

International Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building of Urban Communities

10-14 of December 2012, Nagoya & Sendai, Japan
Organiser: United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD)

Background

The increasing occurrence of disasters such as typhoons, floods, landslides, mudslides, droughts, earthquake, tsunamis over the last decades shows us every time how natural and human-induced hazards and disasters are not only a major threat to individuals' lives and assets as well as collective equipments and facilities but also pose major challenges to sustainable development through the profound social, economic and environmental consequences they can have for countries, regions, cities and communities.

When they strike, disasters don't discriminate between industrialized and developing countries. Events like the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami remind us that developed countries are also exposed to high disaster risks, from which they may suffer substantial life and economic losses. The impacts, however, are often worse in developing countries —particularly in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which are highly exposed to global environmental challenges and to potentially intense natural disasters—, where weak human and institutional capacities and governance result in inappropriate land use planning and management, poorly designed, constructed and maintained infrastructures and buildings and environmental degradation. While there is no clear and indisputable connection between poverty and vulnerability, poverty is nevertheless an important factor that may increase the exposure and susceptibility to hazards. This is particularly the case in urban areas of developing countries, where rapid urbanization is happening without adequate policies and measures to control rapid urban expansion and where precarious economic conditions are prevailing.

Since the establishment of its Disaster Management Planning Programme in 1985, disaster management planning has been one of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development - UNCRD's main thematic areas of work to support efforts towards achieving sustainable regional development through research, capacity building activities and partnerships with national and local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academia and communities in developing countries for disaster risk reduction, enhancing communities' resilience and reduce their vulnerability to natural and human-induced hazards and disasters.

Over the years, the UNCRD Disaster Management Planning Programme has accumulated a strong long-standing track record of successful work on issues such as Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM), School Earthquake Safety Initiative (SESI), Housing Earthquake Safety Initiative (HESI), which also comprised building code implementation and developing guidelines for repairing, restoring and seismic retrofitting of core community buildings. Throughout its history, the Centre's Disaster Management Planning Programme has always promoted and nurtured a participatory, pro-poor, inclusive, gender-sensitive approach, in all the different activities and initiatives it has developed and undertaken in different contexts, as explained in *Implementing the HFA through Gendered CBDM*¹, which refers to such work carried out in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

After twelve years in Kobe, the Disaster Management Planning Unit has been reintegrated to the UNCRD Nagoya Office in 2011, where a new programme and new activities are being developed and undertaken by a new team. The new Programme is building upon this vast experience accumulated by Centre over the years and, adapting to the reality of the actual trend of urbanization happening in developing countries, it will further integrate disaster risk reduction in

¹ See: <http://www.hyogo.uncrd.or.jp/publication/pdf/Report/GCBDM09.pdf>

urban areas, with a particular focus on their slums and informal settlements which, at present, accommodate more than 90 per cent of the total slum dweller population worldwide.

To date, although various upgrading efforts are being made, very few are directly addressing the disasters risk and vulnerability of the communities living in those human settlements in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and are leading to the integration of pro-poor gender-sensitive risk and vulnerability reduction strategies and plans into the policies, codes, regulations, plans and programmes at national, regional and local levels.

As one of the first activities related to the new Disaster Management Planning Programme, UNCRD is organizing a workshop that will bring together different actors involved in disaster management with poor communities living in different human settlements around the world.

Participants

Fifteen (15) experienced professionals such as mid-level officials from local and national governments, experts and social workers from NGOs, CBOs working at national and sub-national (city/village/community) levels in disaster risk and vulnerability reduction and enhancing the resilience of poor communities of developing countries.

Dates

10 – 14 December 2012

Venue

Nagoya and Sendai (site visits), Japan

Objectives

The overall objective of the workshop is to support the establishment of a network of professionals, experts and representatives from governments, NGOs and CBOs of developing countries through training, including, lectures, presentations, site visits and group discussions, where participants will share their knowledge, experience and point of view and discuss about their eventual cooperation in partnership with UNCRD in developing pro-poor gender-sensitive strategies and plans for disaster risk and vulnerability reduction and resilience building of poor communities living in peri-urban and urban areas of their respective countries, with the aim of integrating those into national and sub-national policies and programmes and their effective implementation at all (national and sub-national, i.e., city, village and community) levels.

The specific objectives are:

- To share and discuss on a variety of experiences of and approaches, identify best practices, and build a common understanding of disaster issues and management in human settlements of developing countries;
- To provide training on disaster risk and vulnerability reduction and resilience building of communities against the impacts of natural and human-induced hazards and disasters as a means to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- To provide training on disaster-proof building and retrofitting and building techniques and systems;
- To present and discuss the draft document of the new Disaster Management Planning Programme;
- To share and learn from disaster management expertise and practice in Japan — including the on-going experience of the reconstruction efforts after the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami— at national, city, community and research institutions levels; and
- To develop further contact for establishing a collaboration with the International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS), Tohoku University;

The overall goal of the workshop is to facilitate the establishment of an international network of professionals, experts and representatives from governments, NGOs and CBOs of developing countries, working at national and sub-national (city/village/community) levels in disaster risk and vulnerability reduction and enhancing the resilience of poor communities of developing countries. Beyond providing an arena for discussing best practices and identifying practical solutions to particular critical DRR issues, the workshop aimed at initiating long term cooperation between the participants where, with the support of UNCRD, joint efforts would focus on developing and integrating into national and sub-national policies the most appropriate pro-poor gender-sensitive strategies and plans for disaster risk and vulnerability reduction and resilience building among poor communities living in peri-urban and urban areas of their respective countries.

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- To share and discuss a variety of experiences of and approaches, identify best practices, and build a common understanding of disaster issues and management in human settlements of developing countries;
- To provide training on disaster risk and vulnerability reduction and resilience building of communities against the impacts of natural and human-induced hazards and disasters as a means to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- To provide training on disaster-proof building and retrofitting and building techniques and systems;
- To present and discuss the new UNCRD Disaster Management Planning Programme;
- To share and learn from disaster management expertise and practice in Japan — including the on-going experience of the reconstruction efforts after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami— at national, city, community and research institutions levels,
- To widen UNCRD's global network for disaster risk reduction by developing new partnerships with governments, NGOs, CBOs, practitioners and academic and research institutions dealing with disaster issues (including the International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS), Tohoku University);

The material produced for the workshop will provide the basis for some future publications of the Centre. For instance, the *Regional Development Dialogue* - Spring 2013 issue will examine some of the themes explored during the workshop, for which a workshop participants will be invited to develop further the contribution they have prepared for the meeting, and turn those into articles under the guidance of the workshop facilitator, who will also be the Guest Editor of the RDD Spring 2013 issue.