Decentralised Disaster Management in South Asia: New Dimensions to Community-based Disaster Management

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CBDM as a Concept and Practice

- The concept aims at including community perceptions, perspectives and experiences into the counter-disaster planning and management.

- It is targeted at planners, managers, and practitioners entrusted with disaster management.

- It claims to reverse the ‘top-down’ outlook with ‘bottom-up’ vision in relation to disaster management.
Issues

- CBDM is `community-oriented` not `community-based`.
- It does not provide for community-led mechanism to achieve what it claims (bottom-up/top-down...).
- Managers/planners’ choice to opt for CBDM is voluntary, not mandatory.
- It’s a management tool and definitional perspective subject to further improvements.
- It operates within the hierarchical discriminations of ‘at-risk communities’ (unable to appreciate ‘unsaid’ and ‘invincible’).
Rejoinder to CBDM

- **Nature-hazard-disaster-community-livelhoods**: connections and contradictions
  - Colonial natural resource management
  - Post-colonial inheritance
  - Ecology, and community dispossession
  - Community alienation as a form of every-day resistance

- **State-disaster-community**: An irresistible pyramid

- **Disaster and Governance**: Links and missing links
Critical Assumptions

- Disasters are pending issues of governance

- [Most of the] Disasters are collateral damage of growth-driven and speed-induced development

- Macro disruptions in ecology can not adequately be mitigated at micro (community level)

- Overemphasis on community-based/self-help DM is likely to bail out state from its prime responsibility to provide security to its citizens against disaster risk
  - Case of CRBIC, Narmda, Motorways, LBORD etc
Communities are first respondents ‘by default’, while state is first respondent ‘by design’.

Non-state actors can’t reach out to each village/community; they can go for ‘show-case’ demonstrations.

Community can’t take the responsibility of the ‘deeds’ they have not done.

Who control natural resources? Controller has to manage!

If community has to manage it has to have control over natural resources.
Alternatives:
Decentralization and Public Action

- Decentralization of power, authority and responsibility
  - Responsiveness
  - Planning
  - Resource Mobilisation
  - Implementation
  - Monitoring
  - Replication
Rights-based and community-led public action for disaster risk reduction

- Participation
- Accessibility
- Accountability
- Equity
- Transparency
- Social Auditing
Conclusion

- Mainstreaming DDM by capitalizing on the ongoing decentralization drive in South Asia

- Strengthening community-led and rights-based disaster risk reduction