

Towards a post-2015 framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

BUILDING THE RESILIENCE OF NATIONS AND COMMUNITIES TO DISASTERS



Summary and Closing Remarks of "Critical Issues and priorities needed to address urban risk and local governance for disaster resilience"

This online dialogue on the post 2015 framework (HFA-2) for disaster risk reduction ran from 22 March to 5th April and targeted local actors and governments, focusing on rural and urban concerns encompassing governance issues. In total 72 posts were received with a diversity of observations and suggestions, with ample examples. The main purpose of this dialogue was to identify obstacles – and incentives- in managing local risks that potentially could be addressed in the HFA 2.

The summary below is organized following the ‘three’ areas around which the dialogue was conducted.

1. Motivate local government leaders for investing in DRR -

- I. Local governments are the “last mile authorities” where ultimately the decisions and enforcements for implementation of risk reduction policies are made; participants indicated experience of widespread reluctance from local decision makers to take responsibility or act, unless there is a problem or crisis. Investments in DRR do not necessarily show immediate results and that could be a reason for lack in political interest.
- II. Disaster risk reduction (and resilience) is still a new concept for most local government leaders and as a first step it is necessary to raise awareness and capacity of these decision makers, be it Mayors, Municipal commissioners, executive officers or managers of urban local bodies.
- III. Many observed that very few local governments currently take risk sensitive decisions, to certain extent the cause is lack of information and/or understanding of the issues. Conducting risk assessment for the locality should be a precursor for any decision, which in most of the urban local bodies is not a priority yet. For that purpose it is necessary to increase the authority of local government leaders thereby making them accountable.
- IV. The case of Canada is an example cited wherein the local government benefits from development permit costs and property tax however if any Disaster Financial Assistance be required to support the property owner as a result of incurred damaged, that responsibility falls upon the Provincial and Federal Governments. This mismatch could have been addressed if the local

government which receives the income for development is responsible to pay for damage then there decisions would begin to be risk sensitive.

2. Encourage national actions to improve disaster risk reduction implementation at local level

- V. Reports show that national policies and institutional arrangements for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management have been strengthened, while the same quantum of investments have not been imparted at the local level.
- VI. Lack of legal and institutional mechanisms at local level have made it particularly difficult for local governments to act effectively in reducing risks. In terms of decentralization and devolution of power from national and local governments, many attempts have been made but only few have been implemented successfully, according to participants. In order to encourage national actions, the decision-making process fundamentally, needs to include representation of broad networks at various levels and individuals of diverse socio-economic backgrounds.
- VII. Further and the most frequently mentioned barrier has been lack of dialogue between national and local entities not only for Disaster Risk Reduction but as well on larger developmental programmes. Participants strongly suggested that National Platforms (or similar mechanisms) should include representations from local governments.
- VIII. There were some examples cited by participants (such as that of Mexico) wherein the National authority ensures that local governments take necessary actions to reduce risks which in turn affect their share of response funds. This could be a mechanism to learn from.
- IX. Several participants urged that lack of financial resources at local level is a major cause for ineffective Disaster Risk Reduction implementation. Many argued that rather than providing 100% requested funds, national authority (and donors) should ask local governments to contribute portion of the desired amount from their accounts (by including an element of risk reduction and resilience public works, transport, land-use/building permits, emergency management which are funded under existing service lines). This will ensure a level of commitment, accountability and sustainability.

3. Enhance collaboration between citizens and local governments for risk reduction-

- X. It is clear that the motivation of local government leaders is usually triggered by awareness of the local communities, citizens and their demand for risk reduction. At the same time informed and aware citizens provide an opportunity for greater cooperation between the population and

government. In any case citizens are the first responders and their engagement is key to successful preparedness.

- XI. Participants strongly urged for national and local governments to communicate risks, impacts and solutions to the public, which currently is not a practice a pilot let by Seeds India mentioned in the dialogue is currently attempting to address this gap.
- XII. Another recurrent message by contributors is to ensure that DRR Services are inclusive and people with disabilities are taken into account when planning and executing projects.
- XIII. To ensure citizens are informed and aware, social networks and online platforms need to be exploited to its maximum.
- XIV. Citizen groups should be engaged in collecting data to enable informed decisions on mitigation strategies and to ensure that future land use decisions do not worsen an existing situation.

The above summary takes into account various examples, practices and initiatives shared by contributors from Australia, Mexico, Bangladesh, India, Chile, Niger, Sweden, New Zealand, Belgium, South Africa, Pakistan, Morocco, Malawi, Thailand, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines and Nicaragua.