

Better Together: Regional Capacity Building for National Disaster Risk Management

Desk Review

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When a disaster strikes, national disaster management organizations (NDMOs) are called to respond quickly and effectively, usually in collaboration with local governmental authorities. These are the governmental agencies that are on the front lines of response and increasingly on the front lines of efforts to reduce the risk of disasters. For many years, international humanitarian organizations and bilateral aid donors have worked to strengthen the capacity of NDMOs. But, in spite of a growing literature on the role of regional organizations in disaster risk management, there have been few efforts to assess the role of regional organizations in building the capacity of NDMOs.

The Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, with the support of the Australian Civil-Military Centre, is currently undertaking field-based research on the role of three regional organizations – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Pacific Islands Forum/South Pacific Community – in building capacity of national disaster management organizations. This initiative builds on a 2013 study, *In the Neighborhood: The Role of Regional Organizations in Disaster Risk Management* carried out by Brookings with the support of the ACMC which provided a global overview of the expanding involvement of regional organizations with a particular emphasis on regional actors in the Pacific and the Caribbean.¹ The study identified some of the particular strengths of regional approaches to disasters. For example, in the Pacific region, regional organizations were found to have clear comparative advantages including: “political convening power through strong links with the region’s leaders; key coordinating roles at the regional level; information management and dissemination through portals, provision of education, training and applied research; faith-based perspectives and actions in disaster risk management (DRM); representatives of, and advocates for, vulnerable groups (e.g. women, disabled, youth); and their extensive and broad regional experience.”² Because of their close ties

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¹ Elizabeth Ferris and Daniel Petz, *In the Neighborhood: The Role of Regional Organizations in Disaster Risk Management*, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, February 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/02/regional-organizations-disaster-risk-ferris>; Patricia Weiss Fagen, “Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: National, Regional and International interactions” HPG Working Paper, October 2008, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/3415.pdf>.

² John Hays, *Roles of Pacific Regional Organizations in Disaster Risk Management: Questions and Answers*, Brookings Institution, July 2013, p. v. 2. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/07/pacific-regional-organizations-disasters>

with member governments in the region, their activities may be viewed as more culturally and politically appropriate than those of international organizations.

While regional actors play important roles, it is the state itself that bears primary responsibility for preparing for and responding to disasters occurring in the area under its jurisdiction through its national disaster management organization. Though regional mechanisms may provide an important coordinating function and can effectively mobilize a regional response to a disaster (e.g. the case of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in response to Cyclone Nargis), perhaps the most important role they play is to increase the capacity of key national institutions. In the Project's 2013 desk study, *In the Neighborhood* (2013), one of the indicators used to compare regional organizations was precisely their role in building capacity of national disaster management authorities.

This 2013 research found that about half of the regional organizations surveyed were active in the areas of capacity building, research, and technical cooperation. For some organizations, such as the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), training is an important part of the disaster management framework. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)'s core institution, the SAARC Disaster Management Centre, seems to be mainly focused on research and training activities. In the Pacific, several organizations involved in the design and delivery of emergency management training (SOPAC, OCHA, IFRC, etc.) have formed the Pacific Emergency Management Training Advisory Group (PEMTAG). In many cases, regional organizations cooperate with international actors in research and training and serve as important conveners for regional training activities and/or research projects. As many regional organizations engage in collecting information, they are also important resource centers not only for governments in the region but also for practitioners and academic researchers.³

This suggests that regional bodies are active in the capacity-building of NDMOs, but leaves open the question of their comparative advantage in this role and the extent to which NDMOs perceive them as being helpful. The study presently underway will examine the ways in which regional bodies seek to increase the capacity of NDMOs and assess the perceptions of these activities from the perspective of the regional organizations and NDMOs in the region.

This short review, based on desk research, surveys literature on the work of regional organizations and NDMOs in disaster risk management and draws out some of the themes that may be useful for further examination of the relationship between regional bodies and national organizations in disaster risk management.⁴

³ Elizabeth Ferris and Daniel Petz, *In the Neighborhood: The Role of Regional Organizations in Disaster Risk Management*, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, February 2013, p. 18, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/02/regional-organizations-disaster-risk-ferris>

⁴ See Jeremy Harkey, "Experiences of National Governments in Expanding their Role in Humanitarian Preparedness and Response," Tufts University, Feinstein International Center, January 2014, <http://fic.tufts.edu/publication-item/experiences-of-national-governments-in-expanding-their-role-in-humanitarian-preparedness-and-response/>

GROWING RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

In the decades following World War II, the issue of regional integration – spurred in large measure by the development of European institutions – was a hot topic for scholars of international affairs who saw regional integration as a way of building global peace, security and economic development. But, over the years, it began to look like European integration was an exceptional case rather than the precursor of a world of strong regional bodies. Academic attention seemed to shift toward global structures and initiatives, such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Kyoto Protocol on climate change and the Responsibility to Protect norm. Over the past decade or so, however, there has been renewed interest in the role regional bodies play in the system of global governance.⁵ Some scholars have argued that regionalism is both the successor to the nation-state and an alternative to globalization. Rather than a future world order characterized by global superstructures, there is a rival image of an emerging ‘world of regions.’⁶

