



उत्तराखण्ड सरकार
Government of Uttarakhand



आपदा सुरक्षित उत्तराखण्ड

DMICS
Disaster Management, Initiatives and Convergence Society
Envisioning a Disaster Resilient Future



DEHRADUN DECLARATION



**6th WORLD CONGRESS ON
DISASTER MANAGEMENT (WCDM)**

28 NOVEMBER – 01 DECEMBER 2023, DEHRADUN, INDIA

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We, 2,000 participants of the 6th WCDM, originating from more than 50 countries met for 4 days (28 November to 01 December 2023), in the beautiful city of Dehradun, Uttarakhand at the foothills of the Himalayas.

The WCDM has gradually evolved and succeeded to attract diverse groups including the scientific and academic communities, as well as professionals, practitioners and policy makers in various levels of governments and beyond.

The WCDM evolved from 2008 and is recognised for its potential as a change maker, to unite the large community concerned with disaster risk reduction and the challenges of climate change.

We thank the Government of Uttarakhand, Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) and other partners and collaborators who have made this unique mega-platform both a possibility and an opportunity for the future.

STATE OF OUR WORLD TODAY

Since the last World Congress, there has been a growing public awareness driven by repeated extreme weather events, firmly establishing the reality of Climate Change. Deniers of Climate Change have been largely silenced. We were proud in this WCDM to play a vital part in this process by contributing towards a safer future.

We are aware that approximately 97,000 people gathered in the United Arab Emirates for the UNFCCC climate change agreement Conference of the Party (COP 28) to strengthen the commitment of the wealthy nations:

- *"To limit the increase in the average temperature of the earth to 1.5 degrees Celsius above the temperature of the pre-industrial revolution period by the end of the century."*¹
- *To take "into account the efforts of all countries, reducing dependence on coal and other fossil fuels, generating energy from renewable sources, reducing emissions of methane and other greenhouse gases,"¹*
- *To reduce "the losses of developing countries from natural disasters caused by temperature rise, and planning for the future through the establishment of a Loss and Damage fund for compensation. ... The **Loss and Damage Fund became operational** on the first day of COP28, which had been in the works for the past three decade"^[1]*
- *For the first time there was an agreement by most of the countries, including most of the developing countries, to phase out fossil fuels.*
- *Climate Justice remains a powerful issue and key to delivering the promises of the Paris Agreement.*

RESCUE OPERATION

Thanks to fortuitous serendipity the opening of the 6th WCDM coincided with the heroic rescue of 41 trapped construction workers after 17 days in Silkyara tunnel of Uttarkashi. This provides a powerful example for all the delegates of a highly effective disaster management: a major theme of this World Congress.

[1] Source: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/climate-change/cop28-offered-important-outcomes-but-not-enough-to-meet-paris-goals-93655>

OUR WORLD CONGRESS

We have participated in this WCDM with many diverse voices from many countries and highly diverse and interdisciplinary backgrounds, covering a wide spectrum of experiences.

We are thankful for the venue, Graphic Era (Deemed to be University), which provided opportunities for meeting other delegates, decision makers, scientists, and multi-stakeholders to interact and discuss issues of concern.

This was facilitated by the diverse contributions in each of the Plenary Sessions as well as Technical Sessions, Concurrent Sessions, Special Technical Sessions, Special Featured Events, an extensive Exhibition, and Poster Presentations.

EVOLUTION OF THE WCDM

The WCDM has developed throughout India, hosted by a large number of Indian State Governments and initiated and managed by the DMICS over the last 15 years. It has increasingly embraced the international community participating in the Congress. WCDM has gradually progressed from a hierarchical 'top-down' pattern into a more horizontal, inter and trans-disciplinary one, promoting productive dialogue. WCDM has become one of the largest conferences on disaster management outside the UN system, providing extensive opportunities to engage across thematic and international boundaries. The presence of the Hon'ble Chief Minister at the WCDM demonstrates the high level of political interest in the conference and the political will to invest in Disaster Management.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF WCDM

The WCDM is particularly important for promoting mutual understanding and respect among the diverse range of actors, and this can lead to more effective approaches and policies to strengthen more resilient disaster management and climate action. From the outset, the WCDM has utilized the environment of the Congress locations to highlight hazards and disasters in different landscape domains, including coasts, mountains, and plains.

CONFIDENCE

We recognized that running throughout the congress sessions, there has been a common sense of confidence rather than negativism in the face of the enormous challenges posed by hazards and climate change. This confidence is in a safe future and in our ability to protect lives, livelihoods and the environment.

HIMALAYAS

We are reminded of the fragile landscape and vulnerability in the mountainous ecosystem of the Himalayas. The complexity of the terrain requires critical studies to understand how mountain landscapes behave, as well as an equally complex and integrated response system to deal with expanding challenges.

Participants noted that for this level of integration to happen, there needs to be more systematic data sharing to inform all parties and allow the development of durable and sustainable approaches.

RESEARCH FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

We recognize that Researchers and Academia have been playing a crucial role in effective Disaster Management. The presence of a large number of students and faculty members of academic institutions in the WCDM reflected the Hon'ble Prime Minister's 10-point programme (Point 5), networking of Universities and academic institutions in Disaster Risk Reduction. These research and academic communities – and especially students and young researchers – can be supported through more

- Education and advanced training opportunities
- Internships and fellowships
- Exposure to major DRR and climate action platforms
- Volunteering opportunities

VOICES FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Many WCDM delegates represented at-risk communities from across the Himalayas. They participated in the Congress to share their experiences and local insights into disasters and risk reduction to strengthen resilience within their communities. This is key for linking policies to practice at the community level, for providing bottom-up feedback for policy makers, and for promoting grassroot voices and local self-governance.

FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING

01 Cooperation And Collaboration

- More efforts are needed “to break the silos” and to effectively engage through inter and trans-disciplinary approaches for disaster risk management. Our centres of education require a more creative effort to make this possible.
- It is paramount that universities’ and research institutions’ staff and faculty are closely involved in political decision making to reduce risk, which needs to be based on sound evidence garnered through academic and scientific research and analytical studies.

02 Continuing Education

- Given the pace of change and the awareness that lives depend on this, it is essential for public officials, at all levels, to undergo ‘mid-career’ education (in-service training) to experience educational upgrades and professional development to enable their work to become more relevant in the rapidly changing environment. This is imperative for mainstreaming the resilience agenda.

03 Disaster Management and Trust

- Disaster managers / resilience practitioners and stakeholders need to shift from “rigid forms of control” to greater levels of “*trusting and entrusting*”, so that we move away from paternalistic approaches to create greater independence and self-reliance among “last mile communities.”

04

Capacity Building, Empowering and Listening to Local Communities

- More emphasis should be placed to enable local communities to identify and implement their own solutions to address climate and disaster risks they face. For this they may require additional resources, including finances, training in risk management, and capacity building from their governments, the private sector and the international development community.
- There is a critical need to recognise the local knowledge handed down through generations, provide space to voice community concerns and enable them to be equal partners towards prevention and resilient recovery.
- Though it is not possible to completely prevent the occurrence of disasters, there is a lot that we can do to manage them. This can be done by taking suitable policy initiatives, implementing them efficiently and training key individuals & community. For this, the foremost requirement is to focus on capacity building at every level of management.

05

The Importance of Data and Knowledge Sharing

- Increase the culture of data openness and sharing to enable broader participation and collaboration in disaster management efforts. It is key that we work to overcome national silos in access to data and information so that all countries can make progress in disaster management. It is a guiding principle that data and information are an essential public good and thus should be available and accessible to the public, administrators at all level, scientists, and other stakeholders. Data and knowledge sharing should be facilitated for local communities as well.

06 The Value of Nature Based Solutions

- Various contributors emphasized the value of *Nature Based Solutions* to risk management, which enhances the economic prosperity of local communities and facilitates more inclusive risk governance. These local adaptation approaches within fragile/vulnerable communities bring many additional benefits: they protect ecosystems, sustain biodiversity and improve health and well-being, develop livelihoods in green industries, and achieve more secure governance. These solutions are particularly applicable and cost-effective for the environmental conditions of the Global South.

07 Including All Voices

- To build a fully resilient society we need to become far more inclusive in disaster risk management. Marginal, frequently excluded groups (including people living with disabilities, migrants, the elderly, youth and young people) as well as ethnic and other minorities need to be systematically included in decision making at the local level as well as allocated necessary resources. The WCDM will seek to improve their inclusion in future Congresses.
- This WCDM placed a particular emphasis on the involvement of DRM stakeholders living with disabilities through their organisation and participation in various plenary and special sessions. WCDM will continue to strive towards better balancing the women/men ratio of speakers in panel discussions and presentations, with the goal of giving equal voice to women in all discussions and decision making on disaster management.

TECHNOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

Technological and scientific advances hold great promise for reducing and managing disaster risks, from advances in modelling and forecasting, to improved early warning, to advances in engineering and design of communities and infrastructure. Research and development of technological and scientific aspects of disasters needs to be supported in order to realize these advances.

However, technological solutions will not be a panacea, and cannot substitute for local and human-focused approaches. Investments in the application of technological and scientific solutions must be evaluated carefully in light of both effectiveness and overall costs including to avoid adverse side effects (e.g. a contribution to global warming). Technological approaches must be considered in the context of local conditions, communities, and capacities.

CHALLENGES TO PROGRESS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Political Obstacles

Political divisions between countries are a severe constraint on achieving resilience and adaptation outcomes collectively, particularly in regions where disaster risk often crosses national boundaries.

Resolving Conflicts

Continued tensions exist between the interests of the private sector and the needs of the population in reducing disaster risks. There is a need to capitalise and expand efforts for increased win-win-solutions, where the private sector's technical and financial capacities better respond to local communities' legitimate needs for an environment safe from dangerous hazards.

Constraints in Resource Mobilization

Potential actions for disaster management outstrip the resources available to implement them, vis a vis priorities of governments and donor communities. Funding for resilience building is critical to avoid or minimize adverse humanitarian situations. The shift from response to prevention needs to be further supported with resources to become more meaningful and effective in an increasingly hazard-prone world.

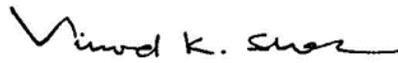
WCDMS OF THE FUTURE

We look forward to continuing the discussion, cooperation, and learning on Disaster Management in future iterations of the WCDM, which will incorporate the lessons and experiences of the 6th WCDM in Dehradun. Through these efforts, we are optimistic about making sustained progress in disaster risk reduction and management.

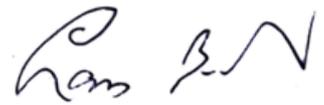
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