

Successful Models of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status:
Best Practices on Disaster Risk Reduction

By

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Disclaimer

This research paper is conducted by HyeerYang Heather Do, currently working towards completing her Master's degree in Public Administration in International Development at Tsinghua University in Beijing, China.

The research was conducted in the context of an internship with the NGO Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations, or any of its subsidiary bodies or the governments represented. They are solely from HyeerYang Heather Do.

Any questions or suggestions should therefore be discussed or addressed to the author.

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Table of Contents

Disclaimer	ii
Acknowledgments	ii
About the Author	ii
Acronyms	iv
Introduction	1
<i>United Nations and Hyogo Framework for Action</i>	1
<i>The Importance of Non-governmental Organizations role in DRR</i>	3
<i>Objective</i>	4
<i>Methodology</i>	4
Models	5
<i>Partnership</i>	6
<i>Community Participation</i>	6
<i>Inclusive Participation</i>	7
<i>Capacity Building</i>	7
<i>Education & Public Awareness</i>	8
Projects	8
<i>Partnership between local and International NGOs</i>	8
<i>Multi-agency Communication & Information Sharing</i>	10
<i>Involvement of Government Partnership</i>	10
<i>Inclusion of Vulnerable Communities</i>	11
<i>Capacity Building</i>	12
<i>Education and Awareness</i>	12
Recommendations & Discussion	13
<i>Stronger Partnership with Local Government</i>	13
<i>Getting the Right Information Flowing at All Levels</i>	14
<i>Capacity Building in Multi-dimensional Approach</i>	14
<i>Look Beyond and Learn</i>	14
<i>Overall</i>	15
Conclusion	15
Appendix	17
<i>NGOs Cited</i>	17
References	18

Acronyms

CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGOs	International Non-governmental Organizations
ISRD	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations

Introduction

Disasters are the greatest challenge for development. When it strikes, it claims and destroys lives, livelihoods, property and infrastructure causing disruptions on a national scale, and sometimes, affecting international arena.

Amongst the different groups affected by the disasters, the poor suffer the most from the impact of disasters, and put them in even greater losses in such devastation. Moreover, the upheaval progress made in poverty alleviation can be eradicated and development plans could be set back. Furthermore, the experience of disasters worldwide, even in developed countries have shown that the poorest are affected worst by a disaster as they often live in the highest risk areas, are less able to protect themselves in anticipation of a disaster and even less able to recover afterwards.

Fortunately, disasters are not inevitable. With better support, a disaster can be averted or its impacts reduced to limit loss and disruption. Ultimately, the most modern paradigm in disaster management aims to reduce the impact of disasters with the purpose of minimizing vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society in order to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of hazards and to facilitate sustainable development, disaster risk reduction (DRR).

The DRR is a complex process consisting of political, technical, participatory, and resource mobilization components. Therefore, DRR requires collective wisdom and efforts from national policy and decision makers from various government sectors and from representatives from civil society, including academic institutions, the private sector, and the media (UN/ISDR, 2004).

DRR is a cross-cutting and development issue that is an integral part of sustainable development. Therefore, it is an important element for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Achieving the MDGs in a sustainable manner requires addressing natural hazard risk and vulnerability into development plans.

United Nations and Hyogo Framework for Action

The United Nations system is working to support globally to reduce community vulnerability and build resilient nations. The Economic and Social Council of the United

Nations (ECOSOC)¹ endorsed the founding documents of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction: the Geneva Mandate and "Strategy for A SAFER WORLD in the 21st CENTURY: Disaster and Risk Reduction" in 1999 (99/63). International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) was considered under ECOSOC agenda item on Economic and environmental questions until 2001.

ECOSOC Resolution E/2001/35 on ISDR reiterated the resolution 1999/63 of 30 July 1999 entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction: successor arrangements", and recognized the ISDR as the international platform for disaster reduction issues, and urged the international community to provide the necessary resources to the ISDR in order to promote the dissemination of the disaster reduction message in view of a successful implementation of the ISDR.²

Even though ISDR is not formally discussed at the ECOSOC, related issues are considered in the humanitarian segment of the ECOSOC, and there are numerous ECOSOC Functional Commissions which are relevant to disaster risk reduction: United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, and ECOSOC Regional Commissions.

