Strengthening Inclusive Disaster Risk Governance for Climate Resilience in Asia (SIDRRA)

Synthesis of Case Study Findings from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan (August – September 2024)

Strengthening Inclusive Disaster Risk Governance for Climate Resilience in Asia (SIDRRA)

Sweden Sverige

ADRRN

PBSP Philippine Business for Social Progress

CWS JAPAN Church World Service

RESCUE

cepa centre for poverty analysis

This report was produced as part of a larger study named The Strengthening Inclusive Disaster Risk Governance for Climate Resilience in Asia (SIDRRA), co-implemented by a consortium led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN), and Duryog Nivaran. The Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) was commissioned by Duryog Nivaran to collect and analyse existing contextual landscape relevant to the project.

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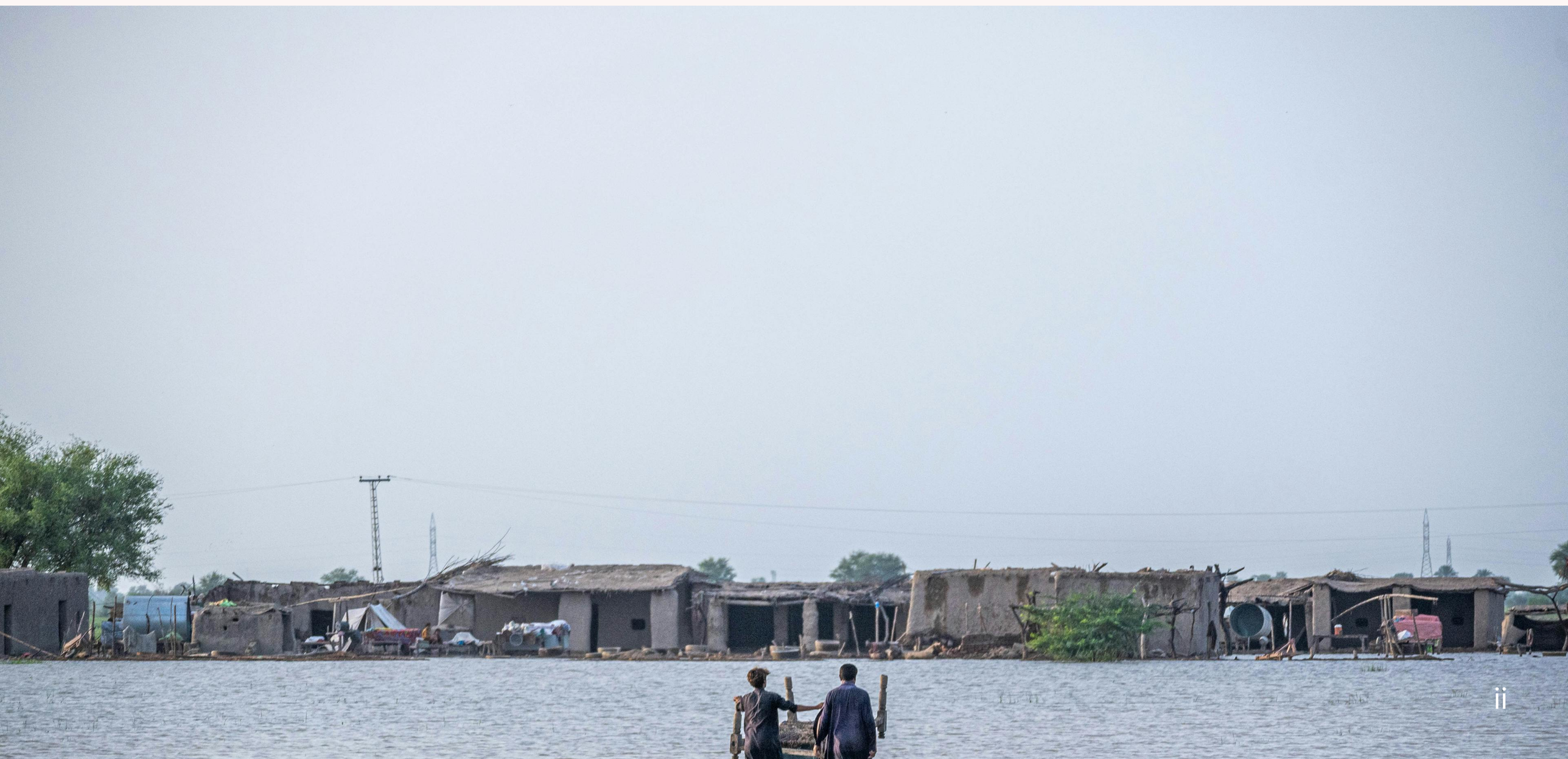

List of Acronyms

ADRRN: Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network

BPP: Bangladesh Preparedness Partnership

BYEI: Bangladesh Youth Environmental Initiative

C&D Dialogue: Climate and Development Dialogue

CANSA-BD: Climate Action Network South Asia-Bangladesh

CBDRR: Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction

CDD: Centre for Disability in Development

CEPA: Centre for Poverty Analysis

CPP: Cyclone Preparedness Programme

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

DN: Duryog Nivaran

DPNet: Disaster Preparedness Network Nepal

DRM: Disaster Risk Management

DRR: Disaster Risk Reduction

GDN: Gender and Disaster Network

GESI: Gender and Social Inclusion

IRC: International Rescue Committee

MoDMR: Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief

NDMA: National Disaster Management Authority

NYCA: Nepalese Youth for Climate Action

PFF: Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum

PRA: Participatory Rural Assessment

UDMC: Union Disaster Management Committee

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

SIDRRA: Strengthening Inclusive Disaster Risk Governance for Climate Resilience in Asia

WAF: Women Action Forum

WHDRRP: Women in Humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction Platform

INTRODUCTION

The disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster risk management (DRM) landscape is full of terminology with much overlap with the latter, referring to the general operational practice of responding to and mitigating disasters. The former, however, refers to a systematic approach to responding to disasters and it is often understood as a two-pronged approach; this involves addressing and mitigating disasters already in place and preventing disasters which may take place in the future (UNDRR, n.d.). The core objectives of DRR comprise of the reduction in individual exposure, reduced damage to property, improved preparedness, the proper management of land, and enhanced population resilience (Mall et al., 2018).

