Disaster Risk Reduction, Governance & Mainstreaming

"There is now international acknowledgement that efforts to reduce disaster risks must be systematically integrated into policies, plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction... Sustainable development, poverty reduction, good governance and disaster risk reduction are mutually supportive objectives and in order to meet the challenges ahead, accelerated efforts must be made."
- Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015.

Governance is the umbrella under which disaster risk reduction takes place. The existence of public awareness, political will and sufficient capacity are key to making disaster risk reduction (DRR) an underlying principle in all relevant development sectors. With its significant experience in DRR, democratic governance, and development, UNDP is taking forward the practical and conceptual work on DRR governance and mainstreaming.

DRR AND GOVERNANCE

Natural hazards on their own do not result in disaster. Rather, it is the vulnerability of populations in countries that has a direct bearing on levels of disaster. Supportive governance is necessary to ensure coping-capacities in societies. Governance influences the way in which national and sub-national actors (including governments, parliamentarians, public servants, the media, the private sector, and civil society organizations) are willing and able to coordinate their actions to manage and reduce disaster-related risk.

Sufficient public awareness to recognize and address risk, coupled with the political will to set policy and allocate appropriate resources, is key. Equally critical is the need for processes institutions with sufficient managerial and coordination capacity to and manage and integrate the efforts of relevant sectors and account for vulnerable and poor communities. Such capacity is ultimately dependent upon the human, social, physical, economic and environmental capital of a society.

Principles of good governance include broad-participation, transparency, accountability, efficiency and responsiveness. All are as important for DRR as they are for development at large. A central criterion of good governance — namely, the principle of ensuring that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decisions about the allocation of resources affecting them — is essential for effective DRR and sustainable disaster recovery.

Mainstreaming of DRR is a governance process enabling the systematic integration of DRR concerns into all relevant development spheres. In other words, responsive, accountable, transparent and efficient governance structures underwrite the environment where DRR can be institutionalized as an underlying principle of sustainable development. Therefore, building resilient communities in disaster-prone countries requires that: a) underlying risk factors are continuously considered in all relevant sectors; and b) risk reduction standards and measures are an integral part of the planning and delivery of core development services and processes, including education, environment, and health.

What is Governance?

Governance, as defined by UNDP, is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Governance encompasses, but also transcends, government. It encompasses all relevant groups, including the private sector and civil society organizations.

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Despite the prevailing recognition that good governance and DRR are mutually supportive objectives, the international community's understanding of the linkage is still at a nascent stage. As a first crucial step, UNDP undertook a global review of its support to institutional and legislative systems for DRR in 2007. The review discovered that "although increasingly risk management and reduction is mentioned in governmental development policies, plans and strategies…it is not treated as a truly multisectoral concern." Similarly, the summary report of the 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction concluded that "governance arrangements for disaster risk reduction in many countries do not facilitate the integration of risk considerations into development. In general, the institutional and legislative arrangements for disaster risk reduction are weakly connected to development sectors."

Many disaster-prone countries have not embraced mainstreaming DRR concerns into development practices as an underlying principle. The failure to prioritize DRR and the resulting absence of its inclusion in country development policies, planning and implementation leads to new or heightened patterns of disaster risk, and ultimately an increased risk of the loss of lives and livelihoods. Working with approximately 100 disaster-prone developing countries in a multiplicity of contexts, UNDP is in a unique position to advance the agenda of these important areas.

UNDP ROLE

As one of the largest operational development agencies, with a pivotal role in co-ordinating the UN system at country level, coupled with its wealth of experience in DRR, governance and mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues (for example, gender and HIV/AIDS), UNDP has exceptional capacity and an important responsibility to take forward the practical and conceptual work on the links between DRR, governance, mainstreaming and development. Within UNDP's crisis prevention and recovery practice area, DRR is already an underlying principle for all activities associated with disaster response, recovery, preparedness and mitigation. Furthermore, UNDP supports its national and local partners to incorporate DRR into key development sectors and strategic development programming. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, UNDP has provided technical assistance in integrating DRR into the ongoing decentralization process. In Georgia, UNDP has successfully lobbied for the incorporation of DRR in the five-year regional development strategy for the Shida Kartli region. In India and Pakistan, UNDP has supported the training of hundreds of engineers, masons and architects on disaster resistant construction technology, while UNDP Mexico has strategically combined ecosystem recovery and DRR efforts.

UNDP's work on DRR, governance and mainstreaming is coordinated under the Global Mainstreaming Initiative (GMI), within UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR). The purpose of this initiative is to undertake work that is strongly country-oriented, and that helps UNDP to advance its understanding of and practice in the governance dimensions for DRR (including national level organizational arrangements, policy, strategies and legislation); and integration of DRR into development. Furthermore, GMI supports the incorporation of risk reduction concerns as integral dimensions of policies, programmes and strategies from UNDP and its partners, and has developed a practical framework giving clear guidance on how, systematically and strategically, to mainstream DRR at the national level.

The GMI DRR mainstreaming framework is comprised of five interconnected spheres of engagement.

