
Policy Brief: Importance of Self-Assessment for Climate Smart Disaster Risk Management

Based on Self Assessment Workshop carried out in Bhubaneswar Odisha, towards using the CSDRM approach for making institutions and their activities climate Smart

April 2013

Countries need a ‘Climate-Smart’ revolution. Major changes are needed in the different sectors around the world if future generations are to survive and grow. Climate change is increasingly creating an impact of our lives directly or indirectly. The adverse effects of climate change are increasing the severity and frequency of the disasters causing major losses both to economy and people. Moreover, it is realised that disaster risk reduction and climate change are closely linked.

Based on the ‘Getting Climate Smart for Disasters’ a self-assessment workshop was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha on March 18-19, 2013. Mr. Mihir Bhatt from the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), Dr. Indrani Phukan and Ms. Shazneen Cyrus Gazdar from Inter-Corporation Social Development India (ICSD), discussed how the Climate-Smart Disaster Risk Management approach can be used to support local, state and national-level governments in addressing the formidable challenges of addressing climate change, disaster risk reductions and development in Odisha.

They examined why it is important for organisations to carry out self-assessments of their activities and evaluate the extent to which they are ‘climate-smart’. Self assessment is needed to tackle the climate change risks suggested one of the experts in the workshop. The increasing severity of the hazards, vulnerability of people and unexpected events such as the heat waves and lightening demands self assessment exercises.

The self assessment process is about taking the pulse of an organization – what is or isn’t currently working well and what is hindering the progress? The process should be designed to expose the root causes of organizational problems, so that effective solutions can be implemented; or new methods can be implemented for things never done before. The self assessment will lay out the strengths that can be used and the limitations that might inhibit implementation of project.

Why Odisha?

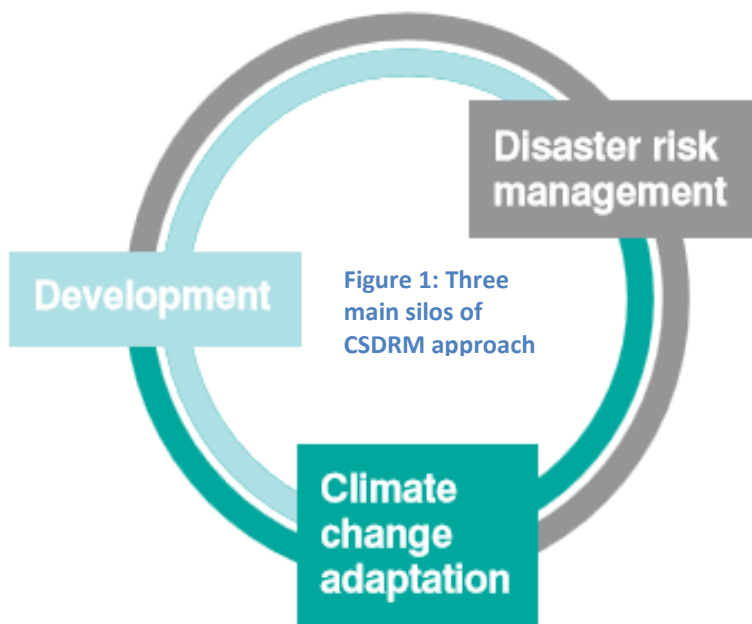
Indian state of Odisha is adjacent to coastline and therefore experiences more cyclonic storms and tidal surges effects. It is vulnerable to multiple disasters due to long coastline, rivers and its tributaries and vast forest area; that has helped the state to earn the title ‘**Disaster Capital of India**’. For over a decade, Odisha has experienced contrasting weather condition from one extreme to another: from heat wave to cyclone, from drought to flood. Over the last few years, other lesser-known disasters such as heat waves and lightning strikes have also become frequent. In the meantime, reports of fluctuating weather patterns and rising sea water levels causing

coastal erosion, sea water ingress, frequent flooding, embankment failures, and the entire relocation of villages, have become more commonplace¹.

