

Disaster Risk Governance: The essential linkage between DRR and SDGs

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The issue of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is intimately linked to Governance model used by states to implement a comprehensive strategy to manage such risks and undertake integrated management. Depending on the chosen Governance model, the DRR circle can be either virtuous or vicious. At this moment when decennial appraisal of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is taking place and looking for better strategies, the first results are mixed about the effectiveness of selected governance. Fortunately, as we shall see below, interesting and successful examples exist.

Concept of “Governance”

The Governance concept has undergone some trends in the last years and knows some nuances according to different authors. However, a more comprehensive approach of this concept can be stated. For the Canadian Institute on Governance (IOG), *“Governance is a straightforward process, akin to a steersman in a boat. (...) Governance is complicated by the fact that it involves multiple actors, not a single helmsman. These multiple actors are the organization’s stakeholders (...) Decision-makers are then accountable to those same stakeholders for the organization’s output and the process of producing it.”* (IOG, 2015²)

The same philosophy is included within the UNDP definition, which states *“Governance 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.”* (UNDP, 2010³)

This more comprehensive approach to governance is found particularly in the field of Disaster Risk Governance.

Disaster Risk Governance: Challenges and Opportunities

Disaster Risk Governance involves many actors, but the State, as the Sovereignty holder, retains control on these issues. Indeed, only the State has the capacity to engage legal, administrative and economic reforms to involve all stakeholders in the decision-making process and assign them the powers and means necessary for their missions.

An analysis realized by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) – along with the results of national DRR reports – established some shortcomings in actions undertaken at the regional and national levels.

“The governance arrangements adopted by many countries, relying heavily on specialized emergency management organizations, are not always appropriate to address disaster risk. The governance

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² IOG website : <http://iog.ca/defining-governance/> (seen 24/02/2015)

³ UNDP/BCPR (Oct. 2010), *“Disaster Risk Reduction, Governance and Mainstreaming”*.

approach based on the disaster management cycle and represented by a specialized disaster risk management sector may have reached its limit, while at the same time a new governance paradigm has yet to emerge.” (UNISDR, 2015⁴)

Nevertheless, the results are not so bad. Some governance models are able to lead to successes. Regional, but above national and local initiatives demonstrate the effectiveness of implemented actions that enhance resilience, take into consideration the underlying and future risks, and enable an integrated management of disaster risk by ensuring consistency with MDGs and SDGs. The growing list of cities which have joined the “Making cities resilient” campaign is a good example⁵. These examples are found both in developed countries and low-income countries, but very often, after one or even several disasters.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, some projects seek to promote sustainable development in the face of climate change, linking disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, sustainable livelihoods and good governance. The key techniques in this approach are community mobilization, capacity building, connecting communities to government services, establishing sustainable livelihood practices at community level (tree planting, securing non-saline water supply) and sharing knowledge between all stakeholders. The findings will be shared widely across the field of disaster management.

Six hundred of the poorest and most vulnerable households have been selected as beneficiaries. These households will benefit directly from asset transfer to help them switch to climate compatible livelihood options. The broader community will benefit from improved governance and formalized disaster risk reduction practices.

Japan

In Sendai city, since the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and based on the lessons learnt from it, another development concept was added, *disaster resilient urban infrastructure*.

Based on the concept of "Building Back Better", there are high expectations on the Tagonishi Eco-Town project as a symbol of the recovery, and it has been selected as a model eco-town under Sendai City's Earthquake Disaster Reconstruction Plan. Moreover, it has been singled out by the UNISDR, being introduced as an example of disaster resilient urban development.

This eco-town is focused on advancing three main concepts: reducing energy consumption, setting the stage for safe, secure and comfortable living, and harmony with nature. The project is aiming for a new paradigm in urban design by integrating the three concepts of design, technology and community.

If "*DRR makes sustainable development*" (UNDP et al. 2014⁶), it is above all through the involvement of all stakeholders in an integrated governance framework for an integrated risk management in all territories. Whatever the means, successes exist.

⁴ UNISDR (2015). Making Development Sustainable: The Future of Disaster Risk Management. Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), p. 128.

⁵ About 2500 cities have joined the « Making cities resilient » campaign (seen 24/02/2015), <http://www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities/>

⁶ UNDP et al. (2014), "*Disaster Risk Reduction makes development sustainable*"