They have adopted the themes of disaster management and vulnerability to be reviewed. Risk management and vulnerability have also been examined in the context of other thematic clusters of CSD, such as water, sanitation, human settlements and drought and desertification. Poverty eradication, protecting and managing the natural resource base, sustainable development are all very relevant to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) (2005-2015).

The HFA was set up by the United Nations for 'the substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries'. It prioritizes DRR at local and national level and the establishment of strong and functional institutions to manage disasters (UNISDR, 2005). The action plan explicitly identifies the assessment of disaster risks, early warning systems, enhancement of community resilience capacity, reduction of hazards and risks, and preparedness strategies and activities

¹ ECOSOC coordinates economic, social, and related work of the fourteen United Nations specialized agencies, functional commissions and five regional commissions. It serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system.

² UNISDR website. <<http://www.unisdr.org>>

at all levels.

The HFA recognizes the role of local level actions in reducing disaster risks and suggest the institutional arrangements that could help enable this action (UNISDR, 2005). In many countries appropriate national policies and strategies recognize community level actions on DRR and include provisions for the integration of local disaster management plans into development planning.

The Importance of Non-governmental Organizations role in DRR

Thousands of civil society organizations (CSOs) throughout the world at the global, regional, and country levels bring attention to development planning. These CSOs include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, faith-based organizations, indigenous people movements, foundations and many others. CSOs play an important role in reaching the internationally agreed development goals set out in the United Nations agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals. Strong relationships among NGOs working in the fields of development facilitate and strengthen the contribution towards these goals and other important universal commitments.

Therefore, civil society is an essential partner for sustainable urban risk reduction. Experiences show that community-based approaches offer viable solutions for managing and reducing risks and ensuring sustainable development. CSOs have provided the indispensable link between public authorities and citizens, and are present in vulnerable areas before, during and after emergencies and crises. The range of support they provide includes, services to vulnerable groups, capacity building, community outreach, social mobilization, advocacy, and awareness raising regarding risk reduction, such as health and hygiene promotion and safety and resilience.

NGOs grow out of communities of specific interest, and they are the voice of that community and have the values and aspirations of that community embedded in their vision and working culture. NGOs have provided a framework or structure that has supported and encouraged the empowerment of those who have been unwell and used services to take charge of their own lives and become visible and included into ordinary neighborhoods and communities. Those that have done this well also understand the importance of strong partnerships.

A predominant view for risk reduction strategies to be truly effective in protecting lives and livelihoods is to be people-centered. The need to build on people's local knowledge

and cultural practices is to apply tools and approaches that people can easily understand and integrate into their lives. Conversely, disaster reduction using top-down government and institutional interventions alone are often considered insufficient as they tend to have a lower understanding of community dynamics, perceptions and needs, and ignore the potential of local knowledge and capacities. Thus, NGOs' involvement in DRR activities has proved beneficial for a number of reasons.

Objective

With a growing international acknowledgement about the importance of NGOs in DRR, this paper outlines a framework of successful models NGOs can follow with regards to disasters. These models are derived from the study of actual projects that are carried out by NGOs in consultative status³ with ECOSOC. It particularly looks into how different NGOs operate and work towards DRR, and how they reflect their broader development goal into their respective projects. The paper also provides some recommendations on how the United Nations can learn from these Civil Society experiences, and improve its work in partnership with multiple sectors at the global level.

Methodology

This research was conducted using primary and secondary sources. The initial selections of NGOs were done by utilizing the DESA integrated Civil Society Database⁴ and based on the disasters they were involved in. The details of the projects were obtained from the NGOs' website, quadrennial reports⁵, and other third party documents. UNISDR and other organizations that were devoted to the DRR were the source of the information as well as the government and United Nations documents. Due to time constraints, this paper is not based on a field study, which may have been more intriguing and depth and accurate if it is.

³ Consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) is a type of accreditation that gives NGOs access to meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies as well as the Human Rights Council. This framework is governed by ECOSOC resolution 1996/31. NGOs are granted Consultative status by the Council, following recommendations by the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations which is in charge of considering applications for status.

⁴ The integrated Civil Society Organizations (iCSO) System, developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), facilitates interactions between civil society organizations and DESA. The system provides online registration of general profiles for civil society organizations, including contacts, activities and meeting participation, facilitates the application procedure for consultative status with the ECOSOC, and assists accredited NGOs in submitting quadrennial reports and in designating representatives to the United Nations. <<http://esango.un.org/civilsociety/newLogin.do>>

⁵ A brief report of NGOs in General and Special consultative status with ECOSOC which is submitted to the Committee on NGOs, every fourth year, on their activities, in particular regarding their contribution to the work of the United Nations.

In evaluating the involvement of NGOs in the major disasters over the last decade, disasters were found both in developed and developing countries, but more than half of the disasters occurred in the South. This paper incorporates both local and international NGOs (INGOs), yet more INGOs are presented from the limitation on accessibility and availability of the information on the local NGOs in the disaster stricken countries without a field research.

The first part of the paper presents the theoretical models of how NGOs involved in disasters are working towards DRR. The second part depicts these models into real projects carried out by NGOs, and thirdly, the recommendations and discussions on the models towards further development in DRR. This paper exemplifies only a small representation of what the NGOs are contributing to the DRR.

Models

Derived from HFA, the models that are represented below reflect the findings of successful NGOs implementing successful projects. These models and strategies show a positive long-term impact towards the DRR, and working in hand-in-hand with the sustainable development.

The complexity of DRR can be lessened by working together through partnerships. The importance of collective wisdom and efforts from national policy and decision makers from various government sectors and from representatives from civil society, including academic institutions, the private sector cannot be more emphasized. The shift from a relief-centric approach to a multi-dimensional endeavor involving diverse communities in a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach with stress on building up capabilities of community to enable them to work towards their own risk reduction is the primarily goal, and it is on its way. The role of NGOs in this context therefore assumes added significance. The development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels, in particular at the community level, that can systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards, and the systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programs in the reconstruction of affected communities is the framework.

There are many CSOs that take in the values of such framework. This paper identifies NGOs incorporating and carrying out the actions that are geared towards this framework and towards development.

Partnership

While governmental and inter-governmental organizations attempt to impose top-down coordination structures in an attempt to impose order on frequently chaotic situations, NGO coordination is usually built from the bottom up. As a result, externally imposed NGO coordination mechanisms fail to take root, while those generated and supported by NGOs themselves tend to show great resilience. NGO coordination appears to be the norm rather than the exception. At the very least, NGO staff responding to emergencies maintain bilateral or multilateral relations to facilitate their work.

The stated reasons for forming NGO coordination bodies are similar in every country, namely the recognition that collective action can achieve common goals more effectively than individual initiatives.

Partnership is important in the whole cycle of disaster management. During the long-term recovery, knowing the needs, the language barrier, and the funding that gets channeled through, is all big part of the partnership. Partnership is the first and foremost important components identified in DRR. Partnerships that not only target international donors for aid, but also the ones that integrates local civil society and government to provide services at all levels constitute key factors.

The larger NGOs can provide technical and material support to NGOs already active at grass root level at each district or sub-district level. These local NGOs are already working closely with the community and have better appreciation of their vulnerabilities, needs and the capacity for revival so as to bring them back to the pre-disaster stage at the earliest. A well-coordinated approach giving a lead role to local NGOs with necessary linkages with larger NGOs and District Administration will go a long way in institutionalizing the role of NGOs in disaster risk reduction.