As a result, Odisha's economy has been ripped apart. The impacts of climate change and disasters have already, and will generate, a huge amount of social, economic and environmental costs which for a state that has 57 percent of its population living below the poverty line, more than two-thirds of its population dependent on agriculture-based livelihoods, and a Human Development Index of around 0.40 – one of the lowest in India – is extremely difficult to bear.

The challenge of climate change is here to stay with us for decades, if not longer and for many more generations to come. Therefore, it is inevitable to develop climate friendly policies to reduce emissions and address development concerns and simultaneously adapt to living in a world whose climate will be distinctly different from that of the last century. The Government of Odisha is very proactive in recognizing the risks that climate changes pose and taking actions to prepare for; mitigate and respond to its impact at state and local levels. Since 2011, the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) has undertaken several disaster risk reduction activities. It has worked with the World Bank, the Government of India, and the National Disaster Management Authority, to establish disaster resilient infrastructure such as cyclone shelters along the coastline and to raising and strengthening saline embankments to protect lives and agricultural property from storm surge and saline ingress.²

Climate-Smart Disaster Risk Management Approach (CSDRM)



In 2010, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) conducted a study that involved consultation with more than 500 practitioners, policy-makers, scientists and academics from the climate change, disasters risk reduction and development to develop a climate resilient approach that can be implemented in 11 'at-risk' countries across Asia and Africa. The output was in form of a Climate Smart Disaster Risk Management (CSDRM) approach to guide those working in *climate change adaptation, development, and disaster risk reduction* to integrate and holistically address

¹ Merylyn Hedger, Ashok Singha and Mohan Reddy (2010), 'Building Climate Resilience at State Level: Disaster Risk Management and Rural Livelihoods in Orissa', Strengthening Climate Resilience Discussion Paper No. 5, Strengthening Climate Resilience, Institute of Development Studies, pp. 10-11

² Odisha State Disaster Management Authority, 'National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project as on 10.03.2011' Available at: <http://www.osdma.org/downloadfile.aspx?projid=P085>

these issues into their projects and activities.

Its unique quality is that rather than requiring organisations and government authorities to completely adopt new methods of thinking, methodologies or projects, the CSDRM approach builds upon what they have already done and enhances their ability to address these challenges.

Outcomes from the Workshop

- *Each of the stakeholders will be involved in the project and its activities.*
- *Each of the participating organization will implement self-assessment tool to assess how 'climate smart' they are.*
- *Sharing the existing knowledge with people in form of art or otherwise will create greater awareness*
- *Organization must share each other's projects by creating more communication channels. This would not only reduce costs but, facilitate better coordination and improve overall effectiveness of the project.*
- *Lastly, the government is the lead proponent of the majority of development, climate change and disaster risk reduction activities. It is particularly crucial that it should begin to consider adopting CSDRM approach in all of its work.*

Instead of inventing new concepts, the approach uses concepts that organisations and government authorities are already extremely familiar with – for example the empowerment of local communities and local authorities, open information to all stakeholders, address social injustices and environment sustainability, and collaborative partnerships. **CSDRM is about re-adjustment and modification, harnessing existing strengths, the re-organisation of what is already known, not wiping the slate clean and starting again.**

The CSDRM approach is **process-oriented**, which again, is a unique feature as there are very few guides available that systematically take organisations through how they are to address climate change, disaster risk reduction and development not just at the policy level, but also at the operational level. It maps out a series of pathways by which they can achieve the three central pillars of tackling changing disaster risks and uncertainties, enhancing adaptive capacity, and addressing poverty, vulnerability, and their structural causes.

