

Letter to Editor: Initial Steps to Achieve a Disaster-related Statistics Framework in Iran: An Executive Proposal



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1. Introduction

Providing a statistical framework in every scientific area, such as the social, economic, and cultural fields, is vital in planning and making appropriate decisions. Therefore, it is better to allocate enough time to create a statistical framework according to the organizational goals by scrutiny and thinking. A favorable framework provides more accurate estimates for decision-makers who are closer and more in line with the realities of the society [1]. Researchers, experts, and official statistics always consider the compilation and use of statistical frameworks. A thorough review of the existing frameworks in different areas indicates that the lack of a disaster-related statistical framework is evident. Achieving such a framework by some international organizations and institutions is not far off, as the Working Group on Disaster Statistics at the Asia-Pacific Economic and Social Commission (ESCAP), from 2014 to 2018, prepared and introduced the first draft. A review of this framework shows that the primary purpose of this framework, known as the “Disaster Statistics Framework (DRSF)”, is generating statistics to be used in the calculation of international indicators and global monitoring systems of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [2, 3].

Iran is a country that experiences different types of disasters, both natural and unnatural, every year. Major natural disasters include frequent severe earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides, desertification, deforestation, storms, and the like. So, achieving a favorable framework related to disaster statistics is particularly important in Iran. Disaster management in the government sector is under the overall supervision of the Ministry of the Interior in Iran. Disaster information collection, analysis, and dissemination are the main mandates in this ministry. A plethora of technical ministries and organizations contribute to disaster management in the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Jihad Construction, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Roads and Transportation, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the first of its kind in the region, is the most critical non-governmental partner in disaster management in Iran. Given the diversity and multiplicity of ministries and organizations involved in crisis management in Iran, it is necessary to have special coordination and program to build a framework for disaster-related statistics. The following are the basic steps to achieve this goal.

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Prerequisites for developing a disaster-related statistics framework

For compilation and presentation of a framework of disaster-related statistics, the following steps are necessary:

Recognize the current situation

The first step is to review the activities taken to provide a framework for disaster-related statistics in other communities. On the other hand, it is necessary to prepare a complete list of available statistics in the field of services required in disaster management at the national and international levels. Then, according to the strengths and weaknesses of available statistics, additional measures and necessary suggestions to complete the framework should be taken. Naturally, the lack of necessary statistics and information in each stage of disaster management will prevent an efficient framework.

Definitions, concepts, and upstream documents

After recognizing the current situation, it is necessary to explain the definitions and concepts agreed at the international level and rely on technical recommendations in disaster-related statistics. Many definitions and statistical concepts are defined in national statistical organizations (in Iran, it is the responsibility of the Statistical Center of Iran), but in terms of hazards and disasters, we need to define the related and accurate concepts. The lack of definitions and concepts or the incompleteness of this section makes it difficult to provide a consistent framework with the facts of disasters, and it may cause some confusion for the users.

Determining and completing statistical sources

The disaster-related statistics framework is not only limited to disaster-related statistics but also includes statistical information about the vulnerable community and its vulnerabilities and capacities. It means that the assessment of risks and effects after disasters are also included in this step. Other statistical sources that are crucial in preparing the framework for disaster-related statistics rely on analyzing a diverse set of demographic, social, and economic data sources from the surveys and other techniques of information collection in official statistics for multiple purposes. At this stage, it will be helpful to identify any statistical source that has a direct or indirect impact on the disaster-related statistics framework.

Inter-organizational coordination and appointment of a custodian

Since various organizations and institutions may provide the basic information that constitutes the framework for disaster statistics, it is essential to determine the role and duty of each organization in the exchange. Assigning a focal point or responsible institution for collecting the required information and submitting reports based on such a framework will happen following this coordination.

Experimental implementation of the framework and finalization

After compiling and implementing the disaster-related statistics framework, it is time to upload the information related to one of the disasters in recent years as a pilot. Preparing such a pilot and receiving the required reports will contribute to the comprehensiveness and adequacy of evaluation. The pilot assessment will show the need for revision and probably correction in the aforementioned steps and operationalize the finalization of the framework.

2. Discussion

Disasters can affect all elements of society and threaten the sustainable development of societies. Benefiting from relevant and quality statistics and information leads to improved capacity to research, plan, develop, and monitor new evidence-based policies. Therefore, in the international community, after emphasizing the need for solidarity in the face of disasters, the need to create a framework for disaster-related statistics is emphasized. Besides facilitating and promoting disaster prevention and response programs and measures, such a framework provides a good basis for preparing the reports that are the basis for improving existing programs.

Ethical Considerations

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Authors' contributions

Methodology, Data collection, and Writing – original draft: Batoul Khoundabi; Investigation and Writing – review & editing: Ahmad Soltani

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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