

Expert: Peter Essens

Title of the Session: Using each other's strengths: How can we better prepare for effective cooperation to improve resilience?

Date: 01/12/2014 to 07/12/2014

Summary

To step up resilience we need to combine the efforts, capabilities and expertise of multiple actors – institutes, organisations, communities. Why is cooperation so complex and often difficult? How can we better prepare together?

Context

Cooperation should start before we meet in a crisis. This will not only improve resilience by enabling a more adequate response when in crisis. It will also trigger a process of identifying what could or should be improved to reduce the risks and impact of a crisis.

Raising the level of cooperative capacity in a community (region, country) is partly a goal in itself, which positively influences many aspects of society, including societal resilience. A higher level of established cooperative capacity makes it easier to reach the level of intensive cooperation needed in a crisis.

There are however many obstacles and challenges in bringing diverse parties together and cooperating effectively. Two main statements (or questions) need to be addressed here:

- We need to overcome these barriers and work more closely, respecting each other's independence and interests – how can we do that?
- We need to realistically but adequately build cooperation with all parties involved - How can we do that?

To learn from each other, from the many efforts that are undertaken in many regions, we need to get a better view on what works well, under what conditions, and why. For this to achieve we need to combine our knowledge and experiences by collecting systematically how cooperation was established and in what format cooperation was framed, who was involved. We have not found, however, systematic analysis and evaluations, and there is no common framework in place to compare the diverse events. The next two statements (or questions) should be addressed:

- We need a common framework of effective cooperation - How would that look like?
- We need to organise to systematically collect data (e.g. in case studies) world-wide using such common framework - How can we do that?

A special issue in building cooperation is the combination of military and civil capabilities. In May 2013 at the UNISDR mixed experiences were shared on how constructive these interactions have been. We contended that effective civil-military cooperation training

approaches should be implemented. However, participants then indicated that there are many training approaches and models around.

- We need an overview and a review on how civil-military exercises are organised and how effective these are - How can we achieve that?
- We need to develop effective training methods and use best practices to improve these trainings, if needed.

Along these six statements annex questions, I would like to develop the discussion. However, any question on cooperation is welcome.