



Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction Fourth Session - Invest Today for a Safer Tomorrow

Geneva, Switzerland, 19-23 May 2013

Name and Type of Event	Book Launch and High-Level Panel Discussion: Turning Risks into Opportunities – Mainstreaming Ecosystem Management, DRR and CCA
Date	Monday 20 May
Reporters name	Mila Lomarda (UNEP)
Number of Participants	Approximately 150 persons

1) What were the key messages, outcomes and recommendations from your event?

The book presents current knowledge and practice in the field of ecosystem management and disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR) with contributions from the scientific, expert and policy-making communities. This approach is regarded as a “no-regret solution”, is effective as well as cost-effective, and is intrinsically participatory, capitalizing from indigenous knowledge. Moreover, conserving and rehabilitating ecosystems is not only an answer to disaster risk reduction or climate change but is also an integral part of sustainable development.

That is not to say however that engineered structures are obsolete: ecosystem-based measures are not a panacea to disaster risk reduction, says co-editor Fabrice Renaud (UNU-EHS). The panel speakers all agree that engineered structures and healthy ecosystems go hand-in-hand in increasing chances of vulnerable people to resist disasters. It is also important to highlight that ecosystems provide multiple benefits not just for disaster risk reduction but also support livelihoods and local economies, and provide water, food and energy needs.

More scientific investigations are needed to understand how complex ecosystems work – be it mangrove forests, coral reefs, and wetlands – and how they reduce disaster risk. There is much empirical evidence about the protective role of ecosystems at local level for instance in the case of coastal ecosystems like coral reefs, mangroves and seagrasses against storm surges and in the case of forests and reduction of landslide risk, but there is a need to generalize the knowledge and upscale the experiences. Additional research and empirical data is needed for specific ecosystems and their protective values for specific hazards, which could eventually lead to the production of guidelines to which practitioners and engineers can refer..

In addition, economic assessments of ecosystem services should be further improved in order to provide policymakers with correct and useful information in decision-making processes. Some initiatives to achieve this are already in place but need to be developed so that adequate valuation of ecosystem services can be achieved.

2) Based on the Synthesis Report of the HFA2 consultation process up to the GP13, what are specific recommendations and concrete examples for the main topics, themes and issues to be addressed in the HFA2?

In light of discussions on the future international framework on disaster risk reduction, the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR) and panel discussion has put forward 6 key considerations to be included in the Post-HFA:

- Environment should be recognized as a cross-cutting issue across the main priorities in the new framework considering that environmental improvements can reduce disasters by influencing hazards, reducing exposure and increasing local resilience.
- Disaster risk reduction institutions and structures should be formally recognized as effective vehicles for delivering action on climate change adaptation priorities and targets, given that disaster risk reduction becomes adaptation in practice.
- Ecosystem-based approaches, especially with respect to water resource management, should be explicitly recognized as an integrated solution to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the new framework, as they have been proved to be effective and cost effective solutions, especially at local levels, to reduce disaster risks and adapt to climate change and variability. Ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation should be incorporated into risk-sensitive, climate resilient planning across different development sectors.
- The role of science and scientific research on the disaster risk reduction functions of ecosystems should be recognized in the post 2015 framework as central to informed risk assessments and policy decisions.
- Environmental impact and strategic environmental assessments should include disaster risk reduction components in order to incorporate this issue into development and land-use management plans.
- Community based and community led initiatives that promote the use of ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation should be more strongly promoted in the post HFA given that ecosystem-based approaches are acknowledged to reduce vulnerability at the local level.