A key dimension within the DRR formula is vulnerability which cannot be restricted to one's economic wellbeing. Vulnerability is a cumulative and compounding effect of "economic, social, cultural, and political factors that shape people's lives and create the environments that they live and work in" (Twigg, 2015, p.003). 'Vulnerability' is key in understanding DRR for it is vulnerability that could make a natural or anthropogenic hazard into a risk. A person's risk of being subjected to a disaster event commensurately increases with their vulnerability, and evidence-based research around the globe attests to how those who are marginalised, systemically oppressed, and victim to structural violence are more likely to be disproportionately affected by disasters (Twigg, 2015). Such groups usually include persons with disabilities, women, gender and sexual minorities, and those who are considered to be caste, ethnic, and racial minorities. These groups' risk of being exposed to disasters is further compounded by their economic wellbeing or the lack thereof. Climate change is also intrinsically connected to disasters, and it continues to exacerbate disasters faced by communities and their vulnerability to them. Reasons for such increased exposure to disasters can also be attributed to how structures of decision-making are designed to exclude minority and minoritised communities as well as the said communities' absence of any bargaining power.

The most common method of addressing DRR and disaster management at the communitylevel is to treat these groups as victims, rather than agentive, first responders who have the capacity to recognise the proactive roles they could play. Most often, the design of DRR itself lacks emphasis on inclusivity and on what different communities can bring into how they are prepared against disasters and manage post-disaster.

Such findings then raise the question as to how effective the DRR efforts in place can be. Not surprisingly, the majority of literature available on public domains focus on state actors' involvement in DRR and the international treaties and frameworks in place, as state actors have the responsibility for the wellbeing of people within its borders and treaties are very much a part of global governance. A study by Mall et al. (2018), did a comprehensive examination of the institutions in place in South Asian countries in implementing DRR efforts. Whilst Mall et al. (2018) provides a detailed description of the establishing of relevant ministries and state departments, the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and attempts at addressing DRR through their respective national adaptation plans, the authors fail to investigate the spaces in which informal and non-state actors and communities operate and their contribution to DRR efforts.

However, in order to gain a rounded and more comprehensive understanding of DRR and its efficiency, one needs to see the informal and non-state actors' involvement in DRR and whether they hinder state-led initiatives or whether they complement the process already in place, and whether they duplicate efforts in existence or whether they bridge the gaps left behind by state-led initiatives. This is also crucial in identifying the communities and individuals who have access to formal processes and frameworks in DRR vis-à-vis their informal counterparts. The Sendai Framework encourages this inclusion of non-state actors in its all-of-society approach to disaster risk reduction and management, whereby the shared spaced and platforms are sought to create an inclusive risk governance space (UNDRR, 2015). This includes empowering access to decision-making and participation which is non-discriminatory and inclusive which accounts of individuals living on the peripheries of society (UNDRR, 2023).

There are various modes and modalities in terms of how non-state actors engage with DRR. This includes individual organisations, coalitions, networks, platforms and movements.

These modes or modalities can come from different ideological stances, operational modalities and scales – from the very grounded to national, regional, and global.

The intersection of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework for DRR, and risk governance represents an integrated approach for global resilience-building especially against climate change, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. The SDGs, established by the United Nations in 2015, outline goals to address systemic social, economic, and environmental challenges, while the Sendai Framework (2015-2030) specifically focuses on DRR, aiming to mitigate the impact of natural and human-induced hazards. Together, these frameworks call for adaptive governance structures that strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerability, and create sustainable, risk-informed societies.

The Sendai Framework's emphasis on disaster risk governance is critical for advancing SDG targets related to climate action (SDG 13), sustainable cities (SDG 11), and reducing inequalities (SDG 10). Birkmann et al. (2016) emphasise that risk governance must evolve to include multisectoral collaboration, particularly at local levels, to integrate resilience across infrastructure, health, and ecosystems — aligning directly with the SDGs' holistic development agenda. For example, resilience-building in cities requires both Sendai-aligned DRR strategies and SDG-compliant urban planning that enhances infrastructure adaptability to climate change, especially in vulnerable regions (UNISDR, 2015).

Academic research stresses that achieving SDG targets, National Adaptation Plans, and adhering to the Paris Agreement necessitates embedding risk governance principles within both global and local policy frameworks. Risk governance, as defined by Renn (2008), requires collaborative, inclusive decision-making that engages diverse stakeholders in identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks. This approach aligns with the Sendai Framework's call for decentralisation and community engagement, particularly in high-risk areas where local governance is crucial to DRR success. According to Gaillard and Mercer (2012), community-based DRR initiatives can significantly contribute to SDG outcomes by fostering local knowledge, enhancing adaptive capacities, and ensuring equitable risk management.

