstruction initiatives are not always seen in development operations. DRR initiatives are not presently considered in most negotiated sector development loans and grants, often at the insistence of the country.

International NGOs working through networks and formal consortiums (INEE, ProVention, COGSS, etc.) are taking a lead in researching, discussing, proposing, and disseminating performance standards and norms for reconstruction. These DRR initiatives are being undertaken often at the request of if not contracted by IFIs, bilaterals, NGOs and national governments. Through the process of developing norms and standards as well as in applying them in specific projects, the international community and the recipient government have a technical meeting space to review and accept preconditions, monitoring, evaluation and objectives for reconstruction. Moreover, access to reconstruction support from the international community can be more accessible and represent larger financial resources than would otherwise be made available to the country. In the end IFI and donor-driven DRR initiatives may have a demonstrable impact on new economic and social infrastructure risk reduction long

before there takes place any substantive risk reduction of existing economic and social infrastructure.

International reconstruction support defined by the number of projects and the volume of financial support, whether commercial loans, concessionary loans or grants from third party donors, continues to grow. IFIs now report post-disaster reconstruction and DRR grants and lending as a significant part of their portfolio. Yet there is no clear understanding of the qualitative and quantitative profile of post-disaster reconstruction activities by sector, geopolitical administrative space (sub-national or national level), related population groups (age, sex, educational level, employment), economic and social infrastructure, hazard, nor by vulnerability and risk as part of a country's overall development activities, economy, debt, and GDP. And it does appear that far too often relief, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction following a declared disaster are in fact the main focus and economic stimulus of the country's development agenda.

Finally it must be noted that this Strategic Goal focuses on reconstruction, which reflects a far too prevalent view held by the international community and national governments alike that somehow reconstruction following a natural hazard event and subsequent disaster declaration is best addressed apart from development.

The Way Forward

In the long road ahead to reduce vulnerability of populations and their associated economic and social infrastructure, the processes and products coming out of post-disaster reconstruction efforts, together with those from titular DRR initiatives must be immediately put to use by and for development operations in IFIs, bilaterals, NGOs and most importantly national governments and their ministries, business and civil society.

To the extent possible, further elaboration of DRR approaches destined for reconstruction should be take place as development operations. Systematic integration of DRR into reconstruction should be seen as a sub-set of systematic integration of DRR into development operations and managed as such.

On a technical level, additional DRR guidance for development and reconstruction should be more conditioned as to the specific hazard risk reduction context (hazard type, vulnerability, risk, existing and proposed economic and social infrastructure, livelihood, sustainable economic endeavor, and life safety or functionality).

There is a gap between the national needs for international assistance and the anticipated international resources, including those for post-disaster reconstruction and DRR initiatives, as well as those for development investment including those for MDG, social safety net initiatives, environmental management, and CCA. As part of broader discussions on international development assistance, a dialogue aimed at guidance should begin at the sub-regional level to discuss international development assistance in the context of perceived and anticipated maximum national access to overall disaster risk reduction, including access to capital for emergency relief, response, recovery and

reconstruction following a disaster declaration. In the case when no disaster is declared and no major reconstruction effort is needed in the resource disbursal timeframe, use of such funds should be allowed for risk reduction of economic and social infrastructure through development institutions. Such a dialogue will assist in deciding between budget allotments for emergency response apart from recovery and rehabilitation (reconstruction) and also help to address the issue of sustainability of DRR initiatives and for defining and dealing with assistance gaps.

Technical preparation for this dialogue can take place through the Regional Platform process though sub-regional working groups with broad participation from the private and public sector and line ministries and with recommendations for action by the IACNDR.

Priority for Action 1 - Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation

Disaster risk reduction as a national and by extension local priority is by ISDR definition the first priority for action. Considerable advances have been made at the national and local levels to deal with emergency management issues. Making disaster risk reduction a development priority through national, sector and community initiatives is less visible, however, including when investments in risk reduction are presented as apart from development initiatives. Risk transfer is being more widely discussed across emergency management-development institution lines, but it too is being pursued without concurrently addressing the underlying causes of vulnerability. Most progress has been made in the area of financial risk management, but much less has been attempted from a national and local perspective for dealing with the economic and physical components of risk by specialized DRR agencies.

