



Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): Recommendations for DRR Linkage

Integrating Disaster Management in the programmes and policies of Education Sector

Introduction:

Presently the education system is facing several challenges, to address school safety issues. Earlier Kumbhakonam, and now Khajuri Khas & similar incidents, have initiated the heated debate over this issue. In India, Ahmedabad Action Agenda is a stepping stone towards institutionalization of risk reduction measures on school safety. And across the globe, same issue was raised through Bangkok Action Agenda, Islamabad Declaration and UNISDR campaign for safe schools.

Now one thing is for sure that a need is being felt for the concerted efforts to create awareness on disaster risk reduction amongst all the school students & allied stakeholders, irrespective of their location and local vulnerabilities. And Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) can be an ideal platform to cover this very vital aspect, and it can reach from top to the lowest level through Government support and assistance from other partners.

Integration:

The National Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction (NADRR) was formed in 2007 with an aim to bring together regional, national and local stakeholders in order to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) concerns into mainstream development planning and actions on the ground. As part of alliance activities, a grassroots campaign has taken up titled, “Demystifying DRR”, where in the alliance with its constituent members would learn, share, guide, advocate and partner to promote disaster resilient programmes and policies that enhance capacities of vulnerable communities. In view of this NADRR has initiated the Action Group on “Collaborative Efforts for Disaster Risk Reduction: Demystifying DRR” with Disaster Management Community of Solution Exchange. Among other activities planned, NADRR generated discussion on possibilities of integrating DRR with current programmes of Government of India. In this regard, Alliance started a discussion on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The entire discussion was facilitated by Disaster Management (DM) Community Resource Team of UNDP Solution Exchange. And a query was floated across the entire DM and Education communities (having more than 5000 experts). Through this query, out of various components of SSA and National Curriculum Framework (NCF), the Alliance (NADRR) wanted to explore possibilities of integrating disaster risk reduction in the following:-

- Formal inclusion of Disaster Risk Education in curriculum, like inclusion of life skills, practical trainings (Mandate of NCF)
- Focus on special groups, including participation of children with special needs, in DRR and developing IEC material on safety and disaster mitigation/ risk reduction
- Maintenance and repair of school buildings, also including construction of model school design, restoration and retrofitting, considering various hazards and vulnerable zones in India
- Facilitating teacher orientation and training on disaster risk reduction through the Block Resource Centres/Community Resource Centers
- Effective involvement of DM related agencies, School Management Committees and Parents Teachers Associations, Village/ Urban slum level Education Committees etc.

In this regard, Alliance (NADRR) requested DM and Education Communities members through Solution Exchange:

- To provide suggestions/ guidance, on how to best integrate DRR components into SSA (in the above mentioned areas)

- To share experiences, with reference to DRR components in line with SSA activities, for various stakeholders (including any challenges faced).

In relation to this, an overwhelming response was received by members of both the communities. And in parallel to this, the NADRR Secretariat also carried out an in depth study of concerned features of SSA development program and possible linkages with the current management structure, for program institutionalization.

Based on the feedback received from members, and the research work of Secretariat, the Alliance prepared a set of recommendations, to put forth for consideration to the Government of India. Please find the same on the next page.

Recommendations on integration of DRR components with SSA

Following are seven key components, which need special attention in relation to the integration of DRR components with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA).

1. Developing a policy framework,
 2. DRR education in school curriculum,
 3. Maintenance & repair of school buildings,
 4. Agencies involvement at community level,
 5. Teachers orientation and training on DRR,
 6. Focus on children groups of special needs,
 7. Partnership amongst stakeholders.
1. **Developing a policy framework**, including school safety programs and required clearances, this can support the implementation of mainstreaming DRR into the education system. The following recommended points can assist Government to implement school safety initiative through state level programs w.r.t education.
 - a) The Governing council should take up school safety policy matters on priority. And institutionalization of the same should be done through Project Approval Board.
 - b) Grading system may be introduced for promoting the safe schools as a policy. The incentives to be given for carrying forward the DRR activities in order to promote school safety.
 - c) At the same time, the punishment to be imposed to school and responsible allied authorities for not following the safety measures.
 - d) The required mandatory clearances and certificates with reference to fire safety inspection should get it done in time, as per the Honourable Supreme Court's judgement on a Writ Petition.
 2. **In school curriculum**, the element of DRR education should be made essential. In this regard, the National level Executive Committee has to ensure with respective central/ state boards through adoption of the following suggestions:
 - a) Teaching DRR as a separate subject, studying it with the other subjects, or covering it as an extracurricular activity.
 - b) Disaster Management and DRR should be viewed as life skill components and have maximum impact when taught through hands on learning.
 - c) Department of Education has come up this year, with YUVA module to implement the life skills. But books are yet to reach to schools. It depicts that however approach is good, but it is yet to be deployed.
 - d) Integration of DRR with activities of Boys & Girls Scouts, NCC (National Cadet Core) and NSS (National Service Scheme).
 - e) Spread the awareness on disaster prevention through non formal means such as theatre, newsletters, competitions etc. Informal teaching aids to be used to educate school children.