And indeed, regional organizations are growing in number, expanding in scope and becoming more active in many areas – from free trade agreements (which now number in the hundreds) to cooperative initiatives on resource management to counter-terrorism measures.⁷ As Louise Fawcett notes, “the regional momentum has proved unstoppable, constantly extending into new and diverse domains.”⁸ In terms of global governance, she argues that “what is emerging is a de facto, albeit often ad hoc, division of labour, sometimes consensual, sometimes contested, where regional actors take on increasingly important roles...”⁹ In today’s globalizing world, regions can be seen as serving as an effective bridge between the international and national systems. As Haver and Foley point out, “a regional entity, working from cultural and linguistic commonalities, can provide a forum for building trust and familiarity that is not possible on a global scale. For these reasons they can often be more effective in establishing common policies and resolving issues of contention.”¹⁰

⁵ See for example: Council on Foreign Relations (2013) “Rising Regionalism: Trends in Southeast (and wider) Asia,” 26 June, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/projects/world/rising-regionalism-trends-in-southeast-and-wider-asia/pr1659>. Deacon, B., Fioramonti, L. and Nita, S. (eds) (2014) “Special Issue on Regions without Borders: Regional Governance, Migration and Social Protection in Africa and Europe,” United Nations University Institute - Comparative Regional Integration Studies, Summer 2014 (forthcoming), [http://www.cris.unu.edu/sbook.175.0.html?&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=1528&cHash=da8217d307f4439e23a02dce9293f63d](http://www.cris.unu.edu/sbook.175.0.html?&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1528&cHash=da8217d307f4439e23a02dce9293f63d); Fioramonti, L. (ed.) (2013), *Civil Society and World Regions: How Citizens are Reshaping Regional Governance in Times of Crisis*, Lexington Books: Lanham. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs (2013) *Special Issue on Regionalism*, Issue 14 (2), <http://journal.georgetown.edu/14-2-integration-of-regions/>.

⁶ For a discussion of these theories, see Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 480-486.
⁷ See for example, Kati Suominen, “Globalizing Regionalism: Harnessing Regional Organizations to Meet Global Threats,” UNU-CRIS Occasional Papers, 2005/11, <http://www.cris.unu.edu/UNU-CRIS-Working-Papers.19.0.html>, pp. 8-11.

⁸ Louise Fawcett, “Exploring regional domains: a comparative history of regionalism,” *International Affairs* 80, 3 (2004) p. 431

⁹ Fawcett, “Exploring regional domains”, op. cit., p. 431.

¹⁰ Katherine Haver and Conor Foley, *International and Regional Initiatives*, Background paper 2 prepared for the International Dialogue on Strengthening Partnership in Disaster Response, October 2011, <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/93533/Background%20paper%202.pdf>.

At the same time, the international system is based on respect for national sovereignty, a principle which has limited the ability of regional organizations to become more assertive. This has been particularly apparent in studies of ASEAN¹¹ – which, together with SAARC, are the two regional organizations operating in the region of the world experiencing the lion's share of sudden-onset disasters.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND DISASTERS

Renewed interest in the role of regional organizations is occurring at a time when awareness of the risks of natural disasters, particularly sudden-onset disasters, is growing. The scale and frequency of these disasters is increasing.¹² The economic costs of disasters are becoming larger and the number of people affected by disasters is rising.¹³ Important international initiatives such as the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction have successfully heightened awareness of the urgency to take measures to reduce the risk of disasters.¹⁴ The HFA Mid-term Review, conducted in 2010-2011, used workshops and interviews with stakeholders and in-depth case studies of countries to evaluate progress in disaster management made at both the regional and national level. The Review found that significant progress has been made in the passage of national legislation regarding disaster risk reduction and management, and national progress reviews have been completed or are underway in over 100 countries.¹⁵

In addition to the HFA, there are now well over 200 global, regional and bilateral treaties related to disaster risk prevention and management, though some studies have found that significant normative gaps exist between international, regional and sub-regional laws.¹⁶ At the same time, growing concern for the impact of climate change and the need to support climate change adaptation measures have generated momentum to prioritize these issues at the national level. Both disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change global initiatives have worked through regional platforms, providing further support for regional initiatives and for their national

¹¹ See for example: R. Ramcharan (2000) "ASEAN and Non-Interference: A Principle Maintained," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 60-88,

<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/25798479?uid=19760&uid=3739584&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=19758&uid=3&uid=67&uid=62&uid=3739256&sid=21103894456581>

¹² IPCC, "Summary for Policymakers," in *Climate Change 2013: The physical science basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, http://www.climatechange2013.org/images/report/WG1AR5_SPM_FINAL.pdf.

¹³ Elizabeth Ferris and Daniel Petz, "The Year that Shook the Rich: A Review of Natural Disasters in 2011," Brookings Institution, 1 March 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2012/03/natural-disaster-review-ferris>.

¹⁴ UNISDR, "Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters," final report of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, July 2007,

http://www.preventionweb.net/files/1037_hyogoframeworkforactionenglish.pdf.

¹⁵ Note that the HFA final cycle of international, regional and local progress review is underway, to be completed by the fall of 2014.