Community Participation

On many occasions, local people and organizations are the main actors in disaster risk reduction and disaster response. When a disaster strikes, immediate response such as search and rescue, and care for those injured, traumatized and homeless, is often carried out by

family members, friends and neighbors, and grassroots organizations. In the case of the many small-scale events triggered by natural hazards, there may be little or no external support at all, especially in countries where government capacity is limited.

Many members of local communities also represent the greatest potential source of local knowledge of hazardous conditions, and are the repositories of traditional coping mechanisms suited to their individual environment. Their awareness of historical risk scenarios is often stronger than that of other people. Decentralization of disaster preparedness and response responsibilities creates the conditions for more rapid responses that are better informed about local needs and designed for the specific hazard and vulnerability context (Pusch, 2004).

Inclusive Participation

Forgotten communities increases poverty, poverty increases people's vulnerability to natural disasters, and vulnerable communities like women, children, and disabled people are affected even worse by disaster within poor populations. Vulnerability is embedded in social, economic and political structures and it is often the result of development failures. It is sustainable, responsive development that works for the poor and for women within these communities that can redress these vulnerabilities.

Therefore, incorporating these forgotten and vulnerable communities in planning and implementing projects are essential for it promotes an enabling environment for all and it is consistent with the goals of inclusive development, democratization, and good governance (Guernsey et al., 2007).

Capacity Building

Capacity building does not only include the physical capacity of infrastructure, but also, institutional, and intellectual capacity that can pass on the new knowledge, technology and skills to community members. This component is significant during the phase of recovery that promotes the DRR.

Physical capacity, that is, having a strong foundation and rebuilding a infrastructure that can be more accommodating to future events is as important as the intellectual capacity of communities knowing how to deal with disasters. This is due to the fact that most emergencies are smaller-scale localized events where community members are the first

responders, and where the most isolated or underserved communities need greater self-sufficiency in anticipating and responding to them (Twigg, 2004).

There is a need for developing the capacity of the stakeholders. Human resource development along with institutional development, supported by a system of monitoring and evaluation are essential components of capacity building. The large spectrum of society, which is affected by a disaster, underlines the need for such activities to equip the population in order to cope with each calamity successfully. Capacity building eases the implementation of the projects, and it can be institutional, physical or intellectual—depending on the needs of the community.

Education & Public Awareness

Effective disaster preparedness saves lives and property (IFRC, 2007). It has two main aims: to help people avoid impending disaster threats and to put plans, resources, and mechanisms in place to ensure that those who are affected receive adequate assistance. The role and significance of education and public awareness prevents from higher number of casualties. The key components to the resilience and reduction stage are to strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response, and to use knowledge and education to build a culture of safety. Successful CSOs focus on long-term education within the DRR.

Projects

The critical role of NGOs in disaster reduction and response has been widely acknowledged. More and more NGOs are involved in disaster-related activities in Asia; however, networking and collaboration among them has been weak due to the lack of resources and organizational constraints. Yet, networking and enhancing the capability of the NGOs is considered to be an important strategy for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster risk reduction and response activities, especially at the local level in various aspects such as training and public education, sharing of information, experience and expertise on best practices, and transfer of relevant technology in disaster reduction and response.

Partnership between local and International NGOs

When the disaster occurs, for INGOs who are not familiar with the ground, it is challenging to provide relief. Local NGOs or INGOs that have operated in the country before

disaster may have easier access in distributing the help at the localized level. Many INGOs, like **International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC)**, **Save the Children International (General, 1993)**, **Norwegian People's Aid (Special, 2007)** have partnered up with smaller local NGOs to cooperate in the DRR.

In 2008, during the Myanmar's Cyclone Nargis disaster, the international community responded to the cyclone victims, to be thanked by the Myanmar junta, who initially rejected the aid, dragging its feet on relief decisions and imposing a blockade on the delta region. The authorities were known "to create an element of competition between the INGOs, playing games of favoritism and giving concessions to those who please them." (Aung, 2006). However, due to the large scale of the disaster, eventually, INGOs were allowed into the country to offer relief and implement humanitarian programs.

