



# Soka Gakkai International

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## **Soka Gakkai International's Statement for the APMCDRR 2022**

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Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and Local Faith Communities (LFCs) hold significant influence and trust and a unique reach to people living in poverty, information deficiency and vulnerable to disasters. FBOs and LFCs support such people through their development and humanitarian activities, community leadership and spiritual support.

Soka Gakkai is a community-based Buddhist organization. In Japan it possesses around 1,200 centers across the country. Several of them have functioned as a shelter after large-scale disasters.

In light of the forecast of future disasters and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), Soka Gakkai is currently proactive in creating or updating an emergency response manual in accordance with each center's environment and situation, partly due to climate change. In each area local leaders analyze disaster risk in collaboration with local authorities and communities and clarify how each center can effectively work for its local community.

In some areas local authorities themselves are keen on collaborating with faith entities as well, particularly from the perspective of increasing shelter capacity in emergency. For example the Tokyo Metropolitan City government provides a subsidy to companies and organizations that purchase emergency stock for accommodating those who are forced to stay in or around their workplaces for a few days after a disaster. 83% of the expenditure for the stock is covered by this subsidy. Some centers of Soka Gakkai have received it as well. These can be regarded as a good example of Article 24 (o) of SFDRR.

Another point that Soka Gakkai has focused on is psychosocial care of the affected people by disasters. It is relevant to Article 33 (o) of SFDRR.

After the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, Soka Gakkai launched the "Restoration of the Heart Project" and has promoted various activities including home-visits to the affected people and musical concerts for encouraging them. So far more than 170 concerts have been held with the audience of more than 60,000. Many of the concerts have been organized at a meeting room of temporary housing units or other types of public

housings for the displaced people.

Generally speaking, physical reconstruction has greatly advanced over the decade. Regardless of that, however, not a few of the affected people are still suffering from depression or a sense of being left behind. It might have been exacerbated by ageing of the affected communities. Due to budget limitation and difficulties of the issue, the government and local authorities are not addressing this problem sufficiently.

Furthermore, there is a possibility that the same areas be hit by earthquake and tsunami again in the future. Though physical remedies for DRR have been implemented, people's apathy would hamper community's resilience.

FBOs are quite keen on this aspect and promoting relevant activities. In terms of Soka Gakkai's concerts, there have been many reports of positive effect on the audience's mental health. Some of them regained pride in their own local community and others started to join community activities. These changes are considered to be making a difference in promoting DRR as well.

At the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction held in Bali in May of 2022, thirty-four FBOs submitted a joint statement based on their own unique experiences. Below are the proposals addressed to decision makers.

Support and scale up the meaningful and substantive engagement of Faith-Based Organizations and Local Faith Communities in SFDRR processes.

Specifically we call on decision makers to:

1. Acknowledge that FBOs and LFCs play an invaluable role in the Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation dialogue - in strategy development, policy making and implementation. Collaborate with FBOs and LFCs on SFDRR implementation, and involve FBOs and LFCs at all levels (international, national and local) to help monitor DRR impact at individual, household and community levels. Use the capacity of FBOs and LFCs to communicate with communities, building on the trust communities have in their faith leaders.
2. Work with and promote collaborative networks of LFCs and FBOs to engage in resilience strengthening by encouraging local agency and integrating local knowledge in implementation plans, helping to contextualise DRR policy, guidelines and approaches. FBOs and LFCs can influence a community's values, attitudes and hence behaviour in risk management, anticipation and mitigation of

disaster risks and climate risks. This should include partnerships with FBOs and LFCs, to support their leadership, strengthen their capacity to plan in evolving risk contexts and support local approaches developed by them. Working with FBOs and LFCs contributes strongly to the whole of society approach and to the localisation of humanitarian response & preparedness. National and international systems need amending to bring these roles and approaches into planning for complex disasters.

3. Collaborate with FBOs and LFCs to promote risk informed development to address climate change, pandemic risk, conflict and other forms of disaster risk, through strengthening social capital and social safety nets and recognizing the role FBOs and LFCs already play in risk communication and community engagement.
4. Strengthen the synergy between the implementation of global frameworks like the SFDRR, the Paris Climate Agreement, the WHS Commitments to Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Commit to translating coherence of global frameworks into policy and practice, to achieve resilience at national and local levels across all sectors and segments; recognizing that FBOs can support these efforts.
5. Provide the enabling environment and capacity for innovations, policy dialogues, and the access to technologies that address practical and strategic risks related to climate, disasters and pandemics. FBOs and interfaith networks can facilitate this by sharing best practices across different faiths and national boundaries.
6. Involve FBO and LFCs with their expertise in community mobilisation and capacity building to help governments to bridge the gap between resilience strengthening policies and putting those policies into practice.

We would like to reiterate these points at the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction this year so we ensure the voices of local faith communities reach the decision-making table and bolster the advancement of DRR efforts.