Part of the regional DRR trend is that emergency management institutions often remain in charge of its implementation, and DRR itself is presented, if not recognized, as a separate sector. Within the same institution (national or international, governmental or NGO, pubic or private) units responsible for development interested in addressing their parochial natural hazard risk management issues are juxtaposed with a specialized DRR unit with all the competition, overlap and duality that this situation implies. Thus sectors may have little incentive to address risk issues. Moreover, whether a public or private institution, there is often a lack of vertical integration from policy to practice, and from local to national levels of operation.

International development assistance approaches over the past 40+ years have conditioned recipient countries to request resources and place priority on issues defined or negotiated with the international community. Today, such international development assistance makes available resources to address development (line sectors), environmental management, social investment including social trust funds, DRR and most recently CCA in parallel tracks.

The task of investment in disaster risk reduction challenges international and national institutions alike. They must make risk management part of development efforts and avoid using natural hazard risk reduction as a stand alone special interest issue. Initial efforts by one or more IFIs to focus on ex-ante rather than ex-post support for DRR have met considerable success including the use of decentralized development mechanisms in the country. Such initiatives may be constrained, however, by the volume of support requested for post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, credit ceilings and intra-national competition for available financial support. Moreover, international resources for preparing and implementing grant and loan projects are often dependent on donor funds managed by institutional units other than those responsible for DRR actions.

Much of DRR has been created and implemented as a product, not a process, by both the international community and its national and local counterparts. These products are often produced along side ongoing development efforts. Reporting on verifiable, bona fide products also often lie outside ongoing development efforts. And often the products are in the form of mandated immediate results by donor institutions and are produced in the wake of a declared disaster. The reporting on a product is taken to be the monitoring of, and the success of, a DRR process. These products, however, may contribute little to long term sustainable economic growth and security, or social justice. And since DRR programs are largely supported by international assistance, the sustainability of the program is often in doubt. DRR may be difficult to implement as a product, but it is even more difficult to measure as a process.

At the sub-regional level, DRR approaches are now distinguishing between, and discussing the advantages of, an integrated approach though various actors and administrative and operational levels on a sector basis rather than a multi-sector approach that often never reaches implementation.

A sector-based institutional approach for disaster risk reduction is a simple but far reaching concept. Often supported and oriented by sub-regional organizations, and in some cases isolated national initiatives, sector institutions can go about priority setting for disaster risk reduction in a meaningful way as owners and operators of vulnerable economic and social infrastructure. They are reaching out beyond the programmatic bounds of narrowly defined concepts of disaster management.

These initiatives sometimes lead to engagement as part of the HFA National Platform. The sectors' presence or absence reflects internal challenges in the structure and participation of sponsored meetings using the various mechanisms and processes at the UNISDR secretariat's disposal. It also includes the challenges in partnering with other UN specialized agencies on themes where DRR is, can or ought to be an issue.

Too often, however, there has been little or no progress towards putting the owners and operators of the vulnerable economic and social infrastructure (whether from the public or private sectors) as the priority partner in framing, discussing and acting on DRR initiatives. There are cases where the national emergency management, civil defense, civil protection or national emergency committee has been given the responsibility for

DRR beyond emergency preparedness and response, including for risk reduction of critical infrastructure. In some instances calls for such specialized attributions and roles continue. When such agencies are the organizers and heads of National Platforms, there has not always been engagement of relevant sector actors to lead DRR initiatives. In such circumstances, HFA reporting process is often through the lens of emergency management.

In the sub-regions of the Americas (Caribbean, Central America, South America/Andean countries), individual countries, often led by sub-regional disaster management and risk reduction specialized agencies (CDERA, CEPREDNAC and CAPRADE, respectively as well as the Asociacion Iberioamerican de Organismos Gubermentales para Defensa y Proteccion Civil), are in ever more discussions with their respective coordinating political bodies (CARICOM, SICA, CAN respectively as well as the ACS and MERCOSUR) on the subject of DRR initiatives beyond emergency management. In responding to national, sub-regional and regional mandates, these agencies are reviewing (1) the relationship of emergency management to the broader DRR issue, (2) the role of traditional civil defense, civil protection and national emergency committees, including that of the uniformed services, and (3) the formulation and adoption of DRR as a priority for policy, budgeting and implementation by line ministries representing specific economic and social sectors. These may or may not take place in the context of, or knowledge of, the country's HFA National Platform.

