



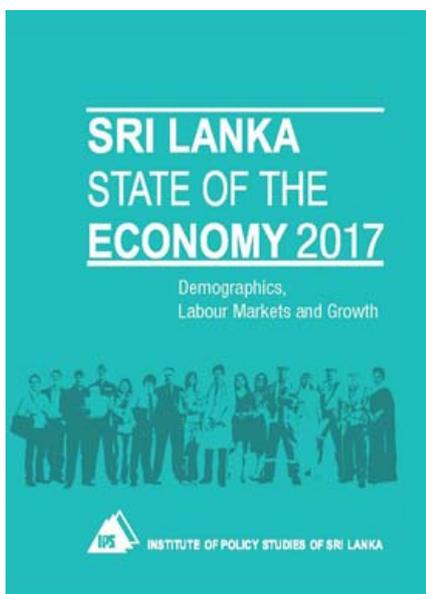
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POLICYINSIGHTS

INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES OF SRI LANKA

MANAGING NATURAL DISASTER RISKS: A NEED OF THE HOUR

From the IPS flagship publication 'Sri Lanka: State of the Economy 2017 Report'



Recent incremental impacts of natural disasters substantiate the fact that disaster risk management has to be an integral part in sustainable development in Sri Lanka. Much progress has already been made in regard to disaster risk management in Sri Lanka, following the devastation caused by the December 2004 tsunami. However, there are areas still which need policy attention in increasing the resilience towards natural disasters.

The three most common and important disasters for Sri Lanka include floods, droughts and landslides. Lightning strikes, high winds/cyclones and animal attacks are also causing substantial impacts as per the available evidence. In addition, sporadic disasters, such as a tsunami are important to consider based on the magnitude of their impact. It is clearly being witnessed that the

frequency and severity of climate-induced disasters have been increasing. The impacts of global climate change are identified as a cause for this among other human-induced factors such as improper land use planning and environmental degradation.

The Economic Cost of Disasters

Natural disasters impact almost all economic sectors in the country at varying degrees. Recent floods and droughts particularly impacted the agriculture sector. In fact, in recent research conducted by the IPS, farmers in the Anuradhapura district ranked top in climate induced disasters with the risks and uncertainties faced by them. Over three-fourth of the farmers have been affected by at least one disaster event during the last five years. Due to lack of diversification of livelihoods, the

disaster leads to affected farmers adopting costly risk management strategies.

While the economic costs of disasters are on a rising trend, there is a growing interest among the international community to improve the resilience of vulnerable communities under two major disciplines, namely, disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate adaptation. It is essential that climate adaptation policies and measures are built on the existing DRR frameworks in order to be efficient and effective.

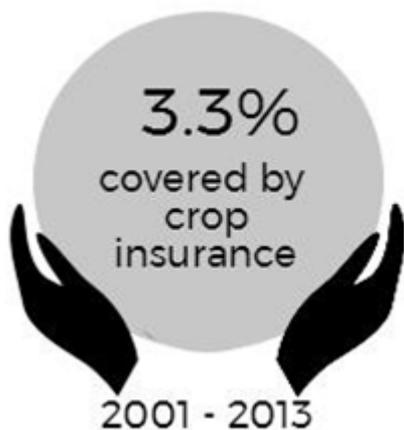
Challenges in Disaster Risk Management in Sri Lanka

As DRR is an important cross-cutting issue, it is linked to many agencies that deal with various subjects. Though sufficient thought has been put towards disaster resilience, still significant gaps



remain in relation to coordination and integration of disaster management in Sri Lanka.

Certain steps are taken to integrate disaster management in development activities and there have been some collaborative efforts among the two groups of agencies which handle DRR and climate adaptation in Sri Lanka. However, since the two subjects are handled by two separate ministries (Ministry of Disaster Management and Ministry of Mahaweli Development and Environment, respectively), most of the work is also undertaken separately. This leads to replication of certain elements at implementation level. The absence of a common and shared framework also puts forward constraints in investing in DRR by donors. Therefore, disaster risk management aspects have to be streamlined to sectoral policies and regulations for their effective implementation.



The Way Forward

Resilient development should synergize DRR and climate adaptation at the national level. A collaborative

65%
Not Aware
Specific Risk Covers



64%
Not Aware
Claiming Process

mechanism should be in place to coordinate the actions taken under DRR and climate adaptation. The DRR management activities in Sri Lanka should receive a clear policy leadership with the involvement of key agencies dealing with DRR and climate adaptation. This provides an enabling environment for making informed decisions and effective interventions for strengthening disaster risk management activities in Sri Lanka.

DRR should not be a standalone sector in the overall development framework of Sri Lanka. There are signs of mainstreaming the important aspects into sectoral policies and plans. The process should be further enhanced through meaningful involvement of all stakeholders. Specifically, disaster risk management should be incorporated as an element required for approval of development projects. This can be carried out in parallel to the EIA which is being carried out with regard to environmental concerns under development projects.

DRR aspects should be further strengthened using both physical measures and socio-economic instruments. Meaningful involvement of stakeholders, including the local communities is a must in designing such interventions at project level.

Reliable and timely data and information on disasters provide the foundation for many disaster risk management initiatives. It is highly opportune to develop a comprehensive mechanism for sharing data and information among all users. This also should be coupled with effective capacity building of the data generating agencies.

This Policy Insight is based on the comprehensive chapter on "Improving Natural Disaster Risk Management in Sri Lanka" in the 'Sri Lanka: State of the Economy 2017 Report' - the flagship publication of the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS). The complete report can be purchased from the publications section of the IPS, located at 100/20, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7. For more information, contact the Publications Unit on 0112143107/0112143100.



100/20, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7,
Sri Lanka
T: +94 11 2143100 / 2665068,
F: +94 11 2665065
www.ips.lk