UNISDR, "Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Mid-term Review," 2011, <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/18197>.

¹⁶ There is quite a bit of existing literature on disaster law, much citing the need for better synchronization and coordination of codification of these laws at different levels of governance. See, for example: De Guttery, A., ed al. (2012) *International Disaster Response Law*, TMC Asser Press, 2012.

members. Although in some cases parallel regional structures have been set up on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, there are some indications that these new initiatives are not only coming together but are strengthening existing regional mechanisms.¹⁷

While there are few studies which focus specifically on the role of regional organizations in natural disasters, there does seem to be increasing interest in seeing regional organizations not only in terms of traditional security and economic free trade areas but also as broader human security arenas where cooperation can advance interests.¹⁸ There are also a number of articles focusing on specific cases of regional involvement with a specific disaster, most notably ASEAN's response to Cyclone Nargis and most recently, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.¹⁹ But there is a notable lack of academic work comparing the responses of regional organizations.

Some of the exceptions are studies carried out by Brookings in 2013 and by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG).^{20 21} The latter report, entitled *The Growing Role of Regional Organizations in Humanitarian Action*, looks specifically at the role of regional bodies in responding to refugees, disaster risk reduction and conflict management with a focus on cases where regional

¹⁷ Elizabeth Ferris, "Bringing Together Disaster and Climate Change Networks: Historic Meeting in the Pacific," Brookings Institution, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, 23 July 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/07/23-disaster-management-climate-change-pacific-meeting-ferris>.

¹⁸ Ear J. and Campbell J., *Regional Cooperation on Disaster Management and Health Security*, 2012, <http://www.apcss.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Chapter5.pdf>.
Fioramonti, L. (ed.) (2013), *Civil Society and World Regions: How Citizens are Reshaping Regional Governance in Times of Crisis*, Lexington Books: Lanham.
H. Wulf and T. Debiel (2009) "Conflict, Early Warning and Response Mechanisms: Tools for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Regional Organisations?," London School of Economics, Crisis States Research Center, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28495/1/WP49.2.pdf>.
Koff, H. and Maganda, C. (2014) "Regions and Cohesion," RISC Consortium, Volume 4(2), Summer 2014, <http://journals.berghahnbooks.com/reco/>.
Tavares, R. (2014) *Security in South America: The Role of States and Regional Organizations*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 7 April 2014.

¹⁹ See, for example, Yves-Kim Creach and Liliane Fang, "ASEAN's Role in the Cyclone Nargis Response: implications, lessons, and opportunities," *Humanitarian Exchange*, Issue 41, December 2008, <http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-41/aseans-role-in-the-cyclone-nargis-response-implications-lessons-and-opportunities>; Julio Santiago Amador III, "Community building at the time of Nargis: The Asean Response," *Journal of Current Southeast Affairs*, 28 (4) 2009, <http://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/files/journals/4/articles/168/public/168-168-1-PB.pdf> . Also see Jeffrey Wright, "Wherefore art thou ASEAN? Typhoon Haiyan's Teachable Moment," 30 November 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/philippines/wherefore-art-thou-asean-typhoon-haiyans-teachable-moment/p31920>

²⁰ Elizabeth Ferris and Daniel Petz (2013), *In the Neighborhood: The Role of Regional Organizations in Disaster Risk Management*, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, February 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/02/regional-organizations-disaster-risk-ferris>.

Hay, J. (2013) *Roles of Regional Organizations in Disaster Risk Management: Questions and Answers*. Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement., July 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2013/07/pacific%20regional%20organizations%20disaster/s/brookings_regional_orgs_pacific_july_2013.pdf.

Mark Kirton (2013), *Caribbean Regional Disaster Response and Management Mechanisms*, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, July 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/07/caribbean-regional-organizations-disasters>.

²¹ Humanitarian Policy Group (2013) "The Growing Role of Regional Organizations in Humanitarian Action," Overseas Development Institute, Policy Brief 54, December, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8766.pdf> .

bodies have been successful in collaborating to respond to crises. Both the Brookings and HPG studies emphasize the diversity and complexity of regional bodies, the lack of easily accessible data on budgets, the weaknesses in implementation of policies and frameworks and the reliance of many regional bodies on external funding. While these studies represent important initial attempts to examine the role of regional bodies, neither goes into depth on the relationship between regional institutions and national disaster (or broader humanitarian) capacity.²²

In the context of the present research initiative, these studies suggest the importance of:

- Analysis of the actual implementation of regional strategies and frameworks on the national level
- Examination, to the extent possible, of the *impact* of regional capacity-building programs on national capacity (rather than, for example, number of participants in training workshops)
- Understanding the extent to which members of regional organizations provide political support to the regional body and, in particular, what they expect from their regional bodies

STUDIES ON NDMOS

Given the increased awareness of the importance of natural disasters, it is perhaps surprising that there have been so few published comparative studies on NDMOs or even on individual NDMOs.²³ At the same time, there is growing interest in the role of affected states in the international disaster risk management system²⁴ – which would seem to make the collection of information and analyses on the roles of regional and national actors particularly relevant.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) currently maintains a database on national laws and policies and, together with the UN Development Program (UNDP), has recently released a large-scale comparative study on national laws and policies on disaster risk reduction.^{25 26} This study of 31 countries, of which 14 were singled out for comprehensive analysis, draws helpful comparisons between legal frameworks in a range of countries. The study provides a typology of DRM laws, ranging from those that focus only on

²² Both Brookings and HPG are continuing their research on regional bodies. While Brookings is focusing on the role of regional bodies in building capacity at the national level through 3 case studies in Asia and the Pacific, HPG is looking at regional organizations' engagement in humanitarian issues in Africa and Asia. HPG, in collaboration with Brookings, is organizing a meeting of regional bodies in early 2015 to further deepen understanding of regional engagement in humanitarian work, including disasters.

²³ Note, however, that there is a wealth of information on disaster response in the United States, especially post-Katrina, some of which focuses on particular institutional characteristics. More broadly, there is considerable literature on emerging global risks and the importance of cross-sectoral/integrated approaches to DRR, notably reflected in the Overseas Development Institute's journal *Disasters* ([http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1467-7717/issues](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1467-7717/issues)) and the *International Journal of Risk Assessment and Management* (<http://www.inderscience.com/jhome.php?jcode=IJRAM>)

²⁴ See for example the IFRC's initiative to foster a dialogue between affected states and international actors. In particular the background papers prepared for the meeting include a wealth of information which is not readily available elsewhere. <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/idrl/meetings-and-events/past-events/international-dialogue-on-strengthening-partnership-in-disaster-response/>

²⁵ See for example: <http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/idrl-database/>

²⁶ See for example: <http://www.drr-law.org/>

preparedness and response, to broad DRM laws encompassing all stages of disasters, to DRM laws that enable a ‘whole-of-society’ approach and provide guidance for other related laws – such as natural resource management and building codes. While the IFRC/UNDP study focuses on legislative frameworks, it does draw some conclusions about the institutional frameworks for disaster risk management:

“In most of the sample countries, DRM laws established a single agency (such as a national disaster management agency or a civil defense office) as the central national focal point for cultivating a whole-of-society approach to DRR, and providing national leadership and policy direction. However, it was found that these institutions often need to strengthen their coordination with other sectors and stakeholders, especially those related to development planning and climate change adaptation.

Most of the same countries have established specific DRM institutions or mandates within their legislative and institutional frameworks, from the national to the local level. Some establish implementing institutions at the local level (e.g. in Guatemala and Namibia), while others supplement general governance functions at the provincial and local levels with DRM advisory committees (e.g. in South Africa and Algeria), and still others principally use existing local government institutions (e.g. in Iraq and Italy). In all cases, the key to effective local institutional structures to support DRR is that they have clear legal mandates an authority, matched with dedicated resources and capacity, which can also be enhanced through DRR training and education.”²⁷

By providing a comparative perspective on the legal frameworks on which NDMOs are based, this IFRC/UNDP study has contributed greatly to understanding the various institutional forms that NDMOs take. In particular, this study suggests that further work on NDMOs should examine:

- The extent to which DRM has been de-centralized and whether designated de-centralized structures receive adequate financial and human resources to carry out their work.

This study builds on a 2007 UNDP review of institutional and legislative capacity in 19 countries across five regions, examining five dimensions critical to capacity (legal frameworks, policy and planning, organizational aspects, resources and capabilities, partnerships).²⁸ This study notes that the process of developing national capacity is a long and not necessarily linear process, citing the case of Colombia, which took two decades to arrive at its present level of capacity that is probably less than it was in the 1990s. The study concludes that the construction of a national legal and institutional system is not a technical issue, but rather is a political process which must mobilize and reconcile the political interests of stakeholders. The 2007 UNDP *Global Review* found that, while progress has been made generating political commitment to DRR and DRM,

²⁷ UNDP & IFRC (2014), “Effective Law and Regulation for Disaster Risk Reduction: A multi-country report summary,” UN Development Programme and IFRC, June 2014, pp. 9, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/summary-report-final-single-page.pdf> .

²⁸ UNDP, *A Global Review: UNDP Support to Institutional and Legislative Systems for Disaster Risk Management*, New York: UNDP, 2007, <http://www.sasparm.ps/en/Uploads/file/A%20Global%20Review%20UNDP%20Support%20to%20Institutional%20Legislative%20Systems.pdf>.

bridging the gap between national policies and local projects is difficult, and follow-up and review of law and policies is often lacking.

