

Workshop on the Implementation of Post-2015 Framework for

Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia

Monday, 23rd March 2015, Hong Kong

Background

A workshop on the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 organized by the Collaborating Centre for Oxford University and CUHK for Disaster and Medical Humanitarian Response (CCOUC) and the Chinese University of Hong Kong Centre for Global Health was held in Hong Kong on the 23rd March 2015. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 is one of the three United Nations (UN) 2015 landmark agreements that address Disaster Risk Reduction, sustainable development and climate change. This was the second science-based implementation meeting since the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 was adopted on Wednesday, 18th March 2015 by 187 member states. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together a group of local, national and international experts on DRR representing a wide range of fields and disciplines to discuss how to consider taking forward DRR science, technology and public health implementation in the Asia region.

Delegates and Representation

Over one hundred delegates attended the one day meeting and represented a wide range of disciplines including government officials, academia, clinical medicine practitioners, public health professionals, geologists and humanitarian workers. Eleven delegates from Mainland China representing National Health and Family Planning Commission, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of Guangxi, Guizhou, Qinghai and Yunnan Provinces and Chinese Society of Disaster Medicine were present together with a number of Professors from universities including The Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and The University of Hong Kong. A total of eleven NGOs were represented, including Amity Foundation (Hong Kong), CEDAR Fund, Crossroads Foundation, Habitat for Humanity (Hong Kong), Hong Kong Red Cross, International Care Ministries, Médecins Sans Frontières (Hong Kong), Oxfam (Hong Kong), Seeds Foundation, Social Workers Across Borders Limited and World Vision (Hong Kong).

Proceedings

The meeting opened with a ceremony including a welcoming address by **Professor Joseph JY Sung** (Vice-Chancellor and President, The Chinese University of Hong Kong) who thanked the organizers, keynote speakers, Chinese delegates and international guests. Opening remarks were also made by **Professor EK Yeoh** (Director and Professor, Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong), **Dr. Kevin KC Hung** (Director, Hong Kong Jockey Club Disaster Preparedness and Response Institute, Hong Kong Academy of Medicine) and **Professor Emily YY Chan** (Founding Director, Collaborating Centre for Oxford University and CUHK for Disaster and Medical Humanitarian Response (CCOUC) & Centre for Global Health (CGH), The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Professor, Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong). The ceremony concluded with the presentation of souvenirs to the keynote speakers.

Keynote Presentations

Five keynote presentations were given.

The first keynote presentation was given by **Professor Virginia Murray** (Vice-Chair of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)'s Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) and Consultant in Global Disaster Risk Reduction, Public Health England). Professor Murray introduced the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030. She emphasized the mandate given by the Sendai Framework to scientists to work in a trans-disciplinary way across institutions to develop the knowledge and technology needed to save lives and reduce disaster losses. Of note, the Sendai Framework has a more explicit focus on people and their health, and it aims to achieve the following outcome over the next 15 years:

‘The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries’

To achieve this outcome, the Sendai Framework states the need to pursue the following goal:

‘Prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that

prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster; increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience'

The achievement of this goal and the implementation and follow up of this framework require the creation of a conducive and enabling environment as well as *'the enhancement of the implementation capacity and capability of developing countries'*. Seven targets have been agreed to support the assessment of global progress in achieving the outcome and goal of this framework (the full document for the UN Sendai Framework on DRR can be found on the UNISDR website <http://www.preventionweb.net/posthfa/>)

In his keynote presentation, **Professor Gabriel Lau** (Director, Institute of Environment, Energy and Sustainability, AXA Professor of Geography and Resource Management, the Chinese University of Hong Kong) discussed the risks associated with climate change and how these are relevant to the Sendai Framework on DRR. He gave an overview of the basic scientific principles of global warming induced by human activities with particular emphasis on the critical role of the UN Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) in coordinating and documenting the efforts of the scientific community. His talk reviewed the implications of climate change (especially extreme weather events) for disaster risks in various sectors of human society, with specific reference to the Pearl River Delta region in South China which is extremely vulnerable to storms and sea-level rise.

Mr. Zhengmao Li (Director, Division of Emergency Response, Health Emergency Response Office, National Health and Family Planning Commission, P.R. China) spoke about China's disaster risk response. He gave a detailed overview of the systems and strategies in place for DRR and emergency health response in Mainland China as well as outlining its disaster risk management strategy. His talk revealed how inter-departmental cooperation during disaster response is encouraged and strengthened.

Dr. Qiongfeng Li (Director, Department of Emergency Response, Yunnan Center for Disease Control and Prevention) presented an Introduction of Disease Control and Prevention after the Earthquake in Lu Dian County of Yunnan Province of China on 3rd August, 2014. She showcased the success of the implementation of the disease control programme and the internet-based management model. She especially highlighted the formulation of 38 health and disease prevention technical programmes which serve as important guidance for future disaster management.

Professor Emily Chan (Founding Director, Collaborating Centre for Oxford University and CUHK for Disaster and Medical Humanitarian Response (CCOUC) & Centre for Global Health (CGH), The Chinese University of Hong Kong and Professor, Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine, The Chinese University of Hong Kong), with her rich experience and knowledge in the arena of humanitarian work, shared the findings of CCOUC work over the last five years. The work on the notion of risk perception in urban communities and megacities, as well as information on building projects in remote and rural China was particularly featured. She highlighted the opportunity presented by the Ethnic Minority Health Project in training students from a wide range of disciplines.

Panel Discussion

Professor Chan, Professor Murray, Mr. Li and Dr. Li participated in a panel discussion during which a number of challenges to DRR research and policy implementation were raised. It was noted that media coverage of the World Conference on DRR was in part limited which was possibly related to the impact that Category five cyclone Pam had on Vanuatu on 13th March, 2015. However, it was noted that information about the outcomes in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 should continue to be shared with the public by the media. The importance of continuing to expand DRR institutional networks as well as capacity development to achieve the goals of the Sendai Framework on DRR was highlighted during the session.

Roundtable Discussion

Roundtable discussions were held in the afternoon to explore ideas from delegates on how their respective organizations could contribute in the implementation phase of the Sendai Framework for DRR 2015 – 2030 as well as potential challenges and gaps that will need to be addressed. Groups were organized according to four priorities for action of the Sendai Framework which are:

1. Understanding disaster risk;
2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk;
3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience
4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to ‘Build Back Better’ in recover, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Delegates noted that the Sendai Framework for DRR promotes prevention and preparedness as well as response, recovery and rehabilitation. Challenges identified to the implementation of the Sendai Framework in some of the critical areas which include science, technology and public health were described as a range of cultural, political, financial and capacity-related factors.

Potential solutions included effective prioritization in the allocation of resources, capacity development, the practice of risk assessment including taking into consideration vulnerabilities, strengthening the resilience of frontline staff, as well as collaboration and cooperation to share knowledge and develop evidence-informed policies and initiatives that are assessed through evaluation.

Closing Remarks

Participants of the workshop gave positive feedback on the workshop by a show of hands. A vast majority expressed that they found the workshop enlightening and informative and that they have gained awareness of the Sendai Framework. Also a vast majority committed to bringing their understanding and knowledge of the Sendai Framework into their work.

Professor Emily Chan closed the day by thanking all the delegates for their participation and highlighting the opportunity provided by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 in giving all stakeholders involved directly or indirectly in disaster risk reduction the mandate to mainstream DRR into all policies and commit to working in partnership across policy sectors and science disciplines to achieve the outcome of the Sendai Framework:

‘the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, business, communities and countries’.