Moreover, the Sendai Framework and the SDGs converge on the principle of transformative resilience—a concept advocating for systemic changes to address root causes of vulnerability. O'Brien et al. (2012) argue that resilience, when understood through a transformative lens, is not merely about recovery but also about reshaping systems to prevent future risks, thereby supporting long-term sustainable development. This perspective is crucial, as resilience-oriented governance structures can bridge the gaps between immediate disaster response and sustainable and preventative risk management, and address climate change in alignment with the SDGs

The interconnectedness of the SDGs, the Sendai Framework, risk governance, and climate change offers a comprehensive model for achieving sustainable, resilient societies. The frameworks together underscore a shift towards risk-informed governance that anticipates and mitigates vulnerabilities through policy, community participation, and cross-sector collaboration. This synergy is essential for global resilience and a foundation for sustainable development in an era increasingly marked by climate change and systemic inequalities..

METHODOLOGY

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The scoping study was initially informed by a literature review of academic and grey literature on disasters, with a specific focus on South and Southeast Asia. Primary data collection was conducted by three South Asian researchers based in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. These three countries were selected based on the Consortium's existence and presence in them. The Centre for Poverty Analysis's (CEPA) familiarity with researchers and activists working in the said countries was expected to help the project in speeding up the progress in selecting potential candidates. Whilst Pakistan and Bangladesh were picked based on the interest expressed by the Consortium, Nepal was picked based on Duryog Nivaran's (DN's) strong presence within the country. Given the short timeline of the project, choosing these countries allowed CEPA, with the support of Duryog Nivaran's steering committee members and International Rescue Committee (IRC) to source researchers through their contacts to carry out the deep dives. The researchers were given a month and a half (August – September 2024) to collect and analyse their data and produce a draft report of their findings. Prior to commencing their studies, the researchers submitted their study proposals which were reviewed by advisors from DN. The synthesised findings presented in this report and the recommendations provided were extracted from a synthesis workshop held in Sri Lanka on the 18th and 19th of October 2024 and from the three case study reports produced by Sarah Zaman, Raisa Imran Chowdhury, and Tikeshwari Joshi. The civil society organisation (CSO) consultations caried out by the Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN) also allowed the project team and the researchers to identify and prioritise certain study areas while conducting the country case studies.

The scoping study attempts to explore DRR, disaster governance, and community voice within DRR efforts in South Asia, focusing on the following research questions, with an emphasis on intersectionality by considering best practices for integrating gender equality and social inclusion (GESI):

- How do networks strengthen and amplify community voices and concerns in disaster risk reduction efforts?
- How does this translate into meaningful change on the ground?
- What is the added value of networks vis-à-vis other modalities, and how can they improve in better serving local communities?
- What are the best and good practices for integrating GESI and protection mechanisms in disaster risk governance?

The purpose of this report is to both synthesise the country case study findings and to draw learnings on how a network can improve community engagement in DRR and make risk governance an inclusive space where different individuals and communities are provided equitable services. As part of this project, CEPA also conducted an extensive review of literature on DRR and risk governance in South Asia. Where necessary, some findings of this review are also mentioned alongside case study findings.

Networks range from communal, national, regional, and international networks. Furthermore, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction acknowledges that multi-stakeholder platforms can take different forms including formal or informal communities of practice or thematic working groups, all of which can function as a network. These entities can also take other forms such as (social) movements, platforms, stakeholder groups, and other individual organisations. While these different entities entail different modes of functioning, they often overlap making it difficult to discern these entities from one another. For the purpose of specifically examining networks and their contribution to inclusive risk governance and disaster risk reduction, this report utilises the definition provided by Willard and Creech that networks are a "social arrangement comprising either organisations or individuals that is based on building relationships, sharing tasks, and working on mutual or joint activities" (2006, p.4).

CASE STUDIES

The three South Asian case studies produced by the researchers from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan have some uniformity in how they have approached the study area. All three studies commence with an overview of state-led initiatives in place, including Acts, policies, institutions, and ratified international treaties. The studies then move on to look at the state of non-state actors' involvement, the role of networks and how they function. Given below are brief summaries of the objectives of the three South Asian case studies:

Bangladesh Case study

As mentioned in the case study, Bangladesh is prone to natural hazards and disasters given its positioning, landscape, topography, and the increasing impacts of climate change. According to the Global Climate Risk Index (2019), Bangladesh places sixth in being vulnerable to climate risk. Both community-led and state-led initiatives have made efforts to put in place cyclone shelters, rainwater harvesting systems and as well as climate resilient and resistant agricultural practices and systems. However, increasing the capacity of such measures remains a challenge. It is also mentioned that DRR in Bangladesh is supported by the government, non-state actors, and community-based organisations. The evolution of DRR efforts by these actors is reflected in the significant decrease in the death toll reported due to disasters. For instance, the case study reports how Bangladesh managed to go from a 147,000 death toll during 1991 Cyclone Gorki to a death toll of 26 during the Super Cyclone Amphan in 2020. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) is in charge of leading inter-ministerial efforts on DRR. The government also has a Standing Order on Disaster (2019) which puts in a centralised decision-making process in preventing and managing disasters. Bangladesh reportedly also has a large presence of NGOs engaged in both DRR and DRM.

This case study has done an extensive literature review prior to conducting its primary data collection with members of networks, community leaders, and members of disaster committees. The study has collected data from four locations; Bagerhat, located in the coastal region, was chosen as one of the most cyclone-prone districts, having suffered significant damage during Cyclone Sidr. Kurigram, on the other hand, was identified as one of the most flood-prone areas, regularly experiencing both riverine and flash floods that inflict increasing damage and hardship on its population. Bandarban, situated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, was included due to its high incidence of landslides and susceptibility to flash floods. Finally, Dhaka, the capital city, was selected to incorporate the perspective of urban disaster risks, given its exposure to a range of urban hazards. She has used a three-pronged approach to analyse her data (inclusive, intersectional, and participatory) and she has also used five indicators in examining the effectiveness[1] of DRR networks in Bangladesh.