It has already been used with great effect to analyse the 'climate smartness' of disaster risk reduction and development projects in 'at-risk' countries like Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

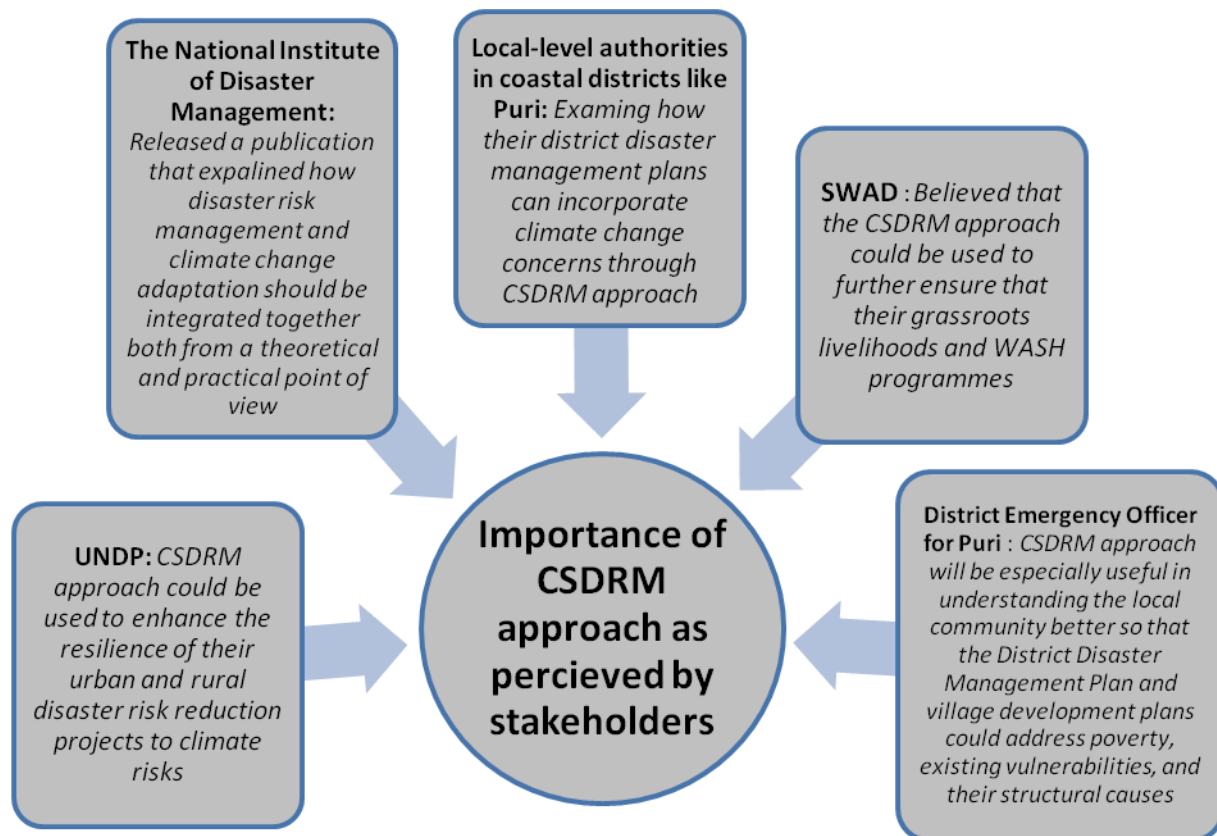
The 'Getting Climate Smart for Disasters' CSDRM & Self-Assessment Workshop: An Overview

The self assessment workshop held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha had conceived out of the common realization by the conveners that disaster and climate risks were becoming greater by the day in Odisha, that they were posing a serious threat to all the advancements government authorities, NGOs, community-based organisations, civil society organisations, humanitarian and development agencies had made in improving the lives of Odisha's people. In addition, they realised that disasters and climate risks seriously comprised the viability of their present and future disaster risk reduction, environment management, and community development projects. The workshop was in short, held out of the critical necessity to take action - fast.

The workshop was attended by representatives of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA); and local NGOs and district disaster management officials from the coastal district of Puri.

They discussed the current disaster and climate risk situation of Odisha in detail. Later introduced the participants to the CSDRM approach, who then considered at length how it could be implemented in their work and what its benefits would be. The following shows the importance of CSDRM approach perceived by each of the present stakeholder post discussions.

