



2nd Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Geneva, 16-19 June 2009

“Urban risk: Increasing the effectiveness of local action on risk reduction and adaptation”.

Round table of local and regional authorities on urban risk reduction

Organiser: PURR¹ (Partnership for Urban Risk Reduction)

I. Context

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is coming at its mid-term anniversary which will, among other things, be marked by the launch of U.N. ISDR global campaign for urban disaster risk reduction (2009-2010).

While the role of local and regional authorities as well as local actors is explicitly recognized in the Hyogo Framework for Action, the main international mechanisms for policy formulation, program planning, advocacy, awareness and funding has been directed towards central governments. A systematic effort to engage local authorities and other local actors and to support them in their participation to the global disaster risk reduction agenda is yet to materialize. However, fundamentally, the success of the HFA is in great part dependent on the realization that implementation must be enabled at the local level. Not only are local governments the instruments for implementation of central government policies and program, they typically render or oversee vital services and functions to their communities that are core to the goal of mainstreaming DRR in governance and development. These include: Land use planning, urban development, public works, construction safety and licensing, community welfare, emergency management, and in many cases transport, sanitation, water and power delivery, and community healthcare and education. Making these services resilient to disasters and climate change should be one of the primary goals for achieving URR and for reaching the goals of the Urban Risk Reduction Campaign.

Successful progress toward risk reduction in urban environments is enabled by strong partnerships among local authorities, civil society organizations, private sector, and community members. Together they can mobilize significant resources and put these resources into action for the purpose of making cities and communities safer and for making the choices in terms of where URR investments should be directed.

¹ The Partnership for Urban Risk Reduction (**PURR**) is an ad-hoc coalition of organizations focused on enabling and energizing disaster risk reduction action at the local level. The current partners include: CITYNET, EMI, ICLEI, METROPOLIS, ProVention Consortium and UCLG

Many local leaders and officials have understood that URR is not only a duty they carry to their population but also an opportunity for their cities. With little resources and support, many cities have adopted a pro-active policy towards providing a safer environment to their citizens by reducing physical, social and environmental vulnerabilities especially to address the vulnerability of poor communities. Working with their communities and with limited financial resources, cities have initiated environmental protection programs, emission control systems, hazard awareness raising projects, flood protection programs, early warning initiatives, neighborhood vulnerability reduction actions, and other projects that are already showing their impacts. In the mind of many local policy makers, disaster management is shifting from being seen as a liability and more as an opportunity. Nonetheless, engaging in URR is a significant challenge to local authorities and local actors and the impediments are many.

- The legal and institutional context remains an inhibitor to action in many countries. Disaster risk management is often associated with public safety and based on laws and regulation that emphasize response under the jurisdiction of a para-military central agency isolated from developmental and day-to-day community welfare issues. Under such systems, the role of local authorities and their linkages to their constituencies are ignored and even sometimes seen as irrelevant. Local authorities and the communities they represent are neither involved in the policy making process nor in the development of programs.
- This situation is encouraged by international agencies, donors and other funding agencies which consider central governments as their legitimate partners. There are a few if any possibilities for local authorities or other local actors to participate in the global negotiation initiatives or directly access funding for URR projects. This is a major roadblock to urban risk reduction. Faced with competing priorities and increasing demands from their citizenry, local authorities do not have the financial resources for long term mitigation projects. Working these projects through the national budget allocations typically take years. The campaign should be an opportunity to intensify the consultations and discussion on developing financing mechanisms of DRR projects at the local level.
- Availability of competent human resources is also another major impediment to URR. DRM is an emerging practice for government, and in most cases a new practice for local governments. It is highly technical, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral. Cities and local stakeholders do not have the human resources to understand its requirements and to support its implementation. There are very few resources available to communities and to local authorities for training of local professionals, volunteers, community leaders and others in local level DRM practice. There are very few learning opportunities and those which exist are not typically geared towards the needs and realities of local authorities and local stakeholders. The URR Campaign opens the doors to address the need for developing competent human resources that can support the full HFA agenda
- The same is also true for the lack of technical resources and approaches. The HFA and its related manuals such as "Putting Words Into Action" are geared towards central governments. A similar effort should be directed towards providing the technical resources that are suitable to local authorities and other local stakeholders such as community-based organizations, small private enterprises, and the academia. What are needed are not generic documentation but manuals and practice guides that recognize the context of local governance, including mandates of different actors, their roles, needs and their processes for policy and decision making.

One key area that the guidance should address the link between URR and core functions of local government related to urban development and the resiliency of services to population, especially to the poor and most vulnerable. Specific approaches are needed on pertinent issues such as addressing risk reduction associated with urban slums and informal settlements, supporting services to the poor, preserving cultural and heritage, protecting small business and similar pressing issues.