Entities Under Study:

- Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs)
- Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP)
- Climate Action Network South Asia-Bangladesh (CANSA-BD)
- Bangladesh Youth Environmental Initiative (BYEI)
- Gender and Disaster network (GDN)

Pakistan Case Study

Pakistan is no different from its South Asian neighbours when it comes to the DRR frameworks and policies in place. While the first ever National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was established in 2005, it proved to be inefficient and ineffective due to coordination limitations and resource shortages. The 2010/2011 floods around the Indus River and its tributaries, led to the formation of a National Disaster Risk Reduction policy in 2014 which, according to the researcher, was a step towards a more comprehensive approach to DRR. Pakistan's DRR efforts are operational at three levels, namely, national, provincial, and local, with the last being largely weak in its functioning. In this context, CSOs and NGOs have begun playing a crucial role in engaging in both DRR and DRM where the government falls short.

In 2017, NGOs and CSOs managed to update the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy by ensuring that it promoted gender inclusivity and the inclusion of other marginalised communities in DRR decision-making and governance. Lastly, it is also mentioned that networks (mainly made up of individual organisations) and community-based organisations play a significant role in both disaster management and building resilience at the community level, either in collaboration with the government or CSOs and NGOs. The case study also mentions that there is no formal mechanism in place in Pakistan for the government to mediate or monitor CSO and NGO involvement.

The case study has conducted an extensive literature review and has collected primary data by speaking to those engaged in and working with select networks in DRR. The researcher utilises Social Network Analysis in trying to identify how organisations are connected; how resources and information circulate; and how influence is distributed across the network. This theoretical framework is utilised in studying how the structure of a network influences its behaviour and the effectiveness of its members and participants.

Entities Under Study:

- Climate March, Karachi (2019)
- Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), Karachi (1999)
- HANDS (1979)

Nepal Case Study

Much like Bangladesh, owing to its unique geological positioning and climatic variation, Nepal is prone to a host of hazards and disasters, both seismic and hydroclimatic. As the case study reports, Nepal frequently experiences landslides, avalanches, debris flow, flash floods, glacial lake outburst floods, earthquakes, and lightning or thunderstorms. In Nepal, the government operates at three levels, i.e., federal, provincial, and local, in both disaster prevention and management, and the constitution provides the legal basis for institutionalising disaster prevention and management. While there are processes and frameworks in place for the functioning of DRR within Nepal, challenges in coordinating between different institutions and shortcomings in human resources, technology, and equipment renders such state-led initiatives ineffective in many ways.

In addition to the government's involvement in DRR, where the government cannot reach or is lacking in providing services, NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs have come together to broaden both DRR and DRM efforts. This is commonly referred to as 'bricolage' wherein various actors, both state and non-state alike, come together to bridge any gaps arising due to resource limitations.

This case study has done an extensive desk review of academic and grey literature, including national-level policy documents, and has interviewed key stakeholders engaged in DRR and CCA in Nepal. Lastly, the study has also interviewed representatives from four different networks working on DRR in the country. The researcher has analysed her data thematically according to the four research questions which guide the overall scoping study.

Entities Under Study:

- Disaster Preparedness Network Nepal (DPNet)
- Climate and development dialogue (C&D)
- Nepalese Youth for Climate Action (NYCA)
- Women in Humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction Platform (WHDRRP)

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

In this section, this report attempts to elaborate on each of the case studies' findings on network behaviour, their makeup, how and why networks function, and what stalls the operations of networks. The case studies have all looked at three levels of institutional and/network involvement in DRR, starting from the government's involvement, NGOs' and CSOs' involvement either as individual organisations or members of networks, and community involvement as volunteers, leaders, and members of CBOs. The researchers have only interviewed a few representatives from each network, organisation, and government authority. Therefore, it is advised that these findings are read in relation to their specific, limited contexts.

All three countries have a central, national level authority which is responsible for both DRR and DRM and their work is to be coordinated by provincial level and local level branches. The communities are involved with these state structures through disaster management groups at the village level. However, all the case studies report of instances where the government fails to effectively prepare communities against disasters, prevent large-scale damage caused by disasters, and provide aid and relief to communities post-disasters. Lack of coordination, resources (including human resources), and technical assistance are cited as reasons for such failure. For instance, the Bangladesh case study explains how government authorities prioritise post-disaster management over DRR and treat risk reduction only as an afterthought during disasters. Some government officers also face difficulties in actually trying to help community members as they have to rely on external department personnel to come in and help with relief and aid, as they lack adequate human resources within designated disaster-related authorities. At times, the local government's service provision, especially during post-disaster management is seen as exclusionary due to political bias, i.e., supporters of incumbent government are given priority when it comes to providing relief measures. This, however, is not something that is specific to government authorities, for the case studies also go on to explain how even more established NGOs and CSOs and/or networks comprising such organisations would tend to prioritise their network of supporters first before moving on to helping the rest of the affected or vulnerable communities.