Save the Children-Myanmar has emerged as the leading INGO in the region after the cyclone, coordinating a consortium of local NGOs and INGOs, where no such mechanism has existed before in Burma. Known as "Paung Ku," the consortium was created to offer capacity-building support and a small grants service to the emerging local relief groups which were urgently in need of technical and financial support.

Norwegian People's aid have partnered up with local NGOs Shwe Inn Thu, a community based organization, to providing new skills and increasing access to basic health and education services to the poor in an integrated and participatory manner, as well as being part of Paung Ku.

These partnerships are important for it is a bottom-up approach attempting to empower local communities through a community-initiated process. A great example of a successful model in DRR can be observed with **IFRC**, a pro-partnership NGO linking and working with local governments. A year after Hurricane Katrina, the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (Special, 2003)** invited more than thirty community leaders to Red Cross training to prepare the leaders in local communities in order to guide disaster response with whom they had previous partnerships. After the disaster, the Red Cross heard that its volunteer force didn't adequately represent the population it was serving. The Red Cross reacted to these concerns, in part, by seeking out community partners such as the NAACP who would effectively assist the organization in its disaster response. The resulting conversations between the NAACP and the Red Cross resulted in this action plan that involves both training of volunteers and education of both groups.

Multi-agency Communication & Information Sharing

As for the **Grassroots Organisations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) (Special, 1998)** has led **The Huairou Commission: Women, Homes and Community (Special, 2005)** that envisions the Community Resilience Campaign. They have initiated through this partnership, a Disaster Watch to support grassroots women to build community resilience. This Disaster Watch is an innovative, community-led disaster relief platform, which involves community participation.

The active involvement of local communities during the resilience is at the heart of the communities that are taking part in rebuilding the communities out of the disaster. These INGOs are all over the world, and for them to know the local needs and to make the contribution count, local communities' participation is highly needed.

In many disasters in developed countries, local governments were prepared, and had abundance of capacity compared to many developing countries. For instance, in Germany during the 2001 Dresden flood, the State took the first step in helping out during the disaster. There were local NGOs that helped such as German Red Cross, German Lifeguard Association. However, the central framework and operation were under the order of the government. This shows the protocol and networks among government agencies and local communities.

Involvement of Government Partnership

Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) (Special, 2002), a worldwide movement of local governments is beginning to work on that network. The international association of local governments, as well as the national and regional local government organizations that have made a commitment to sustainable development, are noticing the importance of local governments' involvement in disasters. They have associate membership where non-governmental organizations and individuals can participate and enjoy the access to a worldwide network of peers allowing members to benefit from, and contribute to, the success of others in the global community. ICLEI has a 'Resilience and Adaptation' program under climate and sustainable cities that can promote.

Another good project that was worked well between the government and the NGO is set in Mozambique between **WaterAid (Special, 2005)** and the government, where the

project was backed by the government and funded by WaterAid and a community development association named ADECO.

The dynamics of inclusive projects are significantly more satisfying and valued. Including the locals and teaching the method help them grow and handle future events more efficiently.

Inclusion of Vulnerable Communities

People are at the heart of decision-making and implementation. This entails paying attention to the needs and views of women and men in local communities and vulnerable people who may be marginalized from participation on the basis of their gender, age, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, or other factors. Inclusive programming and community participation especially in the minorities and under-represented communities are essential. Disasters can cause significant numbers of physical and psychosocial disabilities, and vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, have more loss and damages. If these groups are not included, the gap will increase and the disparities will worsen.

Christian Blind Mission (Roster, 2002)'s inclusive emergency response project engages work with local partners in order to provide effective support to people with disabilities and their families during times of conflict or natural disasters. They have been involved in Indonesia, Myanmar, Brazil and Haiti, during each respective disaster. They also have long-term local projects of inclusion, such as access to health care and rehabilitation services, education and vocational training. Their mission is to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities in developing countries. Also, **Handicap International (Special, 1999)** is heavily involved in activities in the post-emergency phase in both Indonesia and Haiti, aiming to ensure that people with disabilities were included in the reconstruction process and long-term sustainability. Handicap International looks beyond and provides rehabilitation to victims from 2010 Sichuan earthquake in China, 2010 Pakistan floods and the Haiti Earthquake.

Disabled Peoples' International (Special, 1983) maintains partnerships with both **Global Fund for Women (Special, 1995)** and **World Vision International (General, 2004)**. All of them are working in the support of local communities, especially for the cases of Global Fund for Women, the grassroots women's groups in Aceh to organize female "small traders" who make their living selling wares and sidewalks for the women trying to

continue the rebuilding process in innovative ways, as well as to explore social change and human rights-based responses to natural disasters.

The main idea and the purpose to contain for the natural disaster is the resilience, the capacity of a community to organize itself to reduce the impact of disaster. Resilience includes the capacities of communities to advance development processes, social networks, and institutional partnerships that strengthen the ability of the community to cope with and recover from disasters.

Capacity Building

Cooperative Housing Foundation (Special, 1999) has been involved in both Haiti and Indonesia by helping out on building communities that went through a traumatic natural disasters aiming to bring back the much needed livelihoods back. Not only does CHF help in physical capacity building of infrastructure, but also put communities together and prioritize the needs of individuals and the group to build better than before, while training them to mitigate the impact of future crisis going forward.

However, one NGO that stood out without an evidence of partnership is **Haiti Mission (Special, 2009)**. Haiti Mission has not only developed healthcare initiatives in aiding children and communities with the latest health challenge in Haiti (i.e. cholera) in the issue of potable water and sanitation, but also trained the local Haitian team to carry out efficient well-drilling programs by completing thirteen wells in school premises as well as in remote areas where before were only able to dream of having water. Haiti Mission, where the volunteers of many faiths and churches throughout the United States and Haiti were involved. Haiti Mission is not only involved in Haiti's earthquake disaster, but they also have built school and water infrastructure that is essential for life by the school they operate and where they involve education for children and an improved economy for the people they serve. Not only to teach, and aid, but to feed the children, and to take care of the health by providing them the worm pills stuffed in the new shoes the children receive each year.

Education and Awareness

Hope Worldwide (Special, 1996) has also focused on their mission of investing in tools and preparations to deliver dynamic and creative disaster response education to schoolchildren. Funded by the UK Department, **Action Aid (Special, 1991)**, **Christian Aid (Special, 1998)**, **Practical Action (Roster, 1987)**, and **Tearfund (Roster, 2005)** have been

active in the field of the natural disasters in Haiti, 2004 Indian Tsunami stricken countries, and many other countries in teaching and advocating the locals and children's for disaster preparedness, as well as in providing psychosocial support. For example, the role of NGOs in rehabilitation and reconstruction was crucial in playing a major role in educating the people in the disaster areas. In terms of local NGOs, during the Indian Tsunami, **Indonesian Child Welfare Foundation (Special, 2002)** carried out a project called Mobile Child Service which provided psychosocial intervention to disaster victims. These psychosocial interventions, especially for the children, taught them to be more adaptable and integrate them to the changes in the daily life after the disaster.

Empowering families with the knowledge and behavior to improve health care and survival, especially during the disaster is vital. **Medical Care Development International (Roster, 1997)** has been working mainly in Africa to enhance the well-being of peoples in working with water supply & sanitation. Also, by coping with disaster aftermath, **World Federation for Mental Health (Special, 1963)** has been actively involved in providing both material and financial support to mental health NGOs undertaking appropriate and effective service response to disaster situations, as well as specializing in trauma, education and program development to support small grants to mental health NGOs providing mental health disaster response services at the grassroots level.

Recommendations & Discussion

Even though, NGOs are trying to make the best out of the situation by helping and motivating others, challenges still exist.

Stronger Partnership with Local Government

As much as the partnership among NGOs were observed, it would be beneficial at all levels to see the partnership with the local government in the aims of DRR. Local governments often suffer from having limited human resources, little revenue-raising ability or authority, and there is a lack of capacity and resources to act on unplanned events, especially in disasters (Twigg, 2004). Local and central governments also may not see DRR as a priority in the face of other more visible needs. However, having a framework of the local authorities to in the resilience, especially in the early warning system is a must investment.

