



KOBE REPORT draft
Report of Session 1.9, Thematic Cluster 1

Local Governance: Precondition for effective disaster reduction

1. Summary of presentations and discussions

At the beginning Mr. Horst Müller in his opening remarks stressed the following issues:

- Local governance is essential to overcome restraints to achieve effective disaster risk management
- Good governance enhances participation and ownership as part of decentralization thus providing the basis for sustainability
- On the local level there is a need for capacity, skills and resources not only the deconcentration of responsibilities.

Mrs. Angeles Arena's presentation gave a conceptual introduction to the topic of local governance and disaster risk reduction.

After giving a definition of local governance, Mrs. Arenas highlighted four different aspects of governance that affect local disaster risk management. Those aspects are political, economic, administrative governance and social capital.

The application of the main principles of good governance (participation, transparency, accountability, efficiency and credibility) is the necessary context in order to achieve local disaster risk reduction. She then gave a short overview of roles and responsibilities of local authorities, civil society and private sector for effective DRR and explained different fields of action for local disaster risk reduction.

She finished the presentation with the remaining challenges such as:

- Proliferation of small-scale, scattered and uncoordinated initiatives
- Difficulties in transcending the local level to generate required changes in policy and development programming which affects results at the local level
- Articulation between local and national levels and assignation of responsibilities without resources and capacity building.
- When risk reduction is not perceived as an intrinsic part of local development planning, municipalities may seem reluctant to absorb 'additional tasks'

After this introductory presentation there were four country experience presentations.

Mr. Renco, District Administrator from Mozambique explained that the motivation to introduce risk reduction activities were the severe floods and drought as well as an increase of population in high risk areas. He described the main activities e.g. organization of local disaster management committees, risk analysis and definition of specific risk reduction measures.

The main function of the district administration is to guarantee facilitation and dialogue between development actors for the establishment of priorities for risk reduction measures and their integration in district development planning and implementation. Since climate change is increasing risk in the district, the integration of adaptation measures is a major challenge.

Mr. David Smith, JICA Regional Advisor for Central America, described the finding of study on the recovery and risk reduction activities 5 years after Hurricane Mitch. He stated that although most of the

infrastructure has been recovered the rehabilitation of livelihoods was often not achieved. Principles of risk reduction were not systematically integrated in recovery and development planning.

Therefore JICA now supports pilot projects to develop instruments and best practice for the integration of risk management in municipal development planning, environmental and project analysis and implementation. Those mechanisms are based on participatory planning methodologies and strengthening the organization of civil society and municipalities.

He concluded that local governance and risk reduction should focus on the following issues:

- Promote local actors as protagonists of development and disaster reduction activities
- external actors should facilitate and set up dialogue;
- Provide technical assistance to calculate possible losses due to disasters and impacts of risk reduction activities

Oscar Alcántara gave a presentation from the point of the view of the civil society on a process of local risk reduction in La Masica, Honduras. He described how the community got systematically involved in risk reduction measures. Because of frequent and recurrent flooding in the Hurricane season, the affected population took a protagonist approach for the establishment of an early warning system. They convinced the local government to invest in this activity and support further risk reduction measures (e.g. flood proofed reconstruction of houses and bridges, watershed management)

However with the change of local authorities the community faced the challenge to maintain the political and financial commitment of the new mayor. This was achieved through an intensive dialogue with all parties' candidates and a firm position of the organized civil society.

However Alcantara stated that resources of the municipality are limited and that for larger preventive measures national support or intermunicipal coordination is needed.

Finally Mr. Pashtun, Minister for Urban Development, former Governor for the Kandahar-Province in Afghanistan explained that disaster risk reduction is not a top national policy agenda in this country recovering from more than 20 years of war and civil strife, despite the fact that Afghanistan faces frequent and diverse hazards. However, the weakness of national administration and services and the traditional local governance structures, leads to a natural focus on local structures for disaster risk reduction.

Hence the current strategy of the provincial authorities is to strengthen local disaster management centers providing assistance to the local communities. This will be done through the support to a voluntary workers system based on traditional mutual help mechanisms.

Those individual centers should form networks in order to increase their capacity to respond in case of disaster.

Pashtun mentioned the following acute problems in expanding this approach:

- Awareness of Administration
- Capacity and training opportunities
- Technology and resources
- Effective Management and Coordination

The following discussion focused on the following issues:

- The general discussion of how to guarantee the compliance of the principles for good local governance enabling risk reduction
- How to assure participation of the poorest and most vulnerable?
- How to achieve the commitment of the political decision makers on the local level?
- The importance of a gender sensitive approach especially from reconstruction onwards.

2. Primary Issues

- There was common understanding that Disaster Risk Reduction is closely linked with local (good) governance
- The principles of good governance: participation, transparency, accountability, credibility, development orientation, are primordial to achieve sustainable disaster risk reduction.
- Poorest and most vulnerable people are the most difficult to involve actively in local governance and disaster risk reduction. There is a need to develop specific approaches for the poorest with quick results and targeted awareness programs.
- There is still a challenge to convince political decision makers at national and local level and involve them in discussion and application of disaster risk measures. Dialogue, awareness raising and capacity building for those decision makers are needed.
- Programs to improve local governance and risk reduction need to be coordinated and be targeted on all development actors, such as population, local and national governments as well as sectoral ministries (on national and local level).
- Decentralization policies should not only transfer responsibilities to the local level but also financial resources and provide for human capacity development.
- Risk Reduction Initiatives should learn from existing movements (e.g., gender, environment) and their strategies to mainstream. They should link globally.

3. Name of presenters

Angeles Arenas, UNDP regional advisor for DRM Latin America
Lucas Renco, District administrator of Buzi District, Mozambique
David Smith, JICA regional Advisor for Central America
Oscar Alcantara, Civil Society La Massica, Honduras
Yusaf Pashtun, Minister for Urban Development, Afghanistan

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