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Title of the Session: From Disaster Readiness to Disaster Resilience: Taking an Integrated and Transformative Approach to Reducing Vulnerability and Building Resilience When Disasters are the “New Normal”

Date: 10/11/2014 to 16/11/2014

Summary

Disasters, including large-scale, highly complex emergencies such as the West Africa Ebola outbreak, seem to be emerging as ‘the new normal’. As we approach the close of 2014, in light of the trends of recent history, many questions emerge around how to systematically reduce risk, mitigate vulnerability, and build resilience in an environment of increasing insecurity and fragility. Where a decade ago it was said that disaster risk reduction is everyone’s business, now it can be said (or argued!) that disaster resilience is everyone’s business – all the time. Join in for a lively discussion on the implications of an integrated, transformative approach to reducing vulnerability through DRR.

Context

The recent release of the HFA 2 Zero Draft notes the rise in disaster losses, the emergence of new risks, and increases in exposure of people and assets. Among others, three areas of outstanding work are also noted: 1) Need for people-centered, preventative approach; 2) Need for enhanced work to address exposure and vulnerability, ensuring accountability for risk creation at all levels; and finally, the 3) Need for dedicated action to tackle underlying risk drivers and compounding factors of demographic change, consequences of poverty and inequality, weak governance, inadequate and non-risk-informed policy, limited capacity especially at the local level, poorly managed urban and rural development, declining ecosystems, climate change and variability and conflict situations.

Whereas Emergency Preparedness is often considered the entry point to transformation of culture and institutional arrangements from traditional disaster management modalities to disaster risk reduction, if the past 10 years of trends are any predictor, disasters will continue to increase in scale, impact and importance. Disasters, including large-scale, highly complex emergencies such as the West Africa Ebola outbreak, seem to be emerging as ‘the new normal’. As we approach the close of 2014, in light of the trends of recent history, the following questions emerge:

- What key capacities need to be in place in communities and disproportionately exposed populations to ensure disaster readiness and how can this occur?
- How do the concepts and practices of disaster readiness and disaster resilience apply in contexts of increasing uncertainty, fragility, weak governance and socio-economic conditions?
- In terms of mitigation of underlying risk drivers, and reduction of vulnerability, in particular for children and other vulnerable groups, what are lessons learned?

- What are the most critical components of a holistic system of support to reduce vulnerability of highly exposed populations in complex emergencies and how can DRR more effectively bridge this gap?
- How can disaster preparedness in other complex emergencies be undertaken differently to strengthen resilience and build back better? In light of the Ebola crisis in West Africa what are some emerging lessons learned on this subject?
- Finally, should there be a convergence of security and risk reduction frameworks to address the confluence of conflict and increasing scale and complexity in large-scale emergencies?

In light of the current preparation of a post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the discussion will focus primarily on Hyogo Framework for Action priority 4, highlighting the importance of an integrated, systems-based approach to reducing vulnerability and building resilience.