Key lessons learned and challenges identified by the study include:

- *Non-linear political process* – every country’s context requires specific solutions to address unique disaster risks and political, economic and social circumstances
- *Connection between national and local bodies* – policymaking bodies tend to be located in urban areas and there are often gaps between centralized governments and local (particularly rural) communities regarding disaster planning
- *Funding* – the UNDP (or other international bodies) cannot fully finance implementation of policies; there must be sufficient national political will to fund DRR and DRM activities
- *Specificity* – legal and institutional reforms must have a level of specificity that makes them feasible to implement; in some countries, ie. Kyrgyz Republic, very general national laws were passed with no indication of ‘what exactly is to be done, by whom and with which resources’
- *Maintenance* - legal and institutional reforms are only the first step, and must be continually supported, reviewed and refined
- *Long-term engagement* – refinement and funding of policies and initiatives cannot be expected overnight
- *Ownership* – engagement needs to be with more than only a few actors in the national government, and, the study found, can in fact be more durable at the provincial level; policy development can also benefit from an inclusive rights-based approach
- *Better institutional memory and information sharing* – this can be better facilitated with improved central information systems²⁹

As far as is known, these are the only large-scale comparative studies which even touch on the full range of work carried out by NDMOs. Given the importance of NDMOs in the international disaster response system, this suggests an urgent need for comparative analyses of NDMOs. As a starting point, it would be enormously useful to have a compilation of the names and contacts of NDMOs by country, an overview of where they are situated in the government and of inter-agency coordination mechanisms.³⁰ This would enable further analysis of the relationship between the effectiveness of NDMOs and organizational structures.³¹

There are fortunately other studies which have analyzed national disaster risk management systems (although they have not focused specifically on the organizational characteristics of

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 15-19.

³⁰ This could be based on the tables compiled by ADB in Ishiwatari, Mikio (2013) “Disaster Risk Management at the National Level,” Asian Development Bank Institute, No. 448, November, <http://www.adbi.org/files/2013.11.26.wp448.disaster.risk.management.national.pdf>.

³¹ For example, many have argued that US response to Hurricane Katrina was inadequate in part because FEMA had been changed from a standalone federal agency to a department among many in the Department of Homeland Security. See, for example:

Jean-Loup Samaan and Laurent Verneuil, “Civil-Military Relations in Hurricane Katrina: A Case Study on Crisis Management in Natural Disaster Response, Global Public Policy Institute, Berlin, March 2009, chapter 22, pp.413. Available at: http://www.gppi.net/fileadmin/gppi/Humanitarian_Assistance_EU-US-Cooperation.pdf.

NDMOs). The paragraphs below summarize three such studies, with a particular emphasis on their relevance for analyses of the role of regional organizations in building national capacity.

One of the first studies to look specifically at national disaster response mechanisms was carried out by Patricia Fagen for the Humanitarian Policy Group in 2008.³² This study looked at three Latin American cases: the Peruvian earthquake, floods in Bolivia and flooding in the Mexican state of Tabasco, all occurring in the year 2007. The study provides an overview of Latin American regional organizations active in the field, and examines such factors as the role of the military in disaster response and the importance of political will in effective disaster response. The report highlights the important role played by international organizations in supporting preparedness and response, noting, for example, that USAID/OFDA has been working since 1989 to train 44,000 national staff in disaster risk management. However, with the exception of the Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC), there is no mention of the role of regional organizations in building capacity at the national level.

A recent study by Jeremy Harkey for Tufts University analyzed ways that four governments – El Salvador, Mozambique, Philippines and Indonesia – strengthened their national capacity to respond to disasters.³³ The study found that a key first step is the recognition by the government that their DRM system needs to be strengthened. Sometimes this recognition comes in the aftermath of a poor national response to a large-scale disaster, but it can also result from strong civil society organizations pushing for change. The study finds that it is particularly important to mainstream disaster risk reduction, to strengthen sub-national entities in the DRM system, to put a legal framework into place, and to develop the capacity not only to assess needs, but to strategize for the long term and to develop a solid funding base. The study briefly touches on the role of two regional organizations – the Central American Integration System (SICA), which developed a regional strategy of disaster risk reduction and its affiliate, CEPREDENAC, which was helpful in encouraging the development of a DRR law in El Salvador.

A third study, published by the Asian Development Bank in 2013, reviewed national governance structures for disaster risk management and drew out a number of lessons learned, including:

- While recognizing that ‘no one size fits all,’ the need to name a clear governmental focal point for disaster risk management
- The need to ensure that disaster risk management is included in all aspects of development planning and should be mainstreamed in all government ministries and departments
- The need for de-centralized structures where the role of the national body is clearly spelled out

³² Humanitarian Policy Group (2008) “Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: national, regional and international interactions,” Overseas Development Institute, HPG Working Paper, October 2008, <http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/3415.pdf>.

³³ Harkey, Jeremy (2014), “Experiences of National Governments in Expanding their Role in Humanitarian Preparedness and Response,” Tufts University, Feinstein International Center and Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, January 2014, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/TUFTS_13118_Humanitarian_response_V3.pdf.

- The need for the NDMO to coordinate the actions of a wide range of stakeholders both within the government and with other actors, such as NGOs, the private sector, and civil society

The study found that of the 61 countries in Asia, 30 have developed national legislation specifically dealing with disaster risk management. The study found that the international community has played an important role in building national capacity, particularly the World Bank, UNDP and the Asian Development Bank. The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has supported the governments of Nepal and Indonesia to develop national capacities. The study notes (as do others surveyed here) that large-scale natural disasters tend to catalyze efforts to strengthen institutions. The study further finds that one of the most crucial issues for the effectiveness of institutions is where in the government they are located. Ideally they should be located in an office or ministry with political clout, such as in a president's or prime minister's office, with access to the highest political authority. However, when first established, NDMOs tend to be weak, with limited financial and staffing capacity. The work is generally not seen as a priority and there are difficulties in mobilizing funds to sustain its on-going work. Weak NDMOs have trouble coordinating strong ministries. Moreover, while focal point agencies may have a mandate to coordinate line ministries, funds are usually allocated directly to the ministries, making such coordination by NDMOs much more difficult. Finally, the study identifies the importance of relationships with local governments as key to effective disaster risk management.³⁴