For instance, during the 2022 floods in the Sindh province (Pakistan), relief and aid were inequitably distributed and certain charities with religious affiliation refrained distributing aid to other religious and ethnic minorities. Government authorities are also seen as entities that often interfere with other actors' involvement in DRR. While other (often non-state) actors are allowed to assist communities and increase their resilience against disasters, and provide relief and aid post-disasters, these actors are subjected to government involvement which could either derail the said actors' efforts or hinder any progress that they may make. For instance, in Pakistan, the national Economic Affairs Division requires larger, more formal networks to function under their purview, largely limiting their capacity to work beyond what is deemed as sufficient by the government. A related yet distinct finding emerged from the literature review which pointed to community resistance against government involvement in DRR. This was mainly due to the governments' insensitivity towards local culture and way of life. In Odisha, India, Indigenous communities have resisted the government's relocation efforts as it was seen as an infringement on their identity and autonomy (Das, 2018). In Nepal, government-led initiatives have also been met with opposition, for these externally imposed efforts have disregarded and marginalised local and Indigenous practices, perpetuating feelings of cultural loss and eroding community trust (Jones et al., 2016).

The majority of government inefficiencies seem to stem from not having a clear mandate as to what they are supposed to do. Even if certain policies and Acts are present to guide these authorities prior to, during, and after disasters, their inability to coordinate with other authorities renders them ineffective. The case studies illustrate the gaps in government structures by pointing to the overlapping and conflicting responsibilities the different levels of government would have in DRR, the government's ability to implement what is drafted as policies, and the absence of congruence between the ground reality and DRR policies. . For instance, in the Bangladeshi case study, it is shown how the lowest tier of DRR governance, the UDMCs, lacks training in terms of their occupational duties such as evacuation, search and rescue, shelter management, relief and rehabilitation, etc.

In Nepal, while processes are written down and gazetted, approaching climate change and DRR as separate objectives to development leaves the DRR space with shortages in funds and human resources, and leads government authorities to work in silos. An example from the Pakistan case study is that while there seems to be coordination between government authorities at different levels pre-, during, and post-disasters, the severity of the disaster itself brings into question the actual coordination capacity of such authorities. For instance, the 2022 floods in the Sindh region which resulted in 1,093 deaths and 7,383,023 displacements, left many individuals and communities without aid due to the duplication of efforts and mismanaged resources. The Pakistan case study further reveals that government authorities at the local level (along with NGOs and CSOs) are in constant competition with each other for limited resources from the provincial and national level authorities.

The government authorities are also structured in a manner which does not allow the inclusion of community voices and opinions in risk governance. The central government or the local or provincial level governments are at liberty to instruct communities on what they should do and how they should behave during or post-disasters. There are no feedback channels within the government structures to improve their service provision. In Pakistan, when communities lack the power to organise themselves against pre-existing social hierarchies and power imbalances, they are often excluded from DRR efforts by the government. The lack of resources and technical assistance also means that their support primarily focuses on able-bodied persons and ethnic and religious majorities, often leading to the exclusion of marginalised individuals from DRR and DRM efforts. Thus, the vertical power structures present in government structures, especially at the local level would then function as barriers to effectively incorporating community voices and strengthening them within risk governance. The only exception mentioned in the case studies is from Bangladesh where the UDMCs are seen as entities which serve communities equitably, and the inclusion of both politically affiliated and non-affiliated individuals also ensures that awareness programmes on disasters and relief during and post-disasters reach more community members. The UDMC is also known as a committee which promotes gender parity in its makeup. However, there is a lack of critical analysis into whether the UDMC actually provides an equitable service at ground level.

Compared to government authorities, in some instances, networks comprising member organisations or larger, more formal NGOs and CSOs are better positioned to help the community. While government initiatives provide the framework for DRR and DRM and attempt to cover its entire citizenry, networks and individual organisations attempt to help governments either improve their efficiency or help communities which fall through the cracks of government-led initiatives. This is especially true for networks which have a larger funding base. Their ability to make an impact within the DRR landscape also depends on their size. While individual organisations may also be better positioned than government authorities, if they do not have sufficient funding sources, employees, reach, or even the expertise, their potential to advocate for DRR and risk governance is minimum. The added advantage of being part of network where individual organisations are members is that there is strength in number. As will be discussed below, being part of a network allows organisations to share resources amongst its members, gain opportunities to build and improve their capacity, and have a wider reach at the ground level. If individual organisations, however, have sufficient funding for their operations, can at times function like networks due to their large-scale of operations.

There is multiplicity in how these networks and individual organisations are present in DRR and DRM. The three case studies have examined their involvement in raising awareness and capacity-building which is not limited to those affected by or are vulnerable to disasters. Capacity-building in terms of organisational structuring, reporting, and managing accounts is one of the key contributions of networks in terms of risk governance. These services are provided to more local level CBOs and other smaller organisations as well as government authorities, actively contributing to bridge the gap between local communities and the government. This allows such networks to share resources with local organisations and the government, exchange knowledge and know-how, and to put in place a more coordinated disaster response system. The reviewed literature too showed that this collaborative nature allows networks to address complex, multifaceted issues more effectively than isolated and generic interventions. For instance, in Pakistan certain organisations (often members of networks) have been able to effectively implement programmes which address specific vulnerabilities communities face by working alongside the central authority

on disaster management. In Nepal, the National Society for Earthquake Technology, a member of the Disaster Preparedness Network Nepal (DPNet), is known for conducting training programmes for the local government on DRR, DRM, and policy and strategy formulation. These networks' educational programmes at ground level and disaster preparedness are also conducted in collaboration with community members, ensuring that DRR is participatory. They are well placed to pair local Indigenous knowledge with scientific knowledge when improving communities' resilience and responsive capacity against disasters. The PFF, for instance, has been successful in leveraging century-old Indigenous early warning systems and community mobilisation in their work. Again, in Nepal, DPNet, brings together different communities mainly through the help of grassroots level organisations (often members of the network) either virtually or in-person and attempts to understand their capacity-building needs. These capacity-building initiatives often take the form of discussions, training programmes, and workshops, and those who participate in such capacity-building exercises are then also put in touch with other network members and policymakers who are capable of addressing the participants' needs. For instance, the Joint Response Plan 2024 of Bangladesh also has 94 implementing partners working together to build the capacity of both government authorities as well non-governmental actors to carry out large-scale DRR and climate change adaptation projects.