- Local actors, including local governments, community organizations, and the private sector (especially small business) are critical to the implementation of the HFA at local levels yet have not been well represented in the development of the HFA to date. There needs to be more engagement of local actors in developing and monitoring international policy for risk reduction and adaptation and encouragement of the development of localized HFA by and for local actors.

Recognizing the importance of promoting and implementing the HFA at the local level and the need to deal with impact of climate change, four local government organizations: *United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)*, *Metropolis*, *CityNet*, and *ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability*, and the *Earthquake and Megacities Initiative (EMI)*, with the support of ProVention Consortium, came together to create the "Partnership for Urban Risk Reduction (PURR) to serve as an advocacy and support initiative to all local authorities in developing safer, more resilient, and more sustainable living environments in their cities and for their communities. PURR groups a large constituency of local actors that together represent a significant force in creating change and making progress. PURR is open to all those who can engage their institutions in advocating on behalf of and capacitating local stakeholders. PURR is a concerned stakeholder in the ISDR Urban Risk Reduction Campaign and in the UNFCCC climate change adaptation initiative, and is ready to be an active partner and put its resources into their successes.

Today, with increasing urbanisation, continuing intensification of patterns of risk in urban environments, and the alarming threat of climate change, the role of local authorities and local stakeholders in disaster risk reduction has come to the forefront. Reducing disaster risk and climate change adaptation in cities is a major challenge which requires efficient collective action, but there are also opportunities in implementing disaster risk reduction policy and the benefits of strong early action outweigh the costs.

Local authorities and local actors are the primary agents of service delivery to the population, social mobilization, and providing livelihood means thus directly impacting the resiliency of communities to disaster risk. Thus, by engaging in effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and practices local authorities and leaders could bring about large scale protection of human life and property, and preserve development assets and socio-political stability, and reducing the vulnerability of the poor.

II. Focus and main ideas for discussion

- Review the role of local authorities and local actors in the implementation of the HFA at the mid-term anniversary of the Hyogo agreement
- Assess what has been done and what are the key impediments to local level disaster risk reduction
- Explore the opportunities to develop a common strategy among local authorities and local actors as part of the planned global campaign for URR

- Develop a set of recommendations to enable more effective action at the local levels that could be considered in the context of the outcome statement from the Global Platform.

Topics of discussion include:

- a. What are the changes in governance and in particular in legal and institutional arrangements for URR that would enable and operationalize local action and contribute to achieving mainstreaming of DRR in urban governance and urban development?
- b. How can we encourage cities and communities to establish local campaigns partnering local authorities, civil society organizations, and the private sector to lead public efforts on risk reduction and adaptation?
- c. How can local action be more effectively supported by urging donors and funding organizations to overcome the current weaknesses in human capacity and in providing financing of capital investments to reduce urban risk particularly for poor communities where the interest from the private sector cannot be mobilized?
- d. How can local actors intervene and contribute more effectively in the global agenda for the planning and formulation of policies and program for DRR and Climate Change such as the UN-ISDR system, UNFCCC and others?
- e. How can a more effective partnerships be put in place between donors, central governments, and local actors and communities to build the human resources and the competencies and the tools and methods that would help establish a DRM practice at the local level and support the local implementation of the HFA?

III. Expected results

- A better definition of the role of local actors, the opportunities for partnerships, and the synergisms that could be mobilize to empower local action for DRR and Climate Change
- Attract support from national governments, the ISDR System, donors, funding agencies and international agencies for the need to invest locally and to decentralize governance systems for DRR in order to address the root causes of vulnerability and improve mainstreaming strategies.
- Develop a consensus on the key issues that would need to be addressed by the URR Campaign and in particular on the contribution of local authorities and local actors
- Develop consensus on a set of goals and priorities to be addressed by the URR Campaign
- Draw the framework for a concentrated agenda of cooperation and partnership for Urban URR
- Invite other organizations to engage with PURR and the upcoming global campaign urban risk reduction campaign as a focus partnership for advocating and supporting URR.

IV. Panelists

1. **Narayan Gopal MALEGO**, Mayor of Katmandu, Nepal, Chair of the Roundtable
2. Fouad Bendimerad, EMI, Rapporteur

3. Violeta Seva, Señor Advisor City of Makati, Philippines, Facilitator

Interventions

4. Inga Bjork-Klevby, UN-Habitat
5. Dato Lakhbir Singh Chahl, Citynet
6. Alfredo Lazarte-Hoyle, ILO
7. Ian O'Donnell, ProVention Consortium
8. Bhichit Rattakul, ADPC

V. Date and venue

Wednesday 17 June from 11:00 to 13:00