

Welcome Remarks
Domenico Scalpelli, WFP Representative
Earthquake Risk Assessment Results
6 March 2023
Six Season Hotel, Hall Room, Bunka, Level 13
10:00 am to 12:30 pm

On behalf of the Resident Coordinator Bangladesh

Welcome

I would like to welcome all participants today, and express thanks to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) for leading the Subnational Earthquake Risk Assessment, with the support of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the Resident Coordinator's Office, and the valuable technical assistance from the Global Earthquake Model Foundation (GEM) based in Italy.

Special thanks also go Mr. Kamrul Hasan, Secretary at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and especially Additional Secretary, Mr. Md. Hasan Sarwar, for the leadership in this initiative on subnational earthquake risk assessment and to ensure that this analysis is aligned with the needs and priorities of the Government of Bangladesh. We would also like to thank the technical panel composed of academics from relevant universities and representatives of other ministries and departments for providing us with their valuable support and input to this initiative.

Express the importance of exercise

While Bangladesh has been fortunate to avoid a significant earthquake in the past century, historical data indicates the country has witnessed earthquakes previously. This suggests it is essential to proactively prepare and enhance readiness measures. This preparation is crucial for minimizing potential impacts, reducing the risk of loss of life, and mitigating damage to infrastructure in the event of a future earthquake.

The analysis presented today consider by administrative level (districts /upazila) considering hazard, exposure of population, critical infrastructure systems (especially lifelines but also health, and education infrastructures), vulnerabilities (physical and socio-economic), potential economic loss and capacities. Additionally, it has included the 2022 Population and Housing Census, the most current data in the country.

The aim of this analysis extends beyond statistics; it is about facilitating evidence-based decision-making in guiding preventive measures, enhancing preparedness, and fortifying our ability to respond to humanitarian crises and disasters. By systematically considering risks, we are laying the foundation for a more resilient and secure future.

The insights of this research have been disseminated to pertinent professionals, ministries, departments, and university students, contributing to capacity building within the country. Today, we extend this information to donors, agencies, and the humanitarian Task Team, aiming to acknowledge and support the resilient efforts of the Government.

Applicability of the information

Mapping earthquake risks at the sub-national level is a proactive strategy to enhance preparedness, minimize vulnerabilities, and foster resilience across various aspects of a region's development and emergency response capabilities. Some key application of this information can:

1. **Inform Land Use Planning:** Identify areas prone to earthquake risks, allowing land use planners to make informed decisions about where to allocate resources, restrict certain developments, or implement safety measures.
2. **Guide Spatial Planning:** Provide insights for spatial planners to consider earthquake vulnerabilities when designing and organizing the layout of communities, ensuring that structures and critical facilities are strategically located.
3. **Increase Risk Awareness:** Highlight potential earthquake magnitudes, frequencies, and consequences, including worst case scenarios – informing the public and decision-makers about the level of threat they are exposed to and inform actions they can take if an earthquake occurs.
4. **Strengthening Existing Structures:** Help prioritize the retrofitting and strengthening of existing high-importance buildings and infrastructure, such as hospitals, emergency response centres, and key government buildings, to ensure they can remain operational in the aftermath of earthquakes.
5. **Direct Infrastructure Investment:** Assist infrastructure investors in prioritizing projects and allocating resources to areas with lower seismic risks, contributing to the creation of more resilient infrastructure.
6. **Influence Urban Planning:** Inform urban planners on designing cities and settlements with earthquake resilience in mind, including considerations for building codes, emergency evacuation routes, and safe gathering spaces.
7. **Support Sector-Specific Planning:** Aid planners in various sectors, such as healthcare, education, and transportation, by integrating earthquake risk considerations into their specific planning strategies.
8. **Enhance Contingency Planning:** Improve the effectiveness of contingency planning by understanding earthquake risks, enabling authorities to develop and implement emergency response plans tailored to specific vulnerabilities.
9. **Facilitate Search and Rescue Operations:** Provide crucial information for search and rescue teams to prioritize areas most at risk and allocate resources efficiently in the aftermath of an earthquake.
10. **Coordinate Civil-Military Efforts:** Enhance civil-military coordination by sharing a common understanding of earthquake risks, ensuring a more effective and collaborative response during emergencies.

Conclusion

The government agencies and ministries are working on earthquake risk and planning, and they need to have an integrated strategy that is supported by different stakeholders in the government, the UN and International Financial Institutions.

In May this year, the results will be published and be available online and should be considered in policy and integrated as a learning process ensuring that the recommendations are integrated into overall planning and preparedness and SODs. Policy level changes and implementation at the district/ upazila and city corporation level are much needed.