

Background Note

Policy Dialogue

on

**Improving Disaster Risk Management
at District Level**

March 13, 2014

Background Note

Fencing Floods: Improving Disaster Risk Management at District Level

Introduction

Pakistan is a disaster prone country, vulnerable to natural as well as manmade disasters. It has experienced devastating impact of disasters on vulnerable communities living in hazard prone areas. The recent floods have revealed that the incidence of disasters is exasperated by the limited ability at the District and Tehsil level to deal with and reduce the potential negative impacts. One such disaster is the 2010 flood, which affected more than fifteen million people, with reported death of over 2,000 people and damages to more than seven hundred thousand houses.

The significance of disaster preparedness and disaster risk management at district and sub-district level can hardly be over emphasized. This requires systematic approach to deal with the whole spectrum of disasters. Disasters are essentially a local phenomenon and therefore require planned, strong and resilient response at local level. Pakistan is gradually shifting its focus from the traditional response based approach to the Disaster management, due to the disasters like 2005 earthquake on one hand, and on the other, out of its obligation as a signatory to the Hyogo framework of action (HFA) 2005 -2015. The HFA envisaged on promoting resilience through institutionalization of Disaster risk reduction and management at National, Provincial and District Level. It also considers that both communities and local authorities should be empowered to manage and reduce disaster risk by having access to the necessary information, resources and authority to implement actions. The disasters risk management ordinance promulgated in 2006, has strategic importance toward initiating work for resilient communities in Pakistan.

The local communities are important stakeholders in the DRM work, as their socio-economic conditions, traditions, culture have strong link with the impact and implications of the disasters. The involvement of communities in the systems and activities for disaster preparedness and response is one of the most essential elements for ensuring a sustainable and strong disaster management system.

There are various examples, that destruction due to disasters is not just associated with frequency or intensity, but poor governance of Disaster Management system and structures. Good governance in Disaster Risk Reduction is key entry point to develop confidence among multiple stakeholders for coordinated, collective, inclusive and prompt response to increase the resilience of hazard prone communities.

Institutional mapping of DRR/M in Pakistan is much focused on response and striving to develop proactive approach in view of institutional amendments. So, it is necessary to strengthen preparedness and governance on Disaster management to reduce impact and

improve Disaster Management plans at district level with clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities of Disaster Management mandated public units and their line agencies to deal with disasters. I-SAPS with support of Foundation Open Society Institutes (FOSI) is implementing the project Fencing Floods: Improving Disaster Risk Management at District Level to reduce institutional vulnerability and deficiencies in system at District Level to effectively cope with disasters. In achieving this objective it will be of critical importance to mainstream key tools and knowledge of managing disaster risks at the local tiers.

Objectives of the Policy Dialogue:

The broad aim of the Policy Dialogue is to facilitate an informed discourse on creating disaster resilient communities by strengthening disaster planning and implementation at district, tehsil and union council tiers. Specific objectives of the policy dialogue are as following:

- a. Share key findings from the field regarding planning and implementation of disaster risk management at district, tehsil and union council level;
- b. Seek inputs from the policy community for the improvement in the identified gaps and challenges.

Participants of the Policy Dialogue:

The participants of the policy dialogue will include key stakeholders of DRM/R and policy community including representatives of relevant government departments especially representatives of PDMA, DDMA, Rescue 1122, Civil Defense, academics, civil society organizations (CSOs) representatives and media.