



Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction June 20 & 21, 2005

Meeting Proceedings

Introduction

On June 20-21 a two-day meeting was held in Geneva, hosted by the UN Disaster Management Training Programme (UNDMTP) in collaboration with the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), the UN System Staff College (UN SSC) and the International Secretariat for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The meeting was facilitated by Mr. Marvin Weisbord and Ms. Sandra Janoff, co-founders of the Future Search Network. Twenty-three participants included academics, training/capacity building practitioners, technical/research personnel from international organizations, NGOs, UN agencies and donors.

The meeting provided a first time opportunity to convene a broad group of stakeholders working in various areas in disaster risk reduction (DRR) to discuss their respective work and to discuss the role of capacity building. Capacity building is a cross-cutting activity for disaster risk reduction, as noted in the Hyogo Framework for Action, which defines the strategic goals, priorities for action for disaster risk reduction for the next decade, 2005-2105.

Specifically, the purpose of the June meeting was to assess how to develop a common set of targets for capacity building towards which the different actors can work towards together. The premise of the meeting is that the recent World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) and resulting HFA provides us with an opportunity that is unprecedented. How can we take advantage of that to enrich our own respective work and our collective efforts as they relate to building national capacity for reducing disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries?

The meeting concluded with unanimous agreement on the following:

- Capacity development as an outcome of and instrument for change needs better articulation as to what it means as a cross-cutting activity, and as a focus within the five thematic priorities for action, as articulated in the HFA.
- The various actors working in capacity building for disaster risk reduction would significantly benefit from working more closely together and having a support mechanism(s) for this purpose. Currently there is a lack of opportunity for regular communication, exchange and sharing on our respective activities –resulting in too many divergent activities, bi-furcation of efforts and fragmented directions.
- Future Search is a planning method that can assist the various actors working in DRR to define a common set of priorities for action for working together, serving as the basis for developing targets and indicators, and a monitoring strategy.

Meeting Overview: Day One

The meeting opened with welcome remarks from Andrew Maskrey, Team Leader, Disaster Reduction Unit of BCPR, and from Salvano Briceno, Director, ISDR Secretariat. Both emphasized the critical link of human and institutional capacity to the achievement of the goal and targets of the HFA, and the need to link together the capacity building elements to make the HFA work. All have something to bring to the table –what is missing is to be able to make a difference by bringing together all the efforts that people are working on individually.

Joanne Burke, the DMTP Coordinator, provided an overview on the rationale for and the evolution of the concept of the meeting. Initially, this idea started off as a meeting for training practitioners to exchange information on their activities and to discuss lessons learned. This broadened into a need to a) better articulate what is meant by capacity building as a cross-cutting element of the HFA and b) set some targets for the decade related to capacity building/development.

Capacity building requires a broader focus than just training to include the following:

1. Human resource development – the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively.
2. Organization development which focuses on the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, within organizations and sectors (public, private and community).
3. The creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal framework development, making legal and regulatory changes to enable organizations, institutions and agencies at all levels and in all sectors to enhance their capacities. *Source: The Urban Capacity Building Network on the Global Development Research Center (GDRC).*

DMTP further noted that since the topic of capacity building in and of itself is quite broad, any exercise to set common targets would therefore require the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, representative of the levels and actors working in disaster risk reduction, at the international, regional and national levels. One way for the various actors to come together to define a set of common priority targets for capacity building could be through Future Search which could help to develop an implementation plan for the capacity building element of the HFA. This, in turn, led DMTP to develop a project concept and proposal: Capacity Building for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Hyogo Framework and to identify a set of collaborating partners for the project that includes BCPR, UNSSC and ISDR.

With that background, DMTP further clarified that this meeting was the opportunity to launch the project and that the task for this two day meeting was for this group to frame the potential opportunity/need/task around which a global, Future Search meeting could be planned for late 2005, hosted by UNSSC at their facilities in Turin, Italy. DMTP concluded with a review of the meeting agenda and process, and explanation on how this meeting would differ from other more information exchange type meetings. (Annex I: Meeting Agenda)

A short presentation by Paola Albrito of ISDR set the context for the HFA, outlining the key focus and achievements of the International Decade for Disaster Risk Reduction to the current HFA, which resulted from the recent World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Kobe, Japan, in January 2005. The presentation provided an overview of the five priorities for action in the HFA:

- Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national priority with a strong institutional base for implementation.
- Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.
- Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.

