KOBE REPORT draft

High Level Round Table 2: Learning to live with risk

The second high level round table was held on 18 January. The topics ranged from how community risk awareness can be raised, the importance of maintaining research, and linking education and disaster reduction

The following people participated in the above mentioned high level round table:
Facilitator:
Mr. Peter Walker, Director of the Feinstein International Famine Center
Speakers:
Ms. Corazon Alma G. de Leon, Former Chair, Civil Service Commission, Philippines
Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO
Mr. Edgardo Calderon Paredes, Peruvian Red Cross
Mr. Toshizo Ido, Governor of Hyogo
Prof. Hans van Ginkel, UNU

Education for disaster reduction is necessary
especially for those who are involved in future development

Education is vital for disaster reduction. It is a big challenge to integrate disaster reduction into education. Learning should be a lifelong process so that people and communities can master their own destinies.
Three interconnected realms of importance were mentioned:

- Scientific and technological realm (understand better when and where disasters strike and with which intensity, use early warning systems and telecommunications more effectively)
- Environmental realm (protect land and natural resources, sensible approach to the environment in order to help reduce disaster risk, enforce sound engineering and construction principles)
- Educational realm (education needs to be embraced in all its forms and integrated into school and university curricula, capitalize on traditional local knowledge about natural hazards)

No sustainable development can be achieved without education in natural disaster reduction!
The key lesson we should learn from the Indian Ocean tsunami is that knowledge about hazards and training on disaster reduction must increase because they can save lives and contribute to sustainable development.
In December 2002, resolution 57/254 on the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and UNESCO was designated as lead agency for the promotion of the Decade.

Three stages of the integration of disaster reduction into sustainable development can be identified:

- learning to recognize hazards
- learning to mitigate threats posed by hazards
- learning to pass this knowledge on to future generations

Women and children are among the most critical groups. Nowadays children have greater access to knowledge than ever before. Young people today learn to live with risks from an early age onwards and can help us to diminish or even abolish risks in the long run.

Focus on schools and community education

The Philippines are hit by about 20 natural disasters a year and its inhabitants have learned to live and face disasters and the reality that comes with them.
Schools should be the focus of the community.
Example of a project that involved 250 schools participating in an earthquake hazard awareness raising activity, earthquake drills were performed and children volunteered when schools were used as shelters in case of emergency. Children must be made aware of hazards and their exposure to risk.
Community based education is a second very powerful tool in combating disaster risk: Leadership and communication skills need to be strengthened. A community must develop a strong self-confidence so it can accumulate capacity to act and to take better command.

Japan' coping strategy after Kobe earthquake

The governor of Hyogo, Mr. Toshizo Ido, gave a short account of how Japan dealt with the devastation of the Kobe earthquake in 1995.
Kobe was rebuilt with the support of the international community. The people of Kobe did not want to simply rebuild the city as it was like before but they pioneered in new reconstruction methods of the 21st century. Citizens themselves decided what sort of city they wanted to build. The key for success was the efforts and commitment of the citizens in the planning and design of the city after the earthquake.
Several achievements can be noted: Of the total project budget of 17 trillion Yen only 16.3 trillion Yen have been spent. It was forbidden to rebuild houses in an uncontrolled way. Human resources training centers, Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution were established. Psychological and traumatic stress centers were set up. Teachers were trained to deal with traumatized children. The law to assist the rebuilding of lives in disaster areas was formulated and enhanced. Two stage urban plan was implemented to adjust land use and zoning in reconstruction areas. The Victims Reconstruction Support Conference was organized. Support was provided for voluntary activities by prefectural residents. A disaster emergency medical treatment system was established. Programs to assist the elderly were established.
Some things have not been achieved yet: The system of mutual aid in public housing needs to be continued and improved, the elderly must receive more help. Anti-seismic structures remain to be put into buildings. The knowledge, experiences and lessons learned of the past years must be transferred to future generations in order to create a disaster reduction culture and to promote a disaster reduction climate.
Japan also contributes to efforts made by the international community, Japan assists other countries in disaster relief and reconstruction work together with JICA. Additionally, a successful Disaster Reduction Alliance (OCHA, UNCRD, ADRC, EDM, etc.) has been established. However, there is still a need for efficient coordination of international disaster preparedness.

Risk reduction and development

El Nino set Peru's development back by 20 years. The development that had been achieved over decades was destroyed within several hours because development policy ignores the risks of natural disasters.
One of the paramount reasons for such destruction is that the implementation of development policies ignores risk. Disasters pose a development problem. Development countries are disproportionally affected because of deforestation and land damaging farming methods, less access to education, information and basic services, less means of support for families. Yet developed countries are affected by natural hazards as well.
Development can actually aggravate risk when urban planning does not take into account the environmental impact of uncontrolled growth and is not governed by strict building regulations.

The vulnerability to disasters is determined by a complex combination of physical, environmental, economic, political and social factors. The IFRC and its member National Societies must not only focus on better response but also on better preparedness at a community level. However, preparedness and response measures are still not enough, we must work on all aspects of risk reduction, prevention, preparedness and mitigation can not be done in isolation. Collaboration of all stakeholders is therefore crucial, especially work with and by social organizations at local and community level. Lives must be protected without jeopardizing development.

Building codes must be implemented and an early warning system must be developed. In addition, education and awareness raising activities must be promoted so a culture of preparedness can be installed in communities. Local, national or international response to disaster should aim at strengthening community capacities, identifying and reducing vulnerability and supporting, rather than undermining, development objectives.
Risk reduction is at the core of development. Investing in disaster reduction now means investing in long-term development.

Natural disasters as complex as complex disasters:
Further research is crucial

We have to learn to live with the fact that there are not and there will not be any situations without risk.
The next step is now to know risks better and to take immediate action to reduce risks and save lives.
The following action needs to be taken:
We need to acquire in-depth specific knowledge about disasters and disaster risks.
We need to focus on integrated approached for implementation (from theory to practice)
We need to move from a re-active to a pro-active culture.
How can this be achieved?
We need to know and understand risk and learn to cope with vulnerability by increasing out commitment and investments on research and learning in order to increase our knowledge on disaster reduction.
We need to prepare for the unforeseen.
We need to link disaster management and sustainable development.

Though the development of an early warning system is essential, it is not enough. We must go beyond that and really understand how people in disaster prone areas will be informed and what they will have to do in case a disaster strikes. We must go beyond pure disaster preparedness.
Informal community participation is just as important as a legal framework. We must commit ourselves to research and learning.
We must dare to think about the unthinkable, if not, we will always be surprised.

The following comments came from the floor:

- Infrastructure can be rebuilt after a disaster but national heritage must be protected otherwise it will be lost forever. Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO assured the plenary that special programs to protect national heritage in case of a disaster are in place. International instruments can help to assess the on-site situation. Space technology can be used to compose a structure the same way it looked before.
- At the end of the conference two sorts of resolutions should come out:
    - A resolution on monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanisms
    - A resolution which attaches measures for non compliance
- Time bound, monitorable and easily understandable targets have to be included in the program outcome document.
- Armenia suggested that we unite our efforts, pursue not only regional but also international cooperation and avoid political vulnerability. In addition, it was proposed to install regional warning systems, carry out national and regional awareness raising campaigns, improve legislation in line with international standards and protect national heritage

- Traditional knowledge should not be forgotten since it is the only method that can be applied immediately.
- It is important to ensure the support of society and to convince tax payers that it is important to invest in disaster preparedness. This is often a difficult task as the younger generation has often not experienced disasters.
- Risks have been identified but there is not sufficient analysis of consequences and future steps on what needs to be done. Rescue services in Africa can often not access resources. There is a lack of mutual assistance mechanisms. European countries should help African countries to set this up in Africa because African countries simply do not have the necessary resources.
- Solutions to natural disaster risk are different for different countries depending on their level of resources available. International donors give support to different programs, the receivers should ensure that these limited resources are shared.
- We must not underestimate the scientific aspect of disaster preparedness. There is, for example, still a difference in how building codes are calculated. Best practices should be disseminated and transferred to developing countries so they do not have to go through the painful experiences of other countries once again. The conference outcome should include the setting up of such a team.