

South Asia Policy Dialogue on Regional Risk reduction
Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi
21-22 August

Objectives and Expected Outcomes of the South Asia Policy
Dialogue by Dr. Vishaka Hidellage, Regional Director, Practical
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Mr. Shivraj Patil, Hon'ble Home Minister, Gen N.C.Vij Vice Chairperson of National Disaster Management Authority, Mr. V.K.Duggal Union Home Secretary, Dr. R.K.Pachauri Director General of The Energy and Resources Institute, India and Distinguish Guests.

I am pleased to be here today and be able to explain about this workshop to you. Before, I do that, I would like to spend a moment to set the background to this event, and to reflect a bit.

I will start with the organizations that I represent, Practical Action / Duryog Nivaran (DN), the co-host of the event with National Institute of Disaster Management, India.

Practical Action is the new name for the organization that some of you know as ITDG or Intermediate Technology Development Group. It is a development agency set up 40 years ago in UK challenging the ability of contemporary economic models to address problems of poverty; it proposed alternatives that linked appropriate technology, environment or natural resource management and poverty. Philosophy of the organization was highly influenced by Asian way of life, particularly by Mahathma Gandhi and the teachings of Lord Buddha.

After 40 years, the organization is active in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It continues to promote equitable access to technology or technology justice. We have ground level demonstration work with communities that link to highest level of advocacy. We are known for our contribution in sectors such as energy or renewable energy, rural transport, agro processing, fisheries, water, shelter, etc.

Our engagement in Disaster Mitigation began about 15 years ago. We identified disasters as risks that should be considered as an important issue, as we strived for sustainable development. In 1995, the Duryog Nivaran, the South Asia network on Disaster Mitigation, was established by the Practical

Action to address this issue or the gap in development. DN builds on similar networking experience promoted by Practical Action in Latin America – La Red and in Africa Peri-Peri.

Since its inception the DN platform was used by many individuals; professionals, organizations, academics media personnel etc. Those who got excited about the concepts it promoted contributed to further investigate, promote, and use them as appropriate. The “alternative perspective” that DN was set up to promote, is no longer alternative; it is well accepted by the mainstream now. DN is also a platform which linked a cross section of stakeholders from grass root level to highest level of policy making in the region.

In South Asia, the importance of putting sound DM policies in place is adequately recognized, especially due to recent turn of event. This is evident by setting up a SAARC centre for Disaster Management in the region and drafting of a regional framework. The policy dialogue that starts today aims to get broader consensus on concepts for Disaster Risk Reduction and development in South Asia that provides for inclusion of wider range of actors.

With that objective the workshop is organized in to number of sessions to share;

- Country perspectives / policies / approaches to Disaster Management
- Capacity and disaster reduction development initiatives in countries
- Community based in disaster risk management
- Application of ICT for disaster risk reduction, gaps and possible cooperation
- Media

Key points of these sessions will form the basis in to the final declaration that will be discussed at the last session to bring consensus on the way forward for our region. I sure we will have very exciting and fruitful deliberations in the coming two days.

To conclude I should say that although mainstream policies are falling into right places, we believe that individually and as a community we Practical Action and DN has continued role to play, especially in operationalise the policies. We are committed to support government departments in individual countries and regional initiatives.