3. **All new school** buildings should be designed and constructed as per National Building Code. And existing buildings to be made structurally strong and get strengthened through retrofitting / repair. The following actions to be taken, in relation to school building design and construction:
- a) Implementation of structural and non structural mitigation measures to avoid injuries from falling hazards in schools. Design of school buildings should be in such a manner that it should not become a hindrance to the traditional mitigation and preparedness efforts.
 - b) All schools should have the fire safety measures in place for safety of school children and allied school staff.
 - c) The government certified engineers to do compulsory safety audits for schools on periodic basis. All the safety precautions, including building construction, capacities of exits, ventilation, wiring, signage etc should be covered under it.
 - d) The School building should be free from inflammable and toxic materials, which if necessary, should be stored away from the school building. Kitchen, laboratory and other activities involving use of fire, gas or chemical should be carried out in a secure and safe location away from the main school building.
 - e) The provision for child friendly features and adequate spaces should keep in mind while going for the construction/ retrofitting of school buildings.

There is a separate sub mission to look into the provisions of basic minimum conditions, including physical infrastructure. This entity has to review overall performance, identify gaps and facilitate best practices under the supervision of Executive Committee.

4. **Agencies involvement at community level** is very important and vital, in preparation of design, management and execution of the building development programme for the successful institutionalization of programme. A separate sub mission, recently constituted for community involvement & social mobilization, should look into the following attributes:
- a) Involvement of VCWC (Village Civil Works Committee) members, local masons for training on safe construction techniques and orientating them on how to build the safe schools, since they are responsible for construction, monitoring and repair works of schools.
 - b) A third party agency should always be there to carry out the timely safe schools audits in Govt. and Private schools to reduce the risk of unsafe schools. The undertaken safety measures to be linked with the credit rating of the educational institutions.
 - c) The integrated approaches to be strengthened for both, formal & non formal education strategies, to ensure the mutually supportive programmes on building community resilience. It is possible with the involvement of members of block resource centre, cluster resource centre, PRI system.
 - d) School administration and allied agencies to be involved in preparation of School Disaster Management Plans and trainings of school communities in immediate response, evaluation, first aid, crowd management.
 - e) Further the DRR education to be extended from schools to community by involving parents, neighbours and gradually the entire surrounding community at local level through Parents Teachers Associations, Mother Teachers Associations, School Management Committees, Village Education Committee, VCWC etc.
5. **The teachers orientation** and training on school safety is becoming essential. Under the universal access to elementary education the following factors are to be taken into account by another national level sub mission, constituted for teachers training and providing all the required support:
- a) Preparation of School Disaster Management Plans and provide exposure to school communities in immediate response, evaluation and crowd management, in order to better prepared in emergency.
 - b) The plan after putting it into place should be reviewed periodically. This should include the various components of structural and non-structural mitigation measures, education and awareness, training and capacity building of the school stakeholders etc.

- c) Teachers along with other staff to be trained to handle the safety equipment, initiate evacuations and protect their students in the event of emergency. The Emergency Response Drill to be conducted in order to train the students as well as school staff.
 - d) Capacity building programmes for other key players in education, including the State Council of Education Research and Training, Distt Education Research and Training, District Project Coordinator, Shiksha Sahayaks, Aanganwadi workers etc.
 - e) The teachers, students and other staff also to be trained in the first aid treatment.
6. **Focus on children groups** of special needs is another very vital component of SSA in relation to DRR, has been covered under a separate sub mission. Following are few advisories to address it:
- a) To sustain DRR efforts in schools for special children, the structured approach should be planned and active child-centric programs to be developed & implemented in consultation with children.
 - b) In order to address the special needs of different type of children, the uses of ICT (Information Communication & Technology) techniques are quite useful.
 - c) Some special games, short jingle, activity books, quiz etc to be developed in order to generate the interest.
 - d) Special learning packages have to be planned for special needs children and to sensitize these children, teachers need to be trained exclusively.
7. **Building strong partnership** amongst all the stakeholders is key to success for implementation of this development programme with respect to DRR. School safety is an opportunity to establish innovative and effective partnerships amongst national, state Govt., local entities and community to institutionalize school safety initiatives. To establish effective partnerships and institutionalize school safety, following steps are recommended:
- a) The NGOs and Private Sector organizations has to play a very critical role as allied partners in school safety institutionalization through making provisions for technical, professional and project expertise and provide support to respective state governments and community groups.
 - b) The promotion of active dialogue and exchange between schools and local leaders (also including the police, civil defence, fire safety, search and rescue, medical and other emergency service providers), will help in prioritization, co-ordination and assistance during emergency.
 - c) All the stakeholders of school safety, including every parent, teacher, child, technical expert, Govt. policy maker, NGOs, Media and Private Sector representatives etc should come forward and aim to bear respective responsibilities.
 - d) Promoting the concept of schools as “Safe Heavens” in surrounding communities and neighbourhoods through active local level partnerships between school management & local neighbourhood committees.

Overall the SSA has a major role to play in integrating DRR into school curriculum and implementing in the field, and it has stressed the need for advocacy campaigns on safe school concepts at the national and state level. As SSA is also getting matured and more susceptible in its 8th year of running, now it's high time for integration as quickly as possible. The Implementation of above steps will surely contribute towards building a culture of resilience and safety at all appropriate levels w.r.t. education stream.

After streamlining the integration of DRR with SSA, the concept can be further extended to Rashtriya Madhyamic Shikha Abhiyaan, in order to expand the reach to larger masses for safer tomorrow.

.....