In addition, there are a number of other studies that focus on national disaster response. Krishna, for example, looks at the development of contingency plans in the South Asian region while Vasavada studies the governance structure and social networks in Gujarat, India.^{35 36} A recent and much welcome addition to the literature is a new study analyzing African national preparedness and response to disasters in the context of climate change.³⁷ The report presents a collection of country-specific case studies, looking at variation in structure and institutional capacity of ten countries' respective DRR and DRM systems. The studies present some information about particular cases of regional and international influence on national capacity; for example noting UNDP input to national agencies in the Gambia, Ghana and Togo, and World Bank investment in marine management in Senegal.³⁸

³⁴ Ishiwatari, Mikio (2013) "Disaster Risk Management at the National Level," Asian Development Bank Institute, No. 448, November, <http://www.adbi.org/files/2013.11.26.wp448.disaster.risk.management.national.pdf>.

Also note that this study includes draft guidelines on disaster risk management for developing countries as an annex.

³⁵ Krishna, N. (2011) "Approaches in Disaster Risk Reduction – Experiences, present status and future requirements," Oxfam International, 2011, http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.alnap.org%2Fpool%2Ffiles%2F1291.pdf&ei=3ESjU770JPOysQSPgYHADw&usq=AFQjCNGsY8X_MVdbS_PSgeO-p-dBvq2m4w&sig2=Cz9vZ6apAP0vscfjU3sx3A.

³⁶ Vasavada, T. (2013) "Managing Disaster Networks in India," Public Management Review, Volume 15, Issue 3, Special Issue: Disaster and Crisis Management, 23 March 2013, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14719037.2013.769854>.

³⁷ *Climate Change and African Political Stability*, ed. by Jennifer Bussell, Student Working Paper No. 6, Strauss Center at University of Texas at Austin, May 2014, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/studentworkingpaper6-ccaps_strs_f-for%20web.pdf

³⁸ *Climate Change and African Political Stability*, ed. by Jennifer Bussell

It seems that much of the literature on NDMOs focuses on their abilities and shortcomings in disaster risk reduction or often on simply providing information about the various actors involved in DRR, as in the report of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (commissioned by the German Committee for Disaster Reduction), which analyzes national platforms for disaster risk reduction.³⁹

The World Bank has published a number of studies which are relevant to the issue of strengthening capacity for disaster risk management, although they do not specifically focus on either NDMOs or on regional organizations. For example, in *Natural Disaster Response: Lessons from Evaluations of the World Bank and Others*, the Independent Evaluation Group has synthesized lessons from its extensive collection of evaluations of disasters about what needs to be done during different phases of disasters.⁴⁰ The World Bank has also produced publications on learning from megadisasters and through its Global Facility on Disaster Risk Reduction.⁴¹

In looking for tools that are helpful in analyzing the role of NDMOs, it may be useful to look at some of the broader studies on governance in disasters. For example, Ahrens and Rudolph address the question of institutional failures in governance in responding to and preparing for disasters. Although they do not focus on NDMOs (and in fact barely mention them), they suggest that four criteria are essential in governance as it relates to disasters: accountability, predictability, participation and transparency.⁴² Although Ahrens and Rudolph focus on the relationship between underdevelopment, disasters and governance, their model suggests that some of the hallmarks of a strong NDMO will be: accountability – that politicians will be accountable to their constituency for their actions on disasters; predictability – with clearly defined laws and policies; participation – with mechanisms in place to involve communities in the design and implementation of policies; and transparency – the publication of relevant statistics and information which can also inhibit corruption. Another interesting and important initiative would be to synthesize the various lessons learned on disaster risk management from these and other studies and come up with a framework for national disaster risk management organizations, which would include a set of benchmarks that might be helpful to governments seeking to strengthen their DRM agencies. This could incorporate the existing frameworks for disaster risk reduction.⁴³

³⁹ Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (APDC) *National Platforms for Disaster Reduction*, 2007, <http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB8QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dkkv.org%2FDE%2Fpublications%2Fressource.asp%3FID%3D237&ei=LjCfU9vwLbSnsQTcu4HgCw&usg=AFQjCNE50WRr5sc6sdRbxPRQhgBJymlg&sig2=uE2zbKXx8FJfJh6ys5yZhg&bvm=bv.68911936.d.cWc>.

⁴⁰ World Bank, *Natural Disaster Response: Lessons from Evaluations of the World Bank and Others*, Evaluation Brief 16, 2011, http://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/Data/reports/eval_brief_nat_disaster_response.pdf.

⁴¹ Ranghieri, Federica and Ishiwatari, Mikio (2014), *Learning from Megadisasters : Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake*, World Bank, June 2014. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/18864>.