- Reduce the underlying risk factors.
- Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response.

Note was made to the effect that the HFA focuses mainly on the national dimension, with support from bi-lateral, multi-lateral and international organizations. Discussion then focused on the need for and process for developing national programmes and platforms, the process for establishing targets and indicators to measure and monitor progress, and how to promote community engagement. (Annex II: Summary of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-15)

The remainder of the morning of day one participants worked in plenary and in small groups to discuss different topics and issues related to having a common framework for capacity building and what an action plan would look like. Key points generated from the discussions included:

- If we already have the HFA –is there a need for another framework for capacity building?
- Given the diversity in the room –do we have enough in common/enough of a common thread to work on this? Do we need each other? Are we interdependent enough to do something together?
- We don't want a common framework that will appear to present a monopoly by one agency or that will appear to be a straightjacket. It is more important to have people engaged around a common goal, not a framework.
- When we talk about capacity building –whose capacity are we talking about and for what purpose?
- The range of diversity in terms of scope and scale is so broad – each national context is so different - people need to decide what is best for their context. One centralized approach or standardized framework is not possible or desired.
- Is the need to build capacity in this room – something that will help the different people involved have a common language, have a forum that will support them to exchange and communicate by sharing information on what each other is doing –is this what is needed? This community lacks a platform for sharing information on what works – there is already so much that has been produced – how do we make knowledge connections to fit in with what already exists? We need to circulate lessons learned, experiences, etc.
- The need is not to standardize what is being done –but rather to bring together the different actors so they can see what they have and then from there start to work with a common language. We can all learn from one another –what is needed is to create a space for diversity.
- The UN system's Common Country Assessment is a good example of the benefits of having a common process and tool for assessing the situation in a country, rather than each UN agency doing its own thing. Each individual agency still does its own analysis and has its own unique programme, but there is a common UN position for the country. A common framework can serve to provide a broad understanding of where we are going.
- If we were successful in achieving a set of targets for capacity building for the future, what would we want to say? How would we know it?

The afternoon of day one focused on mapping the various capacity building activities that the group is engaged in, which provided a rich array of examples of the materials, resources and expertise that already exists and is at our disposal. Of particular interest was the diverse range of subject matter/technical content areas that were the focus for capacity building. and the use of innovative approaches for this purpose including academic programs, south-south partnerships, school education curricula, independent learning/self-study, etc. Note was made on the fact that the activities listed were more focused on human resource development, not much on institutional development and/or building capacity for an enabling environment. Also, many of the activities were perceived to be donor or opportunity driven, after a disaster occurs.

A presentation on Future Search explained the theory of the meeting and how the process works. Future Search follows tested principles derived from six decades of research and experimentation with what it takes to enable people to act cooperatively without having to defend or sell their own

agenda or give up cherished values. The first principle involves “getting the whole system in the room” ... meaning people with authority, resources, expertise, information and need. The second involves putting the focal task/issue into a global perspective, helping each person to see a bigger picture than usual. The third requires seeking common ground and desirable futures, while treating problems and conflicts as information, not action items. The fourth asks people to manage their own small groups. The meeting consists of five inter-related sessions labeled: Past, Present, Future, Common Ground, and Action ... resulting in a commonly agreed to set of priorities for action, along with an implementation strategy and accountability. Follow-up actions to monitor progress, maintain momentum and motivation can take the form of meetings, newsletters, web-based networking, etc. (Annex III. What is Future Search?)

The two participants in the group with experience in future search highlighted the importance of having the right stakeholders attend the meeting and the need for follow through and funds to implement the various action priorities. The first day did not result in any conclusive decision on a possible task around which a global Future Search meeting could be organized.

Meeting Overview: Day Two

Day two commenced with an acknowledgement that day one did not result in any conclusive agreement about the way forward, and examined some of the reasons for that. DMTP made a few clarifying points about the project and the purpose for this meeting.