Although NGO and CSO networks are more flexible and are better positioned than the government to increase resilience against disasters and post-disaster management, they are not without shortcomings. One of the major concerns of such networks' involvement is the impact on the power dynamics on the ground level, especially if there are international actors involved in terms of financial aid. In Pakistan, for instance, access to international actors who provide aid affects the political economy of sustainability and development in relation to DRR. Different networks or clusters of networks in Pakistan have differentiated access to such funding sources which also determine their connectivity to, and understanding of, the communities with which they work. For instance, much larger networkers, as opposed to loose or more informal networks, often rely on either government or donor funding which may often come with conditions that restrict their operations in various ways. This is partly due to the precarity of registration status of networks which depends on rules and regulations put in place by the government or international donors who have significant influence within the development sector. Although, these networks have the capacity to incorporate local voices and knowledge into DRR, donor requirement and/or project requirements may push them to rely on knowledge systems and practices which are alien to the communities with which they work. There is a risk of misalignment between external agendas and local priorities. NGOs and CSOs which function as members of networks (and even government bodies) may prioritise outcomes that align with funding or political objectives, which may not address the community's actual needs (Mercer et al., 2010). Much like the government, these networks and/or individual organisations can also be exclusionary in their operations. The case studies have also found instances of how political affiliations and one's majority status give communities an advantage when it comes to receiving relief and aid from such networks. While these networks and organisations attempt to create space for more participatory approaches, their organisational as well as operational structures are still very much top-down, rendering some of their work more tokenistic than practical and inclusive. A prime example of this is when networks or organisations do not identify the differentiated, gendered needs of affected communities, leading to solutions which effectively disregard the unfair care burden placed on women. Imbalances in power dynamics would also mean that it is difficult for local communities and actors to incorporate their voices in DRR.

In terms of DRR initiatives being inclusive, the South Asian case studies have found evidence of the inclusion of women in DRR. During the 2010 and 2011 floods in Pakistan, Shirkat Gah – Women's Resource Centre was able to provide safe spaces for women affected by the disaster thanks to its reliance on a network made up of community-based organisations. Networks such as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has been successful in integrating women into DRR and DRM efforts and creating an environment where women can play an active role alongside men in their community. This has led to enhancement in the overall resilience of communities in the Gilgit-Balistan province and improved effectiveness of DRR mechanisms in the northern regions of Pakistan. The Pakistan case study also presents examples of community organising around different communities in DRR such as transgender and

Indigenous activist groups. In Nepal, DPNet and WHDRRP both collaborated with the government to provide input on the GEDSI Strategic Action Plan 2024 which seeks to make the DRR landscape more inclusive. However, the absence of endorsement of local and provincial level policies in this action plan prevents it from being localised in its implementation. Nevertheless, the ability to foster collaboration and share resources, knowledge, and best practices both within networks and across networks allowed DPNet and WHDRRP to rely on the necessary expertise needed to mainstream gendered needs and achieve this feat. Nepalese Youth for Climate Action (NYCA) also mobilises young people to engage in climate action and advocacy, thereby contributing to the integration of youth perspectives into national DRR strategies. In Bangladesh, there is reference to gender inclusivity in terms of networks including women as community leaders and changemakers within the DRR landscape. For instance, 'Kishori Shova' in rural areas where teenage girls are given training on different aspects of social roles, leadership, etc. The government also attempts to empower women by prioritising them in social safety nets in relation to disasters. However, inclusivity remains a pressing concern across networks and government-led initiatives. Broader efforts often neglect marginalised groups including persons with disabilities and ethnic and religious minorities. Structural inequities and exclusionary practices continue to hinder equitable disaster governance. This is mainly due to funding sources and the political ideologies with which they align. For instance, if the network (or its donors) has a religious basis to their work, the said networks may forego working with certain communities owing to their different identities and/or beliefs. Although the three case studies report of networks having representation of many minority communities in leadership positions, further study is needed to determine the extent to which such networks are inclusive in their operations.

Networks may also be affected by their funding cycles, meaning that these networks, or more often individual organisations, would cease their operations and leave localities once funding finishes. Moreover, partnerships can sometimes create dependencies rather than resilience. When communities overly rely on external actors for resources and decision-making, they may lose self-sufficiency, weakening their capacity for independent, sustainable DRR (Djalante et al., 2012). This dependency risk is particularly pronounced when short-term aid efforts or donor-funded projects provide temporary relief without fostering long-term skills or knowledge transfer. Additionally, governments and NGO/CSO network projects typically operate within predefined timelines and funding cycles, while communities experience disaster risk as a continual reality. These differences can lead to projects that abruptly end or fail to address chronic issues in a sustained manner, undermining community trust and long-term resilience (Gaillard & Mercer, 2012). Sustainability of efforts then also becomes a question of mobilising versus organising. While more established, formal networks are able to mobilise communities to spread information and react to disaster events and volunteer during relief and aid provision, they are not organised around a cause to advocate for themselves or cause dissent against exclusionary measures by the government or other entities. This is one of the major differences identified between larger, formal networks and smaller, more community-based networks. As the Pakistan case study points out, these more informal and loose networks are able to go beyond the silos in which larger organisations and networks function, even though they are largely present at local levels. They are also seen as more agile in responding to the needs of communities during and post- disasters, and they are capable of opposing misinformed and misaligned state policies in relation to DRR. For instance, the Women Action Forum (WAF) of Pakistan was one of the very first entities to point out the exclusionary practices in the Ehsaas social protection scheme by the federal government.