In those countries in the hemisphere with the largest economies, and federal or sub-national divisions with political and economic control over much of public services and infrastructure development for business and settlements, there is

1. more accountability for risk due to natural hazards, more use of financial risk transfer by the public sector,
2. more dependency on master planning, enterprise and industrial zones, zoning and building codes to limit vulnerability, but
3. more mixing of natural hazard risk management with other security issues (terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration), which are often defined as a higher priority by the central government.

Regarding the role of thematic platforms on sector policy and participation, to date the thematic platforms covering education and health have not altered pre-existing regional policy nor produced substantive calls for action. Moreover, the declarations reflect the gap between policy and action, which in turn reflects the underlying priority of the sector.

The Way Forward

The initiatives directly involving sector actors are demonstrating the most efficient and effective means of decentralizing responsibilities and capacities, providing for dedicated and adequate resources at all levels, implementing at a local level DRR initiatives with verifiable success, fomenting policy and legal frameworks including provisions for civil society participation, and building towards multi-sector HFA National Platform participation.

The monitoring and reporting on strengthening this institutional basis can be supported by the Regional Platform, led by the UNISDR Americas and OAS/GS. They can work towards direct involvement of sector specialized agencies and their parent political organizations through their policies and priorities for action, as well as the acquired commitments of the IASP and those at the sub-regional level. The Regional Platform as a process can provide a needed non-political place and space to discuss implantation, needs, resources, priorities, agendas, and calendars. As a product, the sessions of the Regional Platform can serve as the forum for specialized sector agencies from government, business and civil society (including professional and trade associations, labor unions, communities of practice, social networks, etc.) to report on HFA and IASP implementation, beginning with their individual contributions to reaching the HFA Expected Outcome.

The proposed process and product that the Regional Platform offers will be only as strong and valuable as the public and private sectors' use of this opportunity, and the potential for gain through preparations for that use. In order to secure a strong and value-added use, the following actions should be taken by the multiple actors at the national, sub-regional and regional levels:

- Greater emphasis by UN specialized agencies, IFIs, international donors and NGOs, and by the regional, sub-regional and national sectors/ministries themselves to address risk reduction through development investment,
- Greater emphasis by UNDP, IACNDR, INDEM, SEDI, IFIs, international donors and national ministries of planning, finance and economy to integrate risk reduction policy, programs and projects into national development plans,
- Greater clarity on the part of the HFA Global Platform as to the context and contribution of the HFA National Platforms the broader development stage, and
- Greater commitment on the part of HFA National Platforms to push forward implementation of commitments with the actors which control the level of risk of economic and social infrastructure and their associated populations.
- Greater definition by the countries as to the role of government, civil society and the business community in the supervision, control, monitoring and enforcement of DRR initiatives through projects and legislation.

As implementation by central government is necessary, there must be the mandatory presence of public finance and sector technical participation at the outset of risk management policies, strategies and program initiatives. DRR initiatives must not be presented as completed or nearly completed initiatives to the sector responsible for the risk. Such an approach will push forward acceptable policy and legal frameworks, decentralize responsibilities and build capacity where it is needed.

Considering all development initiatives as DRR initiatives, and then deciding on the dedicated, hopefully adequate resources at all levels for their implementation will maximize democratic participation, bring in multi-sector participation, and use existing decentralized decision making authority.

Finally, it would be well to consider the word “development” as appearing at least informally in the title of Priority for Action 1 between the words “local” and “priority.”

Priority for Action 2 - Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning

Energy and agriculture sector initiatives along with national meteorological services have traditionally formed the basis for atmospheric and hydrologic phenomena assessment and monitoring. The energy sector has very parochial hazard and basin-specific assessment initiatives; the agriculture sector monitoring services have fallen into disrepair; the national met monitoring services have received some sustaining international support. The energy sector and public geological services have long standing initiatives in geologic hazard assessment and monitoring with often minimal, but relatively sustaining support by the international community. Priority research, assessment and monitoring for these hazards has been undergoing a shift from a pure science to a societal impact focus in response to the growing impact of hazard events with their profiles of place, severity and frequency. This is particularly true in the case of climate change research related to atmospheric and hydrologic phenomena.

Warning systems are limited relative to the exposed population and infrastructure. Climate change researchers have established specific monitoring systems, but often choose sophisticated regional and sub-regional modeling supported by remote sensing without involvement of local communities for observations, monitoring, analysis, or even dissemination. Many communities have undertaken flood alert systems, but these are developed and function by default outside of broader climate monitoring and information exchange protocols. Some have been developed, not in coordination with, but as a defense against possible flood events triggered by agriculture, energy, mining, transportation and water resource projects.

There are instances of increasing capacity for integrated natural hazard phenomena monitoring, early warning and alerts, particularly through community based vulnerability assessment and capacity initiatives focusing on, or evolving from, integrated community development programs from global NGOs such as IFRC and local participation. Progress on sub-regional and national systems is coming about principally through post-disaster investment in geologic hazard assessment, and climate research including atmospheric and hydrologic hazard assessment supporting climate change adaptation programs.

But in general neither governments nor their supporters see nor accept natural hazard information as a public good with free access to information on a timely basis through appropriate reporting and dissemination mechanisms. The generation of much information is dependent on specific donor and lender financed initiatives. Hazard maps are most often not required for development lending yet are used as a control mechanism for post-disaster reconstruction that include DRR initiatives. Often hazard information is only for sale through pubic or private-controlled access. Yet there is no prospect that such activities will ever cover the demand for hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment

information once economic and social sectors take on their responsibility for preparing their individual risk management strategies.

Moreover, while much material is disseminated as risk assessments, the bulk of the available information is hazard location or vulnerability assessments. There are incipient programs to not only explain the differences in these assessments but also discuss and promote priority setting in terms of hazard type, geographical and administrative setting, target population and building type, and life safety and functionality.

The application of geographic information systems (GIS) has a history in the region longer than appreciated of storing and retrieving natural hazard, vulnerability and risk information concerning populations and their economic and social infrastructure. As GIS technology has become more sophisticated, accessible and understood, analytical work and spatially related data bases have grown in number and application. Hazard identification and vulnerability analysis initiatives such as Hot Spots, IDEM and CAPRA use GIS technology to qualify and quantify vulnerable populations and estimate financial losses and other impacts due to hazard impacts across areas of government responsibility. But just as hazard, vulnerability and risk information is not part of a sector's data base for planning, investment and implementation, this information is not typically part of a sector's use of GIS. The result is that better mechanisms are needed to make natural hazard, vulnerability and risk information part of the development decision making process.

Almost without exception, no sector has carried out mandated vulnerability and risk assessments of economic and social infrastructure and their related populations sufficient to define vulnerability and risk in order to guide development actions. This includes making the risk management information and choices more transparent to those who not only benefit from such actions, but also to those who are dependent on the public provision of the related goods and services.

The Way Forward

In the end, only the economic and social development sectors themselves can and will prepare their vulnerability and risk assessments using natural hazard information generated as a public good. Consortiums of public and private enterprises, often bound together by ownership and operations or concession contracts must support the identification and monitoring of relevant hazards, and then act on assessed and desirable levels of vulnerability and risk.

This is particularly needed when dealing with separate and often competing atmospheric and hydrologic monitoring and alert systems spread across public and private entities. Thus coordination and cooperation between issue-specific climate change adaptation and broader natural hazard risk management be put in place. This is particularly urgent when and where these systems are related to water resource management including trans-boundary, ground and surface water issues related to agriculture, energy, mining, recreation, transportation, and drinking water consumption.

Whether through CCA, community development, sector development or humanitarian assistance, international support is needed for local community involvement in natural hazard, particularly climate event monitoring, reporting and feedback based on priority locations, population groups (poverty alleviation, gender), and hazards (atmospheric and hydrologic, and avalanche and landslide events). There is not one acceptable model for national monitoring, storing and disseminating hazard, vulnerability and risk information. But cooperation and coordination of all systems to enhance risk management, alerts and early warning at the community level must be put in place.

Each sector should draw up the list of hazard, vulnerability and risk information it presently needs, wants, and will use to make development decisions and proposals for how such information will be generated. The list of sectors includes the agriculture, drinking water and sanitation, energy, health, mining, natural resource conservation, recreation, transportation, tourism and urban/settlement/housing sectors.

