

The Asia-Pacific Drought Risk Dialogue

'Transforming institutional drought risk management for resilience -

The GAR Special Report on Drought 2021'

Agenda & Concept

Zoom webinar, 27 July 2021

11:30 - 13:00 Delhi Time / 13:00 - 14:30 Bangkok Time / 16:00 - 17:30 Sydney Time / 18:00 – 19:30 Fiji Time

https://undrr.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZvsOuZDXSG-D2yAp1G5-Q

Background

Globally, within the next 80 years, 129 countries will experience an increase in drought exposure mainly due to climate change alone, and 38 countries primarily due to the interaction between climate change and population growth (Smirnov et al., 2016). The way in which we understand and manage drought risk is directly linked to our ability to meet the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Droughts have deep, widespread and underestimated impacts on societies, ecosystems and economies. They incur costs that are borne disproportionately by the most vulnerable people. The extensive impacts of drought are consistently underreported, even though they span large areas, cascade through systems and scales, and linger through time. They affect millions of people and many sectors and domains – such as agricultural production, public water supply, energy production, waterborne transportation, tourism, human health and biodiversity – contributing to food insecurity, poverty and inequality.

Climate change is increasing temperatures and disrupting rainfall patterns, thus increasing the frequency, severity and duration of droughts in many regions. As the world moves towards being 2°C warmer, urgent action is required to better understand and more effectively manage drought risk to reduce the devastating toll on human lives and livelihoods. The GAR Special Report on Drought 2021 emphasizes that while drought poses a significant threat to achieving the goals of the Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (Sendai Framework), this threat can be substantially reduced by applying prospective, proactive and innovative approaches to drought risk management.

Drawing on lessons learned from case studies around the world, the report argues that with what we now know about drought and its risk to societies, economies and ecosystems, we can and must do better at managing it. It calls for a sharper focus on prevention: shifting from reactive approaches to getting ahead of the curve by addressing the root drivers of drought and socioecological vulnerability, avoiding and minimizing risks.

It shows that increasing greenhouse gas emissions, together with the vulnerability of populations and ecosystems exposed to drought, are important drivers of drought risk. Addressing these facets are central to reducing drought risk. At the same time, the report stresses that it is crucial to address the human activities that intensify and propagate the impacts of drought.

Currently countries in the Asia Pacific region from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India to Taiwan, Province of China, are experience severe droughts which in the case of the conflict-affected country is aggravating and already dire food and water insecurity¹ situation exacerbated by the COVID-19 severe third wave and intensifying

¹ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AFGHANISTAN_Food_Security_Outlook_FINAL_2.pdf

conflict leading to large displacement. Developed economies such as Taiwan, Province of China have experienced lack of rainfall, with Taiwan, one of the rainiest places in the world experiencing constant decline in rainy days and currently facing its worst drought in 56 years. Beside the impact on agriculture, and 1 million households experiencing water rationing, the technology sector is struggling to deal with the drought-induced water shortage as microchip manufacturing heavily relies on water-intensive processes.

The Asia Pacific Region is recurrently affected by hot and cold weather droughts as well as sand and dust storms. Sand and dust storm risk is expected to increase in south-west Asia, with associated socioeconomic impacts on various sectors such as agriculture, energy, environment, transport and human health. Recognizing the increasing and compounding drought risks, regional organizations such as ASEAN have called their member states to adopt drought risk management strategies to be supported by a regional plan of action and a community of practices for adaptive learning on drought risk manage.

As a regional specificity, in cold and semi-arid regions, like in the high mountainous areas of Asia, soil moisture can become critically low when periods of high climatic deficit (low precipitation and high evapotranspiration) are combined with or followed by periods of extremely low temperatures. A series of droughts over the last century in the high mountainous areas of Asia led to more than 6 million deaths and an estimated 1.1 billion people affected.² However, many good practices around the world and from the region show that drought risk can be reduced, when we change the way we understand and manage drought. 'The Asia-Pacific Drought Risk Dialogue' wants to take this forward to help create a more sustainable future for all on a healthy planet.

Objective of the webinar

'The Asia-Pacific Drought Risk Dialogue' will unpack the latest findings on drought risk management from the Asia-Pacific Region, as featured in the GAR Special Report on Drought 2021.

The webinar will present two case studies from the region, Australia and India, to share the lessons learned, highlight the challenges of a reactive approach to drought, and illustrate the urgent need for proactive drought risk management.

The first case will feature the multiple and multiplicative drought impacts across all sectors and ecosystems in Australia, based on the Millennium drought 1997-2009 and the subsequent evolution in policy, governance, and financial strategies.

The second case will feature the frequent recurrent droughts in the Indian Deccan plateau region and the challenges of institutional drought risk management treating drought as discrete, episodic and outlier events even if they are frequent and result in the aggravation of drought vulnerabilities, agrarian crisis and natural resource degradation.

The Drought Risk Dialogue will feature policy recommendations from the GAR Special Report on Drought 2021, which calls for proactive action to reduce drought risks. Thinking ahead and acting in advance of drought has far lower costs than reacting and responding to the impacts once drought hits.

The event is tailored towards practitioners and policy makers working in drought risk and water management in the region, who will have the opportunity to ask questions to the authors of the report in a Q&A session following the panel discussion on the main findings.

² GAR Special Report on Drought 2021, UNDRR

Agenda

Date: 27 July 2021

Time: 11:30 - 13:00 Delhi Time / 13:00 - 14:30 Bangkok Time / 16:00 - 17:30 Sydney Time / 18:00 – 19:30 Fiji Time

Target Audience: DRM national Focal Points from Asia-Pacific, national focal points from Ministries of Water, Economy, Planning, Agriculture etc., DRR practitioners from the region and beyond.

Time / Bangkok Time	Topic	Speaker
13:00 – 13:05	Opening Remarks	Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta, UNDRR
13:05 – 13:10	Opening Statement	Ms. Letizia Rossano, UNESCAP Centre for Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM)
13:10 – 13:25	Keynote Address	Dr. Wadid Erian, Cairo University, GAR SRD Lead Author
13:25 – 13:35	Case Study: Australia	Dr. Graham Bonnett. CSIRO/ Australia's national science agency. Leader Drought Resilience Mission. GAR SRD Contributing Author
13:35 – 13:45	Case Study: India	Dr. Jothiganesh Sundaram. Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard EWS for Africa and Asia (RIMES)/ WFP, GAR SRD Contributing Author
13:45 – 13:55	Sub-regional perspectives on drought risk management/ ASEAN declaration on strengthening of adaptation to droughts	Dr. Riyanti Djalante, PhD Head of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (DMHA) Division Assistant Director, Sustainable Development Directorate ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department The ASEAN Secretariat
13:55 – 14:25	Moderated Discussion and Q&A	Moderator – Ms. Iria Touzon-Calle, UNDRR
14.25 – 14:30	Closing remarks	Dr. Sanjay K Srivastava, PhD Chief, Disaster Risk Reduction ICT and Disaster Risk Reduction Division (IDD) United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific