Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction

Introduction

There has been a growing recognition that "disasters are both a cause and a product of failed development" (UNP 2004). Disaster risks are inherent in the environment and geographic conditions. It emanates from the vulnerabilities created through life style and the development process. Also the development practitioners have noted that "With every disaster, there is a significant impact on various sectors of development like agriculture, housing, health, education and infrastructure. This results in a serious social and economic setback to the development and particularly the poverty reduction priorities of the developing countries, and poses a threat for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)... On the other hand, the process of development, and the kind of development choices made in many countries, sometimes creates disaster risk" (Rego, L. & Roy, A. S. 2007). Therefore, it has been now internationally acknowledged "that efforts to reduce disaster risks must be systematically integrated into policies, plans and programmes for sustainable development and poverty reduction..." (HFA 2005).

	Economic Development	Social Development
Disaster limits development	Destruction of fixed assets. Loss of production capacity, market access or material inputs. Damage to transport, communications or energy infrastructure. Erosion of livelihoods, savings and physical capital.	Destruction of health or education infrastructure and personnel. Death, disablement or migration of key social actors leading to an erosion of social capital.
Development causes	Unsustainable development practices that create wealth for some at the expense of unsafe working or living conditions for others or degrade the environment.	Development paths generating cultural norms that promote social isolation or political exclusion.
Development reduces disaster risk	Access to adequate drinking water, food, waste management and a secure dwelling increases people's resiliency. Trade and technology can reduce poverty. Investing in financial mechanisms and social security can cushion against vulnerability.	Building community cohesion, recognizing excluded individuals or social groups (such as women), and providing opportunities for greater involvement in decision-making, enhanced educational and health capacity increases resiliency.

|Source: Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development, 2004|

Copied from ADPC 2010, Mainstreaming Disaster Risk

Key Elements of Mainstreaming Disaster risk Reduction

One of the three principle strategic goals of HFA is "The more effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming at all levels, with a special emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and vulnerability reduction." Essentially, it refers to "incorporating the key principles of disaster risk reduction (DRR) into development goals, governance arrangements, policies and practice (ADPC 201); and ensuring that the interventions
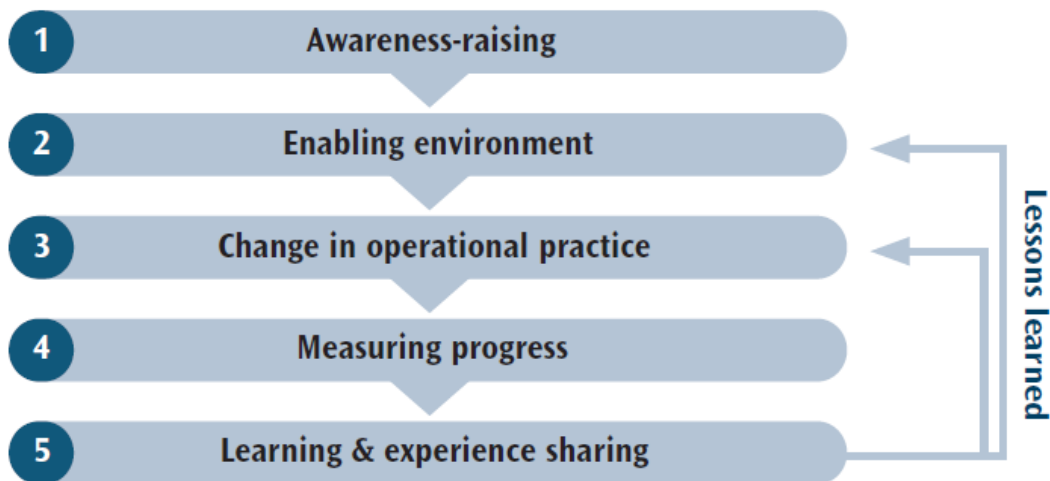
- Never induce any additional risk to the people; for example: infrastructure or road construction will not create water logging increase prevalence of flood;

- Sustain and protect the accumulated gains despite the occurrence of disaster; for example, health services, educational activities or communication will continue to function during flood time;

- Contribute to reducing disaster risks of the communities; for example, infrastructure are built in a way that helps evacuation and sheltering people during a hazard (cyclone, flood, earthquake or fire incidence) and minimize human causalities.

"On one hand, mainstreaming requires the analysis of how potential hazard events could affect the performance of policies, programs and projects, and on the other hand, it needs to look at the impact of the same policies, programs and projects on vulnerability to hazards. Results from the analyses should lead to risk sensitive development, which is now widely recognized as critical to achieving sustainable development. Effective mainstreaming results in DRR being embedded in the day-to-day operations of national and local organizations, in various sectors, with sufficient resources – human, financial, technical, material, information – allocated to managing the risks" (ADPC 201).

Steps to Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction

The traditional system of disaster management concentrates on providing relief and response as quickly as possible and preventing further loss of life and damage. Naturally, this is seen as responsibility of emergency specialist (ADPC 2010), and done by temporally suspending the development initiatives. Disaster risk reduction however demands for proactive involvement of the development planners and practitioners in understanding and mitigating disaster risks of the communities. The building blocks for mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction include the followings.

Figure 1 Steps to mainstreaming

Source: Adapted from Benson and Twigg (2007)

- **Raising Awareness and Understanding –** Awareness-raising is required to secure a solid appreciation and understanding of the relevance of disaster risk reduction to sustainable development and poverty reduction. It should be through developing a solid, rigorous body of evidence on hazard mapping and physical exposure, on disaster losses, on the socio-economic impact of disasters at national and community levels, and on the scope for enhanced resilience. This body of evidence is crucial to establish the case for proactive disaster risk management and to develop appropriately risk-sensitive development policies and initiatives.

- **Legislative Arrangements –** it provides a legal framework that empowers various agencies new responsibilities risk reduction as well holds them to account. It also provides policy framework around which disaster risk management strategies can be developed. Without a comprehensive and binding legal directive the government departments and the bureaucracies are unlikely to undertake disaster risk reduction initiatives (Britton, 2006)."

- **Disaster Risk Management Strategy –** a comprehensive disaster risk management strategy is required to implement the legislative framework and to provide guidance for sector specific disaster risk reduction plans. Individual disaster risk reduction actions and programs need to be located within this strategy, rather than treated as discrete, individual measures. Also, this strategy is essential for coordinating and monitoring progress of mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in sector specific development interventions.

- **Institutional Arrangements –** disaster risk reduction is a crosscutting issue that needs to be 'owned' by all government agencies rather than by a single department. However, an overarching national agency is required to provide leadership, determine broad disaster risk management policies and strategies, advocate for the inclusion of disaster risk reduction concerns in broader development policies, strategies and individual initiatives, actively engage a wide range of government agencies in their implementation, define responsibilities at different levels of government, coordinate this multi-sector, multitier engagement and monitor and evaluate progress. The institutional structure should strengthen the horizontal and vertical integration of DRR between different levels of government, between various line agencies, between other stakeholders (civil society, private sector, academia, etc.) and between neighbouring localities.

- **Stakeholders' Capacity –** understandably, personnel at different levels in various agencies would require relevant skills as well appropriate and effective tools to pursue mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in their respective work. Government officials and other stakeholders may need training on disaster related issue and skills related to good governance, coordination and communication.

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