- 1) The purpose of this June meeting was to identify an area of common need/interest for which a global Future Search meeting could be organized, resulting in some specific targets/priorities for action for the next decade.
- 2) The purpose of the global meeting is not to set targets/priorities for action on who should be trained in what, who needs to do what in capacity building, or the level at which capacity building efforts should be focused. This is up to the countries to decide and will directly relate to their national priorities and strategies vis a vis the expected outcome of the HFA.
- 3) The focus for the common targets will likely be more process oriented, related to a) capacity building approaches that we, the actors, want to use/ give more emphasis to (e.g. south-south cooperation, common terminology, tools for measuring impact), and b) how we, the various actors, can best work together – partnerships, alliances, forums for exchange, etc.
- 4) Based on the outcomes of the discussion on day one, the common need appears to be how the various actors working in disaster risk reduction can better harmonize how they work together and learn from one another’s experiences.
- 5) DMTP’s views that its role is to serve as the catalyst for the global meeting and to help with follow-up support, it is up to the group to determine what should be the task/the need for the global meeting.

An illustrative task for a global Future Search conference was presented by the two Future Search facilitators: Creating a Global Support Network Linking Capacity Building Providers for Risk/Vulnerability Reduction at the National, Regional and International Levels. Participants were then divided into four small groups to discuss this meeting purpose and what it would mean in terms of a global meeting, who should attend, etc. The consensus of three of the four groups was to go forward with a global Future Search meeting, citing the potential for tremendous enthusiasm that could come out of having the “whole system” in the room. Creation of a global support network may or may not be the starting or end point – connection between the different cross-cutting compartments that are now enclosed in the five priorities is what is needed, and linkages between existing networks at the different levels. (Annex IV: Group Reports). The remainder of day two was devoted to discussion on the formation of a planning group and its membership, date for a follow-up meeting, financing for the global meeting, and the review of a video on a Future Search meeting.

Decisions, Conclusions and Next Steps

- DMTP and its partners have a proposal for a project through December 2006 which calls for a second planning meeting, a global Future Search meeting in December 2005, and one year of follow-up support/activities. DMTP will revise the proposal, based on the results of this first meeting.
- DMTP and its partners will pursue joint resource mobilization activities for the project and for the Global Meeting (tentative December 11-14, 2005, Turin, Italy).
- A second planning meeting will be held in Geneva September 27-28. The purpose of this meeting will be to clarify and further define the specific task and agenda for the global meeting including meeting outcomes, identify the stakeholder groups and individuals to attend, develop a work plan and timeline, etc.
- One participant from the Benfield Hazard Research Center offered to document the global meeting; University of Wisconsin will help support web-conferencing to facilitate the planning process.

Annex I

UN Disaster Management Training Programme Planning Meeting Agenda 20, 21 June 2005

International Environment House II
11-13 Chemin des Anemones
Chatelaine, Geneva
Conference Room Rhin
09:00 – 17:30 p.m.

Facilitated by Sandra Janoff, Ph.D. and Marvin Weisbord Future Search Associates

- Welcome: Mr. James Rawley, Deputy Director, BCPR
Mr. Salvano Briceno, Director - ISDR
- Introductions
- Review of meeting purpose, agenda, logistics - DMTP
- Status update on disaster risk reduction and the HFA - ISDR.
- Capacity building as a focus of and cross-cutting activity in disaster risk reduction and the need for a common framework - DMTP.
- Why Future Search?
Origin, theory, principles, methodology that make this meeting different from other meetings.
What conditions will ensure success? - Future Search Consultants.
- Future Search experience and Video
- Planning the Global Meeting
 - Framing the task for the global meeting
 - Identifying Stakeholders
 - Invitation Process (who and how to reach participants)
 - Time Frames, Documenting and Communicating Outcomes
 - Financing of the global meeting
 - Dates, logistics, site, materials, etc.
 - Follow-up to the global meeting
 - Next Steps

Annex II Summary of the Hyogo Framework for Action



SUMMARY of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (HFA)

Expected outcome, strategic goals and priorities for action 2005-2015