Figure 2: Importance of CSDRM approach as perceived by stakeholders



One of the main achievements of the workshop was that it broke the barriers between the local organization and government; and succeeded to develop trust between the two. The suggestions and the remarks were taken well by each of the party, ensuring the consideration of each in their respective future activities. However, given the complexity and range of issues involved with disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and development; it became apparent to them that a lot more needs to be done to support and strengthen the government authorities' efforts especially at the ground level.

Where Next?

- **Introducing a module on Self-Assessment** for Odisha's State level ATIs (Administrative Training Institutions) which is prepared by OSDMA and other partners. The module must include the SRI method of paddy growing which will help farmers to mitigate risks
- **Introducing a training module for Monitoring and Evaluation** of CSDRM for ATIs and National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM). This will help both the Government of Odisha and India to evaluate the sensitive they are climate change in their current activities and projects; and what measures can be taken for future projects.
- OSDMA and SWAD must **undertake a case study of Cyclone Project** in Odisha with FORIN method (also with World Bank and NDMA) to better understand the impacts and root causes to implement a tool that people can use easily to be better prepared for the disasters and mitigate risks.

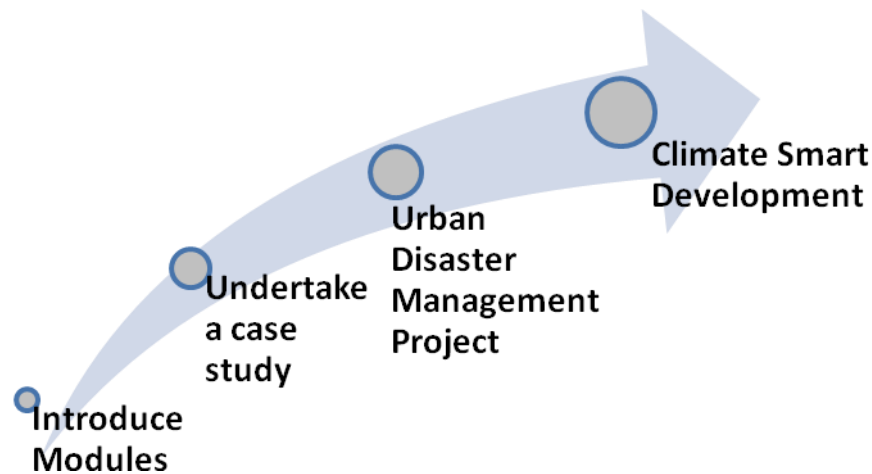


Figure 3: Way Ahead

- OSDMA with other partners must undertake **Urban Risk Project** develop urban disaster management plan. This will not only help the urban cities in Odisha but can be linked to other urban cities across India. This will help us know the communities better, so that the urban

planners can closely provide them with better administration, preparedness and relief that can reach them in time.

- AIDMI and SWAD should to **work on conflicting demands issues** in developing the District Disaster Management Plan for Puri district in Odisha

Lessons for the future

It is inevitable to identify that climate change and disaster risks are serious issues which urgently need to be addressed, for only these can provide the motivation to take action. Odisha already has this motivation, and what is more is that this recognition and commitment is coming from across all stakeholder levels and sectors including policy, institutional, community, and organisational, public and private.

The question is how these actions can be improved and better integrated together?

It is at this juncture where self- assessment exercises are particularly useful. It helps to identify the extent to which the organisation is climate-smart and resilient to disasters, as well as its strengths and weaknesses. This allows baselines, benchmarks, and core action areas to be established and; helps the organisation to set priorities and to develop action agendas.

Self-assessment exercises are an opportunity for organisations to step back, reflect, and appreciate what they have achieved, but their effectiveness would be further enhanced if the findings are shared with others so that learning can be a joint process. Self-assessments are not exercises in self-flagellation. Rather, they are opportunities for learning, growing, and shaping a better future for all.