



Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
 Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction
Fourth session

Bangkok, 27-29 October 2015

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Development of disaster-related statistics
**Towards an agreed basic range of disaster-related statistics
 in Asia and the Pacific**
Note by the secretariat*Summary*

The present document outlines progress made by the ESCAP Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific towards the development of a framework and guidelines for a basic range of disaster-related statistics. This update highlights the opportunity to further synchronize the momentum gained by the Expert Group with the development of new global development goals and to coordinate with related international initiatives.

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction.....	2
II. Towards a basic range of disaster-related statistics	2
III. Progress of the work of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific	4
IV. The way forward	5
V. Issues for consideration.....	6

 * E/ESCAP/CDR(4)/L.1.

I. Introduction

1. The Asia-Pacific region is heavily exposed to natural disasters that leave devastating impacts. Enhancing the management of disaster risks continues to be a priority for countries in the region. Disaster risks, particularly those related to extreme weather events, are expected to increase as a result of climate change. Decision makers, disaster response authorities and stakeholders require high-quality statistics to mitigate risk and protect the most vulnerable populations, infrastructure and economic activities, and to effectively respond to and recover from disasters.

2. The Commission in its resolution 70/2 on disaster-related statistics in Asia and the Pacific stressed the importance of disaggregated data related to disasters in enabling a comprehensive assessment of the socioeconomic effects of disasters and strengthening evidence-based policymaking at all levels for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and decided to establish an expert group comprising statisticians and disaster risk reduction experts to work towards developing a basic range of disaster-related statistics. It also decided that the expert group should report on the progress made in developing a basic range of disaster-related statistics to the Committee on Statistics in 2014 and the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015.

II. Towards a basic range of disaster-related statistics

A. The need for a regional guide on disaster-related statistics

3. Disaster risk management is a process by which the stakeholders undertake measures, investments or other actions to reduce the level of risk. Risk management connotes a comprehensive perspective on disasters within which multiple phases of policy development and information management can be recognized, such as risk identification and prevention, risk reduction, mitigation and preparedness, disaster response, and medium- and long-term recovery. In ideal circumstances, statistics should be available for informing policies for each of these different phases of disaster risk management, drawing from a measurement framework with coherent use of terminologies and methodologies. A simple measurement framework is, therefore, needed for the development of a basic range of disaster-related statistics.

4. National disaster management agencies or equivalent institutions usually are tasked with compiling statistics on disasters and their impacts for national policymaking. The United Nations Development Programme has been helping member States develop disaster loss databases through a joint programme with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. These databases make it possible to review patterns of immediate direct impacts at the national and subnational levels. Globally, the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters has been maintaining the Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) since 1988. This database contains time series data on occurrences and impacts of more than 18,000 mass disasters that have occurred since 1900.

5. Nevertheless, international comparability for a basic range of disaster-related statistics is lacking from national and international sources due to a lack of internationally agreed methodological guidelines and definitions for disaster occurrences and their impacts.

6. To develop a regional “basic range” of disaster-related statistics, the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific, which met for the first time in Sendai, Japan, from 27 to 29 October 2014, needs to develop a clear framework and technical guidelines for producing the basic statistics with consistency over time and across observations.

7. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which was adopted by the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015, highlights the importance of statistical information, particularly for disaster risk assessment and for developing early-warning systems.

8. The technical guidelines for a basic range of disaster-related statistics to be developed by the Expert Group should address the detailed and practical challenges of data collection and compilation of data into indicators for monitoring the broader disaster risk reduction policy targets. The Expert Group’s work, which includes inputs from experts representing national disaster management agencies and national statistics offices, aims to address the fundamental requirements pertaining to statistical quality, including relevance, rigor, reliability, timeliness, accessibility and completeness of metadata.

9. It is not an objective of the Expert Group to suggest changes in definitions for disasters as applied by member States in national laws or in national or international policy dialogues. Instead, the Expert Group is striving to develop regional guidelines for a basic range of disaster-related statistics to address practical challenges for producing statistics that meet international statistical quality standards and can be used to strengthen the availability of evidence for disaster risk management.

B. Alignment with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

10. The Sendai Framework states that in order to reduce disaster risk, there is a need to address existing challenges and prepare for future ones by focusing on monitoring, assessing and understanding disaster risk and by sharing such information. It also states that to complement national action and capacity, there is a need to enhance international cooperation between developed and developing countries and between States and international organizations.

11. The expected outcome of the Sendai Framework is to achieve a substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses to lives, livelihoods and health and to the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries over the next 15 years.

12. To achieve this outcome, the Sendai Framework adopted as its goal to:

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.

13. To support the assessment of global progress in achieving the Framework's goal and expected outcome, seven targets were agreed, as follows:

(a) Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;

(b) Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020-2030 compared to 2005-2015;

(c) Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030;

(d) Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030;

(e) Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020;

(f) Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of the Framework by 2030;

(g) Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessment to people by 2030.