⁴² Ahrens, J. and Rudolph, P. M. (2006) "The Importance of Governance in Risk Reduction and Disaster Management," *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 14 (4), pp. 214, http://iagwestbengal.org.in/downloads/archives/Research_Documents/The%20Importance%20of%20governance%20in%20DRR%20and%20DRM_Journal%20article%202006.pdf.

⁴³ In 2005, the Brookings Project on Internal Displacement developed a Framework for National Responsibility which included 12 benchmarks or actions that governments could take to exercise their responsibility for IDPs. The framework was translated into a number of languages and served as a basis for training governments to develop laws

There have been some publications on the role of international organizations in supporting regional bodies and several studies on the role of international organizations in building national capacity.^{44 45} But by and large there has been very little academic literature on the role of regional organizations in building capacity in national disaster management organizations. This does not mean, however, that these initiatives are not taking place, but rather that they are simply under-studied. For example, in June 2014, OCHA, together with the SPC, convened its 20th meeting of regional disaster managers to set priorities for capacity-building activities.⁴⁶ Another example is the UNDP's Pacific Risk Resilience Programme (PRRP), which aims to strengthen Pacific island resilience to disasters and climate change risk through support for risk planning and budgeting at the national and community level.⁴⁷ We know these capacity building activities occur worldwide – what we need to know is how effective they actually are in strengthening national abilities to prepare for and respond to disaster.

REGIONAL/NDMO INTERACTIONS

One of the exceptions is the study by J. Collymore, who looks at the evolution of disaster risk management over the past 25 years at both the national and regional level among 16 English-speaking Caribbean countries.⁴⁸ He noted that in the 1970s, disaster management was response-driven and there was little attention to disaster risk reduction. But several major disasters in the region led to a recognition that there was need to address disasters on a regional level. This in turn led to the creation of the Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project (PCDPPP), which began to move from an exclusive focus on relief to a greater emphasis on preparedness. Jamaica and Barbados, in particular, took the lead in public education activities. The PCDPPP began to improve communications among members, to hold an annual disaster simulation in different countries and to begin to move beyond preparedness to focusing on vulnerability assessments. The Project used its national focal points to lobby governments to do more on prevention and mitigation. It also sought to build national capacity by training national disaster managers, organizing 10 training workshops between 1982 and 1984. Growing regional

and policies and later proved to be a useful tool in assessing the extent to which governments were exercising their responsibility for IDPs:

Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement (2005), *Addressing Internal Displacement: A Framework for National Responsibility*, Brookings Institution, April 2005,

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2005/04/national-responsibility-framework>.

Elizabeth Ferris, Erin Mooney and Chareen Stark (2011), *From Responsibility to Response: Assessing National Approaches to Internal Displacement*, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, Brookings Institution, November 2011, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2011/11/responsibility-response-ferris>.

⁴⁴ See for example this brochure on OCHA's work in the Pacific which makes it clear that support to NDMOs is its first objective: http://www.pacificdisaster.net/pdnadmin/data/original/PHT_OCHA_2009_Pacific_Brochure_v4.pdf

⁴⁵ See Fagen Latin American study cited above

⁴⁶ UN OCHA, "A New Direction for Regional 'Disaster Management' Capacity Building – Keeping Step with Changing Times," OCHA Annual Meeting, 5th – 6th June 2014, Novotel Hotel, Suva, Fiji, <http://reliefweb.int/report/world/new-direction-regional-disaster-management-capacity-building-keeping-step-changing>.

⁴⁷ UN Island Voices, Global Choices, "Pacific Risk Resilience Plan," UN Conference on Small Developing States, 2014, <http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?page=view&type=1006&nr=2529&menu=1507>

⁴⁸ Collymore, J. (2011) "Disaster management in the Caribbean: Perspectives on institutional capacity reform and development," *Environmental Hazards*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 14 September 2011, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.3763/ehaz.2011.0002>.

cooperation also contributed to considerable bilateral assistance. Thus Jamaica supported Antigua and Barbuda's efforts to develop a national mechanism and policy on disasters, which were completed in the early 1990s. Efforts were made to bring in regional NGOs and professional organizations to complement the work of the regional body, and the first meeting of regional NGOs was held in 1989. The Caribbean Council of Engineering Organizations played a particularly helpful role in building regional standards and a meeting of regional media managers looked at issues related to public information.

The devastation caused by Hurricane Gilbert in 1988 led directly to the formation of the Caribbean Disaster Response Association (CDERA⁴⁹) in 1991, which, among other activities, sought to strengthen national disaster focal points. With the development of a comprehensive regional approach to disasters in 2001, one of the four priority outcomes focused on building national capacity. In fact, more than 60 percent of CDEMA's resources from 2007-2012 were devoted to strengthening national DRM capacity and community resilience. There is presently a strategy for promoting common standards and models in DRR in the different countries, including through enacting DRR legislation, implementing organizational structures and developing common benchmarks. With respect to capacity-building, Collymore suggests that further thought needs to be given to key questions, such as: Capacity for what? To make better decisions? To respond more effectively to disasters? Should capacity be built in a centralized mechanism or at a de-centralized community-based level or both?