One of the major contributions of community-based networks is how they bridge the gap between actual community needs and what others provide or fail to provide. When communities are involved in DRR and DRM, they are capable of catering to their own needs. This also prompts communities to be more proactive rather than reactive, ensuring that community members step forward to take care of their own needs instead of waiting for external parties to get involved. Communities are reached better prior to and post-disasters and according to the case studies, there is better resilience and preparedness amongst communities as a result of community-based DRR (CBDRR). The literature also claims that CBDRR creates practical local solutions, which are culturally appropriate and socially acceptable, which help communities deal with and prevent natural disasters.

They strengthen local resources and can help connect communities with external organisations for managing disaster risk, without making them reliant on outside aid (Delicia-Willison & Gaillard, 2012). Such approaches are often cost-effective and sustainable. Not only do members of the community respond faster than external organisations, but in the aftermath of disasters, communities often demonstrate remarkable resilience and initiative to restore themselves to their former positions. People typically exhibit a strong desire for rapid recovery, channelling this energy into immediate action.

One of the main advantages of being a community-based initiatives is the informality of the network. The informality of such networks and movements would mean that there is an absence of a vertical, top-down hierarchy. This, however, does not mean that there is zero structure in community-based networks and movements – there is a more horizontal structure where members have an equal say in matters which allows for greater representation and inclusion of different identities. This horizontal structure is fluid and depending on the situation or disaster that needs attention, the focal point within the network and movement may change. In Pakistan, these informal loose networks have been capable of mobilising communities in the form of large protests and public interest litigations to hold the government accountable and take ownership over certain DRR processes and mechanisms. The fluidity or looseness of such networks then allows community-based networks and movements to renegotiate and redefine themselves, and also enter spaces which larger, more formal organisations and even the government cannot. In Bangladesh, these community-based networks and organisations function as means of community voice amplification and strengthening within DRR. These networks work towards identifying and prioritising local needs and high-risk areas pre- and post-disasters. Should there be any dissent on the aim of such networks or movements, there is space or possibility for members to break away and form different entities. Such fragmentation could occur due to disagreements over which causes the network or movement intends to prioritise. For instance, some networks working on holding the government accountable over climate change adaptation may not see access to housing and clean water as causes to advocate for, pushing members to form their own networks with an expanded scope.

The case studies also reveal that these community-based, informal/loose networks also lead to collective resilience against disasters and that they render post-disaster management easier than most other types of networks. The informality and looseness of these networks would also mean that their work is not bound by the limits of bureaucracy and the grant economy. Although their reach is smaller on the ground when compared to other types of networks, their reliance on social media allows them to make their presence known for communities beyond their reach, leading to the potential expansion of the network, resource sharing, and knowledge exchange. Social media also allows such networks and movements to mobilise and organise communities by publishing articles and posts critiquing the ineffectiveness of government DRR efforts and their shortcomings.

A factor identified by the case studies, which seems important for all types of networks and individual entities working on DRR is ‘trust’. Trust has to be present within the network itself amongst its members, and there should be trust between the network and the community with which it works, in order for their DRR efforts to be inclusive. In Bangladesh, maintaining trust is seen as crucial for the effective implementation of DRR efforts within communities, and this requires consistent presence and knowledge sharing with the community, and putting in place actions which result in tangible outcomes. Trust, or the lack of it, is also one of the contributing factors for the fragmentation of networks.

By bridging marginalised individuals with larger governance structures, networks attempt and amplify community voices. As can be seen above, networks provide shared spaces and platforms for collective action; promote inclusive risk governance; build capacity internally, of community members, and even of government authorities; foster collaboration across networks for knowledge and resource sharing; and advocate for policy influence and change. Community-based networks and informal, more loose networks, however, adopt a different approach to bridging local communities and marginalised individuals with the overall governance apparatus. They are able to direct information and resources directly to the community and provide a feedback channel upwards to the State. In Pakistan, the PFF was one of the main organisers of The Climate March in 2019 which amplified voices on issues which intersect with climate change, and it

went beyond addressing issues of fisherfolk to addressing issues commonly faced by the larger public. In Bangladesh, the case study provides examples of active community voice strategies and passive voice strategies. The former includes examples of how communities come together to make decisions based on their own priorities and needs, and convince entities involved in DRR to focus their energy on addressing community needs. Such strategies often prioritise participatory decision-making process. Passive community voice strategies include networks and organisations such as the BYEI and the Centre for Disability in Development (CDD) which have established community networks that often discuss the issues they face in DRR and DRM. These findings are then communicated to the local, provincial, and national level governance structures. In Nepal, networks provide platforms, promote inclusivity, and build capacity as ways of amplifying community voices within the DRR landscape. For instance, DPNet links policymakers directly with the grassroots level ensuring that local concerns are reflected in national-level policymaking. Another example is WHDRRP, which provides platforms for women to engage in decision-making in terms of DRR and DRM, especially at the community-level.