Disaster-prone countries will set the strategic framework for designing all country-level programs. However, it will require the development of more systematic channels than the currently existing ones for the feedback of these local-level lessons learned into national assessments and planning. NGOs have opportunities to develop even stronger partnerships with governments to deliver services in more different and innovative ways, which also align with communities' expectations. This could be a time of great opportunity, but governments are interested in organizations that are aligned and working well together, not isolated, dispirited or fragmented. There is a challenge to demonstrate alignment and connectedness.

Getting the Right Information Flowing at All Levels

Those vulnerable to disasters should have the resources, capacities and opportunities to cope and recover from stresses and shocks. The gaps still exist especially with regard to poor communication network, and in absence of any evacuation and or prevention of disabled communities. There is a knowledge on how to survive disaster at the individual level, but not to help the disabled and vulnerable groups.

Capacity Building in Multi-dimensional Approach

Community capacity can be built with the participation of the voluntary sector. Human Resource Development is one of the most important components for building up a sound disaster management system. However, this single phrase encapsulates a huge universe/target population in need of training, sensitization and skill development in terms of sectors and levels of operation, which needs to be designed for specific needs and equipped with a practical and technically sound approach. Thus, a long-term initiative with a multi-hazard and multi-dimensional approach is the need of the hour for a disaster resilient society.

Look Beyond and Learn

There are other great CSO that are not in consultative status who are contributing to the DRR, and it would be good to see what other NGOs are doing. Also, it would be a great to know in a much further extent which NGOs are working with the local governments in hands to further enhance the DRR. The web of partnership in DRR from local NGOs to international and governments is the key to build a strong foundation in dealing with DRR.

Overall

In spite of the encouraging trend observed over the past decade, it should be noted that NGOs have found it hard at times to gain acceptance, both at the national and the international level. They have sometimes been regarded as minor players, especially in countries whose governments have been hesitant to concede authority and resources to the civil society. As a matter of fact, some governments do not always welcome the growth of civil society, and they may sometimes resist the expansion of its role, especially where this involves criticism of government policies or practice. Finally, NGOs' participation in high-level decision-making processes has also been rather limited.

This said, some NGOs are gaining growing recognition in the ongoing process of promoting DRR, and are becoming more actively involved in a number of different activities. Over the past years, some NGOs have committed themselves to advocate for policy changes. Others have been active in mainstreaming DRR into rehabilitation and recovery programs. Many others have engaged actively in capacity building, knowledge transfer and public awareness in communities at risk. All these efforts have contributed to reducing the vulnerability of those living in disaster-prone areas and increasing their resilience through educational activities and capacity building.

Conclusion

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), an international disaster reduction strategy, is in full movement now. The importance of reducing disaster risk and increasing resilience to natural hazards is in line with MDGs. As UNISDR promotes, "the resilient nation can help reduce poverty, increase growth and employment opportunities, deliver greater social equity, fresh business opportunities, more balanced ecosystems as well as better health and improved education" (UNISDR, 2007). Reducing losses, mitigating hazard and reducing vulnerability should be a priority for disaster risk reduction, alongside efforts to integrated development goals into disaster response and reconstruction.

DRR is an international effort that needs to include the multi-agency at multi-level. Efforts to reduce disaster risks must be systematically integrated into policies, plans and programs for sustainable development and poverty reduction, and supported through

bilateral, regional and international cooperation, including partnerships.⁷ 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 to build the necessary capacities at the community and national levels to manage and reduce risk rather than relying on external support. The role of the CSOs, especially that of NGOs, is the essential for they are at the heart of the communities that are on the ground with the people who experience disasters. The need to establish a core aspect of development and embracing the concept of DRR is important for all actors – public, private and non-governmental.

⁷ Hyogo Framework for Action. 2007