14. Countries need to monitor and report the outcomes of disaster risk reduction activities in relation to the Sendai Framework targets. This implies a need for internationally comparable applications of terminologies, such as "affected people" (target b) and comparable statistical methodologies for measurements, such as disaster mortality (target a) or "direct disaster economic loss" (target c). Discussions on the practical and methodological issues related to producing coherent statistics related to such issues is the focus of the Expert Group's work to develop a regional basic range of disaster-related statistics.

C. Integration with sustainable development goals

15. The sustainable development goals are expected to provide a globally recognized framework of public policy priorities, such as ending poverty and ensuring sustainable access to basic resources. In the proposal for sustainable development goals, there are many complex relationships between disasters and the proposed sustainable development goals. Multiple disaster-related targets and indicators have been identified by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, a group composed of Member States that includes regional and international agencies as observers that is tasked with developing an indicator framework for the goals and targets of the post-2015 development agenda at the global level. By coordinating with the proposals pertaining to the sustainable development goal indicators, the work of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific on methodological guidelines will be directly applicable to the efforts of national institutions to produce data for monitoring the post-2015 development agenda.

III. Progress of the work of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

16. In the first meeting of the Expert Group, initial proposals on the scope and statistical challenges related to a basic range of disaster statistics were discussed. The Expert Group agreed that the development of a basic range of disaster-related statistics should be guided by national policy priorities, taking into account regional and international frameworks. It also agreed to prioritize measurement of disaster occurrences and direct and immediate impacts of disasters as a practical foundation for the development of a basic range of disaster-related statistics.

17. At its second meeting, held in Sendai, Japan, on 17 March 2015, the Expert Group agreed to establish subgroups to lead work on three distinct technical issues that needed to be resolved in developing regional guidelines on the basic range of disaster-related statistics. The three issues are: (a) concluding on a regional hazard types classification; (b) developing consensus on the use of terminologies for describing direct impacts of disasters; and (c) developing technical advice for identifying disasters as discrete events with discrete temporal and spatial scales specified following consistent methodologies.

18. The Expert Group further agreed to complement existing materials and literature on methodologies and use of terminology (such as, for example, the IRDR Peril Classification and Hazard Glossary) with a survey of current practices among ESCAP members. A survey of current practices and experiences related to measurement of disaster occurrences, classifications of disaster types, and definitions for disaster impacts were developed and tested by the secretariat during the first quarter of 2015. The results of the survey will be used by the subgroups to help them formulate recommendations on regional guidelines for a basic range of disaster-related statistics.

19. The Expert Group has been working against the backdrop of broader efforts of the international community to develop a set of indicators of progress and achievements of the targets set in the Sendai Framework and those that will be adopted for the post-2015 sustainable development framework. The Expert Group's framework and guidelines for a basic range of disaster-related statistics will be a useful tool in the effort to produce disaster-related statistics in connection with measuring progress towards achievement of those goals and targets.

IV. The way forward

20. The Expert Group's work to complete regional guidelines on a basic range of disaster-related statistics is ongoing and scheduled for review by the Commission at its seventy-second session in 2016. Further work needs to be undertaken by the three task subgroups to develop specific recommendations for comparable measurement of disaster occurrences and direct impacts of disasters.

21. Coordination with groups and initiatives from other regions has become increasingly important as other groups, such as the Task Force on Measuring Extreme Events and Disasters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, have developed work plans or objectives that are similar to those of the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. Coordinating with other groups is a useful way to obtain

additional inputs and feedback on the work development of regional guidelines. After the regional basic range of disaster-related statistics is established, the guidelines could be further disseminated for discussion at forums, including at the global level for developing a global consensus and perhaps global standards for disaster-related statistics. In the meantime, the Expert Group is positioned to take a leading role in the development of technical guidelines for a basic range of disaster-related statistics, in collaboration with the other relevant groups and organizations.

22. The development of a basic range of disaster-related statistics will provide member States with a foundation of basic guidance material for developing and integrating statistics on disaster occurrences and their immediate impacts within their national statistical systems. However, in some cases, national statistical systems will need capacity-building assistance to enable them to effectively apply new regional norms for the production of internationally comparable disaster-related statistics.

V. Issues for consideration

23. The Committee is invited to take note of the progress made by the Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics in Asia and the Pacific towards implementation of Commission resolution 70/2 and provide guidance for its further work towards establishing a basic range of disaster-related statistics.

24. Considering the work on the basic range of disaster-related statistics as a foundation for addressing other complex aspects of disaster-related statistics, such as indicators for assessing disaster risk and sustainable development, the Committee may wish to provide guidance for the future work on disaster-related statistics beyond the establishment of guidelines for statistics on disaster occurrences and the direct impacts of disasters.