Key GMI activities include providing technical and advisory services to UN country offices and government counterparts on mainstreaming and governance for DRR; supporting UN strategic planning to better integrate DRR in risk-prone countries; and building capacities to integrate DRR at the national level through the development of tools, such as specialist training packages and practical case studies; integrating DRR into other UNDP priority areas (like energy and environment, poverty reduction and democratic governance), as well as other central cross-cutting issues, including climate change and gender; promoting harmonization of global efforts on mainstreaming and governance; and exploring the complex relationship between disasters and conflict.

UNDP SUPPORT SERVICES

DRR governance and mainstreaming interventions have become an integral part of the majority of UNDP DRR programmes and projects. Activities implemented by UNDP include:

Supporting DRR policy, legal and regulatory framework development and reform

Policies, laws and regulations provide the foundation upon which strategies can be built to integrate risk reduction into development practice. UNDP provides technical assistance for the establishment of policy, legal and regulatory frameworks; the enforcement and incentive/disincentive procedures based on DRR legislation and policy; the preparation of national and local action plans to mainstream decentralized DRR into the development process; and the review, revision and updating process established for DRR policy, legal and regulatory framework improvement.

Integrating decentralized DRR into local-level development

Some DRR tasks are best centralized, and others can be devolved to the local level. Participation, monitoring and mediation are best undertaken at the local level and in this way decentralization can – depending on the context – effectively support DRR objectives. UNDP provides technical support for the integration of DRR into the national decentralization framework; public awareness campaigns that are specific to local needs and are locally owned or managed; and the preparation of detailed and costed proposals to extend the mandate and coverage of local disaster information centres.

Conducting DRR analysis

Effective capacity development, advocacy and programming require thorough analysis. UNDP supports diverse analyses, such as sectoral policy papers on a country's existing disaster-related laws (and suggested revisions thereof); disaster risk management financing analysis, covering public sector spending for DRR, relief and response; and assessment for identifying key gaps in DRR capacity, which provides the basis for incorporating relevant DRR activities into budgeted projects of development plans at the appropriate level.

DRR advocacy, awareness and education

Public awareness and advocacy activities are central to UNDP's DRR work. With its national and local partners, UNDP supports the organization of seminars with parliamentarians, media and civil society about allocating funds for DRR and operationalizing local disaster management agencies; the establishment of mechanisms to integrate training sessions on DRR as part of official training programmes for senior and middle-level officials of national and provincial governments and agencies; and the integration of DRR knowledge within existing primary and secondary educational programmes like hazard-based media programmes and private sector disaster risk public awareness programmes.

Through teachings at school children can learn to take an active role in disaster risk reduction (© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe).

Establishing DRR partnerships and networks

DRR is a complex cross-cutting issue that requires an interdisciplinary and multi-level approach, bringing together knowledge, skills and resources of different stakeholders. UNDP provides assistance to establishing national and local platforms for disaster risk management; establishing partnership and knowledge-sharing networks for DRR in development; and developing innovative resource mobilization strategies, such as public-private partnerships.

UNDP IN ACTION

Indonesia

Indonesia broke new ground on DRR in 2007 with the passing of Disaster Management Law 24/2007, affording Indonesian citizens individual rights to protection from and during disasters. This law represents an achievement for the Indonesian Society for Disaster Management (MPBI), a national organization supported by UNDP Indonesia. MPBI played a critical role in ensuring that the provisions of the Disaster Management Law were concrete enough to make DRR a reality.

Most importantly, this law has 'teeth'. It lists penalties in the form of substantial fines and jail sentences applicable to individuals and organizations, including those of the government and private sector, for failing to abide by the law. The law includes specific language on direct disaster protection and response services in disasters, and outlines the rights of individuals to information, education and training on DRR. The law also called for the establishment of a new national disaster management agency and for the creation of provincial disaster management agencies, allowing for the active participation of community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and indigenous groups.

With the passing of this law, the government made DRR one of its nine national development priorities and substantially increased funding for this issue. In 2008, USD 150 million was allocated for pre-disaster mitigation, a significant increase from the USD 16 million approved the year before. UNDP continues to support the Government of Indonesia through various programmes at national and provincial levels to integrate the Disaster Management Law principles into community development activities and to address the structural causes of disasters.

India

The process of integrating DRR considerations into Indian school curriculae began in 2003. The central Board for Secondary Education was first to introduce DRR into the schools' syllabi, in social sciences for grades 8, 9 and 10. A committee of teachers, UNDP personnel and academics designed and developed the contents of textbooks, which include chapters on hazards, the development of preparedness and response plans, search and rescue, first-aid and mock drills in schools. This was accompanied by training sessions for teachers to enhance their knowledge of disaster management and provide them with skills to carry out the drills. Care was taken to ensure that the DRR information added to the syllabus was gender-sensitive. The teacher training also included information on gender issues in DRR. As a next step, DRR was incorporated into the secondary school curriculum.

At the local level, in the Tiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu, UNDP India has supported puppet shows as a way of raising schoolchildren's awareness. Gender-sensitive scripts carefully avoid reinforcement of stereotypes, and teach audiences that both men and women can play important roles in DRR.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.undp.org/cpr/we_do/integrating_risk.shtml
www.preventionweb.net
www.undp.org/cpr/disred/documents/wedo/ils/ils_esummary.pdf