Priority for Action 3 - Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels

It is not unfair to state that the current gap between acquired commitments and DRR implementation by governments is in large part a reflection of the risk management views of society. There is a gap, then, between what is perceived as the knowledge, innovation and education needed to build a culture of safety and resilience as identified in the acquired commitments and interpreted through general discussions, and the actual demand for and prioritization of these functions presented by government, business and civil society. There exists a juxtaposition of two cultures: an individual can access from around the globe through the Internet knowledge, experience and expertise with case studies with specific place names and actors, while at the same time lacking totally information, decision and action on specific vulnerability and risk issues related to the school or library where he or she is seated.

When DRR and education including public awareness, communications including information transfer and IT, and urban and community development sectors are discussed, the analysis, conclusions and recommendations as to reducing risk are usually quiet general, and rarely include those who actually make decisions day to day about living vulnerable lives. There is no specificity as to the population or societal group, locale or geopolitical setting, goal or objective except for the rather robust area of primary and secondary school curriculum, community-level emergency preparedness and response, and community vulnerability and capacity assessment.

Attention to education and efforts in the region including those prompted by disperse, locally focused community-based endeavors, the OAS EDUPLANHemisferico, COGSS and joined by the UNISDR Thematic Cluster/Platform for Knowledge and Education (2006-2007) have increased the knowledge base for those seeking guidance in DRR. There has been greater community outreach, whose impact has been mostly at the sub-

national level led by NGOs and community endeavors. These efforts also have increased the visibility of the gaps between public policies and actions, and the overarching goals of private risk management business approaches,

There has also been an increase in involvement of universities and research centers both public and private. There are a growing number of institutions offering advanced degree, undergraduate degree, certificate programs and continuing education courses. These are mostly related to emergency management, but also risk management, and use of hazard, vulnerability and risk information in a variety of disciplines in not only engineering, planning and architecture, but also the social sciences, and the arts and humanities.

Existing and new social, professional, information and thematic networks inside and outside formal institutional boundaries are organizing discussions and participating in a variety of forums on policy and practice. Most of the emphasis is on identifying good practices, guidance and presentation materials for use by those interested in DRR. But there is little discussion of life safety versus continuity of service as a risk management strategy, and assigning responsibility and accountability for reducing the risk of society's critical infrastructure

Disaster events continue to capture the majority of interest from the broadcast, print, and voice media. But there is increased sponsorship, participation and self-examination on the part of the media in presenting, explaining and disseminating information about disasters and DRR. Attention spans are characteristically short for dissemination and even shorter for in-depth analysis. And there is still exhibited by the media confusion, lack of clarity and ambiguity about disastrous events, declared disasters, culpability, myths and realities of post-disaster situations, underlying contributing factors, donor fatigue and unfulfilled offers of assistance.

First and foremost, generating, disseminating and using information about hazards, vulnerability and risk (from precipitation, humidity, stream flow and wind to avalanche, landslide and volcano alerts for graduated risk prone areas) in daily, short, mid- and long term decision making about plans and implementation across the spectrum of sectors and households is the societal approach needed. There will follow a commensurate increase in public awareness whether the geopolitical setting is urban or rural. In other words, a society focusing on development without taking into consideration risk to natural hazards is not a risk adverse nor risk neutral, but a risk prone culture. And societies operating under a democratic form of government are the most challenged in terms of identifying and choosing among risk adverse strategies for all their citizens, or for portions there of.

The Way Forward

Building on hazard information as a public good available at all levels, all sectors and relevant settlement organizations must themselves constitute the constituency for the broad public awareness campaign for risk reduction. They must access and use hazard location, severity and frequency information to determine vulnerability and risk as part of their ongoing development function.

In terms of education and training, national and sub-regional strategies emphasis must be put on individual disciplines, not as an option, but as a requirement for adopting risk concepts and practices as appropriate as part of their curricula and practicum. For the specific academic discipline of risk management and its associated areas of study, further research should be supported on methods and tools for vulnerability and risk assessment tools commensurate with the decision to be made. Emergency management as a discipline must continue to develop and expand its education and research endeavors.

While multi-risk assessments may be sometimes appropriate, tools which deal with specific hazards (location, severity, and frequency), geopolitical place, and built infrastructure type including existing or to be designed and constructed, population, and/or ecosystem, as well as benefit/cost analysis need to be developed, strengthened and used. And for the scientific community, it must move beyond the definition of natural hazard problems to actively participate in the proposing of solutions.