The experience of the Caribbean seems to highlight:

- The importance of specific disasters triggering a perceived need for more robust regional approaches to disasters
- The need for regional organizations to make explicit their commitment to building national capacity and incorporating this into both strategic objectives and concrete activities
- The need to work deliberately with regional non-governmental and civil society organizations
- The possibility that regional cooperation can encourage bilateral efforts which build national capacity (as occurred when the Jamaican government assisted the government of Antigua and Barbuda to develop a national legal framework and a disaster risk management organization)

As earlier work has shown, the world of regional organizations is a complex one with many specialized regional bodies and regional offices of global organizations that are also involved in capacity-building at the national level.⁵⁰ For example, in the field of health, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) conducted a survey of national preparedness in the Americas and have developed training programs to increase national capacity, in particular to support the development of disaster preparedness units within health

⁴⁹ Note that CDERA was replaced in 2009 by CDEMA (Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency)

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Ferris and Daniel Petz (2013), *In the Neighborhood: The Role of Regional Organizations in Disaster Risk Management*, Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement, February 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2013/02/regional-organizations-disaster-risk-ferris>. Humanitarian Policy Group (2013) "The Growing Role of Regional Organizations in Humanitarian Action," Overseas Development Institute, Policy Brief 54, December, <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8766.pdf>.

ministries. The 2006 report notes as a positive trend the fact that training has shifted to the national and sub-national levels – a departure from earlier times, when almost all training was carried out by PAHO.⁵¹ Technical standards have also improved with PAHO’s role in collecting and disseminating existing standards, particularly on technical issues, such as management of the bodies of victims in disaster situations.

FURTHER WORK

This short desk review was intended to provide the literature review for upcoming field-based research to be undertaken over the next year on the role of regional organizations in supporting the capacity of national disaster management organizations. The review has found virtually no academic studies focusing on this relationship. With a few exceptions (noted in this review), the growing academic literature on regional organizations does not address their role in disaster risk management. Nor do the few studies on NDMOs – or more broadly on national capacity for disaster management – examine the role of regional organizations in building national capacity. And yet if regional organizations are to play a more important role in future disaster risk management, this would seem to be an obvious area where they would have both interest and a comparative advantage in working. While international actors have developed impressive expertise in both disaster response and disaster risk reduction, there is a case to be made that regional bodies are particularly well-placed to develop culturally-appropriate ways of building capacities of organizations ‘in their neighborhoods’ which often face similar risks from natural hazards and share historical and cultural experiences.

This desk study has tried to draw out some of the relevant lessons and questions which have emerged in this literature review to guide future work in this area, including identification of issues and areas where further research is needed. It is also intended to serve as guidance for our own upcoming field research.

This field research, to be conducted between August 2014 and April 2015, will focus on three regional organizations – SPC/PIF in the Pacific, ASEAN in Southeast Asia and SARRC in South Asia – and look at two NDMOs in each region. These cases have very different backgrounds and approaches to disaster risk management. In the Pacific, there is a plethora of regional bodies but the focus of this research will be on the SOPAC Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, both of which enjoy broad political support, have long histories and have been very active in DRM activities. In South Asia the pattern is different. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was founded only in 1985 and while it is engaged in a range of capacity-building activities, it has been limited by political differences between its major members (particularly Pakistan and India). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has invested heavily in disaster risk management through the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for

⁵¹ Pan American Health Organization/WHO (2006), “Progress Report on National and Regional Health Disaster Preparedness and Response,” CD47/INF.4, 47th Directing Council, Washington DC, August 2, 2006, pp. 5, <http://www.disaster-info.net/AnnualReport06/Annexes/Annex03.pdf> .

Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Response (AHA Centre) in 2012 following the signing of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) in 2005.

Specific questions this study will address include:

- a) whether and to what extent training activities organized by regional bodies are perceived as useful to NDMOs, and if so, which kinds of training are more effective, and why;
- b) whether the process of working together on a regional strategy contributes to more effective actions at the national level;
- c) whether DRM managers perceive that they learn more from the ‘content’ of a particular training program or from informal interactions with their peers;
- d) whether regional efforts to increase the capacity of NDMOs contribute to stronger regional mechanisms – in other words, if training and other capacity-building measures are provided through regional bodies, does this increase the support and perceived relevance of the regional organizations by its member governments?

FINAL NOTE

We look forward to sharing the results of this research with relevant stakeholders and to continuing our work on the role of regional organizations in disaster risk management. As this is a relatively new area of academic study, our efforts are very much a work in progress and we encourage other researchers and practitioners not only to share information with us which we may have missed, but also to focus their attention on the role of regional and national organizations in disasters. Given global trends, it is likely that they will need to become better at preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters to come.

Acronyms

AADMER – ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency

ACMC – Australian Civil-Military Centre

AHA – ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance and Emergency Response

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CDERA – Caribbean Disaster Response Association (called CDEMA since 2009)

DRR – Disaster risk reduction

DRM – Disaster risk management

HFA – Hyogo Framework for Action

IFRC - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

JICA – Japanese International Cooperation Agency

NDMO – National disaster management organization

PEMTAG – Pacific Emergency Management Training Advisory Group

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

SAARC – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SOPAC – Secretariat of the Pacific Community