At the inception of this scoping study as well as during the synthesis workshop, the project team along with the researchers attempted to understand the difference between other modalities and networks. Some of the modalities identified were movements, platforms, stakeholder groups, and individual organisations. The consensus of these conversations was that while these modalities may have slight differences in terms of how they operate, there is much overlap in their overall objectives and motivations. For instance, movements are more or less made up of grassroots activists or community leaders; they are not registered entities; most of their conception is organic; and they go into areas and spaces which others cannot enter, often through actions such as protests. Platforms and stakeholder groups are often considered to be spaces to articulate a position, and their positioning and agendas are put forward collectively. What links all these modalities to how networks operate is their fluidity in terms of how they advocate for issues, their ability to redefine themselves and renegotiate themselves depending on the issue advocated for, and their prioritising of the need for collective action. What sets apart a network from other modalities is while they work towards addressing a common goal, they also allow individual member organisations to function independently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations were derived from findings of the three case studies as well as from key person interviews conducted with Andrea Ordóñez and Priyanthi Fernando.

Nature of networks:

- There is a gap which networks, both formal and informal, can and should fill when it comes to DRR and risk governance, especially considering the fact that the majority of government authorities on the ground lack the capacity to effectively serve communities – especially given the extensive reach required and the specificity of the solutions given the diversity of issues and communities.

- Rather than having vertical structures, which are hierarchical in nature, having more horizontal structures would allow networks to be more inclusive in their service delivery on the ground level. Horizontal structures with no, or less, hierarchy foster collective action.

- A network should be able to build and maintain a collective presence, and this can be achieved by pooling resources together and sharing knowledge across regional boundaries, which provide an advantage over operating as individual organisations. The network should have its own objectives while ensuring that its member organisations also get to maintain objectives unique to them which also align with the larger goals of the network. However, if networks do not have a distinct advantage – one that individual organisations and individuals see as worth their while – as organisations and individuals, it will not compel them to join and contribute proactively as it is also easy enough to be passive members. Networks need dynamic active organisations and members who will provide leadership, volunteer their time and expertise beyond what their organisations or the network can cover. Therefore, the added value – in terms of the cause, the ability to amplify, gain traction or results, gain recognition, innovate, or connect that determines the reason others will engage is a vital component of a network.

Network Operations:

- Networks must be mindful of the local/ground realities, especially when they bring in funding from elsewhere. Networks have to be mindful of how their involvement can lead to fluctuations in power dynamics within the communities they function. While there are participatory methods such as the Participatory Rural Assessment (PRA), they often begin conversations with the mistaken assumption that communities may not always know what is good for them. For networks to truly question and acknowledge their impact on power dynamics and the extent to which their services are inclusive, they need to rely on decolonised approaches whereby community members have ownership over their lives and preparedness against disasters and are acknowledged for their knowledge on the issues they face and ways of dealing with them.

- For networks to be able to convince decision-makers and policymakers to alter their approaches to DRR, it is recommended that they create more open learning systems where communities are part of the knowledge production and dissemination process.

- Networks should both mobilise and organise communities and individuals. Organising individuals involves a more comprehensive approach, whereby community members are made aware of the importance of advocating for themselves and collective action, as opposed mobilising which often entails communities operating under external directives and/or within a vertical (hierarchical) structure. This would also help communities to better prepare against disasters, especially when they cannot depend on the governing apparatus for assistance. In order to organise individuals and communities, evidence-based knowledge on DRR, resources, and technical assistance need to be shared with communities. Ideally, organising

should also lead to the formation of 'communities of practice' where learning, preparation for disasters, post-disaster management, and dissent in favour of democracy are continuously practised and modified based on experience and expertise. More emphasis on risk reduction and preparedness rather than relief and coping should also be where the community of practice and advocacy should be focussed on – as this is a gap area.

- To ensure the networks' sustained operations, it can adopt a cautious approach to growth, emphasising steady progress rather than rapid expansion. The network should focus on achieving specific, manageable goals and making incremental improvements to its operations.

- The network should focus on specific areas where it can make a meaningful impact. This focused approach allows a network to maintain coherence and direction while also building a strong, sustainable presence. It is important to think what can be achieved through a network rather than an organisation, or how a network can benefit from the collective strength of its members.

- The network should consider partnering with other organisations or networks to increase its presence in global spaces. However, this requires having individuals within the network who are well-connected and able to navigate the complex world of global funding and advocacy.

Member's Expectations:

- The network should have clear operational guidelines to ensure that there is no competition between its members. Every member organisation should be given equal opportunity in the network's operations. In incentivising member organisations for a continuous engagement with the network, the network can allocate a certain percentage of its budget to be reinvested back into its member organisations to support their activities.

- Going forward, the network should sustain member interest in the network. To maintain their interest, the network can offer members targeted and exclusive opportunities which they cannot easily access on their own. This can come in the form of opportunities for accessing resources, training, making connections and partnerships, attending high level events etc. The network also must be able to build on the strength of its membership to access funding, carry out advocacy, build knowledge, and amplify voices.

- To ensure sustainable engagement of members in network operations, capacity building activities should be conducted internally. This can be done by making use of the expertise of network members. Capacity building activities can also be extended beyond the network to reach government authorities as well as other organisations.

Resourcing:

- To ensure the network's sustainability, it should be able to go beyond traditional grant mechanisms and diversify the ways in which funds are channelled into projects and member organisations. Member organisations should have adequate access to the resources they need to carry out their work.

- The network will need to be flexible and adaptable in securing funding. The network should explore different funding mechanisms and build relationships with donors who understand the challenges faced by organisations in politically unstable regions.

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