



UNDP Support to Institutional and Legislative Systems for Disaster Risk Management

The links between good governance and risk management have been widely acknowledged. Good governance is not only an important prerequisite for disaster risk management, but institutional and legislative systems for disaster risk management are by definition part of governance structures and systems and should be guided by the same principles. The need to further strengthen institutional capacities for disaster risk management (DRM), however, remains a crucial challenge in many countries, despite considerable progress achieved to date.

A Global UNDP Review

UNDP has the mandate to assist its programme countries in strengthening and developing national capacities for managing disaster risk in all its dimensions. This includes programming and policy advice to develop suitable institutional and legislative systems (ILS) at the national and local levels; ensuring that risk considerations are factored into development programmes in other practice areas such as decentralization, poverty reduction and the environment; developing early warning and preparedness measures and supporting post-disaster recovery in a way that reduces future risks.

In most countries, embedding disaster risk management at the national and local level has been a process that requires years of sustained support and commitment from a variety of stakeholders. The experiences of UNDP go back to the early 1990s and a recent review of the support UNDP has provided to the strengthening of institutional and legislative systems for DRM has highlighted a number of good practices and lessons learned. The review was conducted over a period of three months in nineteen countries covering all regions with the overall aim to identify opportunities for UNDP to strengthen its future support services. A global analysis methodology was especially developed for this review and provided consistency for data collection and analysis across all regions.

General Findings

Progress has been made in generating political commitment and elevating DRM as a policy priority, particularly in those countries which embarked in the establishment of institutional foundations for disaster risk management, such as legislation, policies, plans, national consultative bodies and DRM agencies.

Sustained commitment and follow-up has usually been contingent upon a tradition and capacity in decentralized governance, a well and informed public and the engagement of key actors, such as mayors of larger municipalities that have taken the DRM agenda on board.

Budgetary allocations for DRM were found to be low in most countries and funding for preparedness and response outweighed allocations to risk reduction considerably even in countries with a more risk reduction oriented agenda. In most countries where the analysis was conducted, the "paradigm shift" from disaster management to risk management or reduction has not yet happened.

Weak central information systems were indicative of a need to further strengthen multi-sector approaches and coordination. Much also depended on the institutional machinery that stimulates or discourages communication and cooperation across individual organizations and agencies. When strengthening ILS for DRM it is, therefore, important to work not only with one counterpart agency, but to stimulate the participation of other stakeholders at various levels.

Progress in terms of enforcing accountability for disaster loss and DRM related legislation has been slow. This is an area that requires capacities for implementation at the local level, which is particularly deficient outside the larger urban conglomerations. In addition, governments find it increasingly difficult to address risks that are configured by the informality of housing construction and livelihood patterns.

NGOs were found to be amongst the most active to establish dialogue with communities at high risk. Local level risk reduction initiatives, however, remained mostly scattered and small-scale, without transferring knowledge, practices and policy-worthy findings to other governance levels.

UNDP Contributions and Lessons Learned

In some countries, UNDP programmes have helped to establish the fundamental “institutional machinery” for DRM and played a leading role in strengthening ILS. In others, UNDP was one actor amongst others, partnering with UN, international and regional organizations, as well as bilateral donors or NGOs.

A majority of UNDP DRM programs have had a national level focus, but in some cases also regional approaches have been pursued, taking advantage of the fact that participating countries share similar hazards and vulnerabilities as well as capacities (i.e. the Caribbean and the Pacific Island Countries). The scope, depth and character of UNDP involvement varied considerably from country to country sometimes only focusing on one particular aspect such as developing a legislation, or preparedness and response capacities; and other times following a holistic risk reduction approach.

DRM is not a narrowly technical task and ILS strengthening requires systematic advocacy and lobbying often at the highest political level. The UN Resident Coordinators / UNDP Resident Representatives have, thus, an important role to play in sensitising national authorities on the importance of disaster risk reduction as part of their development and good governance agendas. In some countries, the United Nations Disaster Management Teams (UNDMT's), under the umbrella of the Resident Coordinator, have proven to be an asset in generating and sustaining interest in DRM amongst

key agencies, identifying opportunities for partnerships and facilitating a dialogue with the government.

The review found that UNDP DRM programming should harmonize with and link its risk reduction objectives more strongly with UNDP development programmes such as local governance, poverty reduction, security sector reform and environment.

Programmes that take DRM to intermediate and local levels of government produced more sustainable results, particularly when dialogue between national and local governments could be established and lessons were mainstreamed into national policy and programming.

Many ILS programmes suffered from a narrow time horizon, which did not allow the absorption of new approaches to DRM. Thus the creation of funding windows is required that appreciate the developmental and process nature of DRM initiatives and capacity building. UNDP could play an important role in raising donor awareness on these issues.

Next Steps

UNDP will build on the learning process generated with this review, with the following activities:

- Development of policy and implementation guidelines capturing good practice and lessons learned for dissemination within UNDP and beyond.

- Feed-back of review findings into ongoing ILS programmes supported by UNDP.

- Design of a training module on participatory design, implementation and monitoring of ILS programmes.

For more information

Web site: <http://www.undp.org/bcpr>

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