IFI, donor, bilateral, NGO and private sector development loan and grant policies, programs and projects of all types should support on a priority basis the education of multidisciplinary teams on natural hazard risk management issues.

Priority for Action 4 - Reduce the underlying risk factors

The fourth priority for action goes to the essence of meeting the HFA Expected Outcome and many of the OAS IASP acquired commitments.

Transformation from an emergency management focused to a development focused approach to addressing disaster risk reduction is insipient and difficult to carry forward at each administrative level, in all sectors, and between and among public and private institutions. It directly calls into play development theory and practice, particularly as it addresses the poor and poverty, gender and highly vulnerable populations targeted in the Millennium Development Goals, but also administrative decentralization, land use management, governance and corruption. Risk reduction is now broadly discussed, but effective policies and intervention schemes are still not part of the development agenda.

But the international humanitarian relief community and its partner and sister programs dealing with recovery, reconstruction, and most importantly development, have now recognized that repetitive disasters and the underlying risk factors make continued effective emergency management questionable in light of donor fatigue and the anticipated natural hazard events, including those related to climate variability and change, not to mention war, civil strife, forced migration, ethnic cleansing, terrorism and religious intolerance. There is a perception that rather than an increase in events, there has been an increase in risk through development. Sub-regional declarations state that vulnerability to natural hazard events has not been significantly reduced, but rather tends to increase and will increase even further in the coming years thus increasing economic,

social and environmental losses. Sub-regional declarations note continuing, reiterated vulnerability issues from one hurricane season and one ENSO episode to the next.

International bilateral development assistance and NGOs agencies, and IFIs are in many ways in the same situation as their national counterpart governments: victims of the creation of a disaster event-centered institutional track growing out of disaster response experience over the past 40 years, but created along side 40 years of development initiatives. The result is that for the involved national and international agencies, disaster risk reduction efforts are often unsustainable. International assistance is triggered primarily by disaster declarations. National priorities separate development goals from risk reduction, a declared responsibility of the state. And for the international development community, disaster risk reduction investment and technical assistance (including response, recovery, reconstruction and mitigation) have become a separate but parallel track for lending, grants and institutional professional advancement.

Risk transfer schemes, usually built around financial risk management are emerging at the sub-regional scale to protect national government fiscal solvency, with fewer risk transfer schemes being attempted at the local level, and usually in the agricultural sector. At both scales parametric insurance is touted for improved access to capital for disaster recovery, but vulnerability reduction comes about as a secondary objective. And not surprisingly, cross-cutting issues such as governance, transparency, visibility, participation and environmental degradation are present.

The Way Forward

With the direct involvement of IFIs, bilaterals and NGOs and other agencies of the international development community, risk reduction to natural hazard events must be redefined through development processes including policies, planning, programs and practice:

- Land use planning
- Zoning
- Building codes, permits and inspections
- Water and other natural resource management
- Financial risk management
- Physical risk management
- Economic risk management

Economic and social sector units in inter-governmental organizations and agencies must:

- Demand, support and participate in natural hazard phenomena research, data analysis and monitoring,
- Prepare vulnerability assessments of their capital stock and operations,
- Estimate cost/benefit ratios for leaving or reducing the level of risk,
- Prioritize risk reduction objectives by population group, sector, geopolitical unit, infrastructure component, and hazard type, and
- Bring the necessary human and financial resources to bear to achieve selected risk levels.

Regional and sub-regional inter-governmental organizations should support legislation, policy and operations reform as needed at the national and sub-national level to:

- Assign responsibility and accountability, sector by sector, for the steps above,
- Demand emergency preparedness and response plans sector by sector,
- Define natural hazard risk reduction as a goal of development,
- Facilitate at all administrative levels active participation of civil society in all its forms,
- Measure each proposed development action, sector by sector, as to its contribution to the Expected Outcome of the HFA as well as with the MDGs, and
- Provide a comprehensive monitoring and yearly reporting on implementation of the HFA and IASP.

For international development assistance policies, programs and projects, the focus must be shifted from the concept of mainstreaming risk management in development to identifying and making visible the risk to natural hazard present in development actions throughout the sectors so as to reduce vulnerability in accordance with the Expected Outcome of the HFA. Where disaster risk reduction actions are present in sector development, reinforce those actions: where they are absent, initiate such actions.

Priority for Action 5 - Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

Emergency management is the longest standing and most developed disaster risk reduction initiative in the Americas. The international humanitarian relief community has provided sustaining assistance and support to public (both civilian and military) and private sector entities at local, sub-national, national, sub-regional and regional levels to deal with preparedness and response issues. There is increasing national institutional capacity in some cases to respond to emergencies. The advances in lessening the loss of life in the region are a manifestation of this progress, support and global concern. But there is some doubt if there has been an increase in response capacity commensurate to perceived increases in exposure. This is one of the gaps in understanding sector by sector, hazard by hazard the vulnerability and risk present.

Given the anticipated needs to deal with now increasing numbers of affected populations, particularly the poor, the international humanitarian assistance community is revising its placement of emergency management in the broader disaster risk reduction spectrum. It is calling for the creation in some instances of a coordinated “dedicated surge” capacity in those countries and sub-regions where there are repetitive disaster declarations and/or where in the foreseeable future countries will be unable for a variety of reasons to mount sufficient national capacity to lessen the need for issuing appeals for international assistance following natural hazard emergencies.

The Way Forward

Follow through with the acquired commitments dealing with:

- Full institutional participation as mandated in existing forums such as REDLAC,
- Discussions and agreement as deemed appropriate at the hemispheric (OAS) and sub-regional level on pending and non-implemented formal conventions, protocols and priorities supporting emergency preparedness and response,
- Through the Regional Platform process and with the participation of the IACNDR, CDERA, CEPREDENAC, CAPRADE, ACE, MERCOSUR, and specialized emergency management agencies from other inter-governmental organization, PADF and NGO and international business and private associations, technical discussions on priorities and initiatives related to emergency management training, rehearsals, information technology, mobilization, and logistics; on funding, reserve financing and contingencies; emergency management plans, and
- Use of discussions, conclusions and recommendations as inputs for regional and sub-regional political body discussions on emergency management protocols and operations.

Specialized emergency management entities should demand of each sector at all planning and operational levels the relevant vulnerability and risk information of its infrastructure and associated personnel and populations so that it can improve its emergency preparedness and response planning and operations. This is of the highest priority to the multiple sectors who directly contribute to critical facilities and life lines before, during and after an emergency (education, energy, health, public security and fire protection, telecommunications, transportation, water and sanitation).

Closing

In summary, disaster risk reduction in the Americas must become primarily a development demand-driven activity where the existing information, knowledge and expertise are sought and applied by populations for their economic and social infrastructure, even as the supply of information, knowledge and expertise is expanded and supported for emergency preparedness and response.

Key Words and Phrases, **Acronyms**

ACS - Association of Caribbean States
APF – Adaptation Policy Framework
bilaterals (donor country aid agencies work directly with recipient countries or through executing agencies)
CCA – climate change adaptation
CAN - Comunidad Andina de Naciones
CAPRA – Central America Probabilistic Risk Assessment
CAPRADE - Comité Andino para la Prevención y Atención de Desastres
CARICOM - Caribbean Community and Common Market
Cartagena Declaration
CDERA - Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency
CEPREDENAC - Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central
CHS - Committee on Hemispheric Security
civil society
clusters
COGSS - Coalition for Global School Safety and Disaster Prevention Education
communities of practice
critical facilities
disasters by design
DRR - Disaster risk reduction
EDUPLANHemisferico
EM – emergency management
gender
GIS - geographic information system
HFA - Hyogo Framework for Action
IACNDR - Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction
IASP - Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response
IFI – International Finance Institution
IGO - Intergovernmental organization
INDM - Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation
INEE - International Network for Emergency Education
Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Emergency Situations
labor unions
LAC – Latin America and the Caribbean
life safety and functionality
life lines
MDG -Millennium Develop Goals
MERCOSUR – Mercado Común del Sur
NDO - National development organizations
NGO - Non-governmental organizations
NOFP - National Operational Focal Points
OAS - Organization of American States
PADF – Pan American Development Foundation
PAHO - Pan American Health Organization
ProVention Consortium
poverty
public good

REDLAC - Risk, Emergency and Disasters Task Force of the Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee
repetitive losses
SEDI - Secretaria Ejecutiva para Desarrollo Integral
SICA - Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana
social networks
social trust funds
sovereign state
UNISDR - United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
VCA – vulnerability and capacity assessment
water resource management