

World Conference on Disaster Reduction

Kobe, Hyogo, 18-22 January 2005

1. Session No. 4.9

2. Session Name: Post-disaster recovery: Lessons learnt, challenges and future options

3. Summary of the session's presentations and discussions

- The chair, Prof. Ian Davis, introduced the session with an insight on relief as an enemy of recovery. He explained that relief tends to present problems to recovery, including the dependency of disaster victims on it and the many inherent constraints of pre-disaster problems and deficiencies. He also cited the challenge of addressing and linking the three areas of recovery, i.e. physical, psychosocial, and economic, in developing recovery programs.
- Based on the presentations, the following challenges and problems in post-disaster recovery were cited:
 - development of creative reconstruction plans
 - establishment of support systems for vulnerable groups, e.g. psychosocial care especially for the elderly
 - coordination and synchronisation of timelines of recovery interventions of various agencies
 - assessing damage and needs with local community participation
 - lack of effective institution and system for recovery, including exchange of best practices and experiences
 - addressing opportunity for social equity and change
 - considering socio-cultural, economic and political structures in developing recovery programs
 - recovery and reconstruction without rebuilding risks
 - lack of division of roles and responsibilities between different international actors in recovery
 - lack of agreed methodology for recovery needs assessment
 - limited capacity of national and local government to plan and manage recovery
 - problems in transferring past experiences to new disaster situations in cross-cultural setting
- Presented as a future option to address these challenges and problems was the establishment of an international platform for recovery and reconstruction aimed at enabling rapid recovery and reconstruction with the effective use of existing good practices, accumulated experiences, and available expertise.
- Following the presentations, expression and affirmation of support for the development of an international platform was made on the floor. The issue on the role of the community in the platform and in promoting the exchange of experiences was raised. The launch of an electronic forum for securing feedback on platform development was also proposed.

4. Primary issues

The session identified six primary issues. They concern some of the dilemmas and challenges in the complex recovery process:

- Ways and means of recovering while learning from past national and international experiences. This learning process involves accumulation, consolidation, communication and application of past experiences.
- Limitations on recovery due to inherent constraints of pre-disaster problems or deficiencies (e.g. civil strife, poor governance, inadequate laws or planning, and the lack of enforcement)
- Managing recovery effectively given the sheer complexity of the task: the awesome scale of damage, the presence of multiple stakeholders involved, political pressures and formidable time constraints
- Achieving rapid recovery while ensuring that it does not build new vulnerable conditions that may fuel a future disaster, and enabling the survivors to fully participate in the entire process
- Ensuring that recovery uses the best professional and commercial capacities available, but without sacrificing the grassroots needs and active contribution that the surviving and affected communities can make.
- Avoiding using up vital financial and human resources as well as political capital in the immediate relief phase to the detriment of the long-term recovery process. "Too often relief has been the enemy of recovery."

5. a) Suggested targets and indicators to measure accomplishments

- international recovery platform developed as a means for international collaboration and cooperation in recovery and reconstruction
- electronic forum for receiving feedback on the development of the international platform
- arrangements for coordination and assessments of recovery and reconstruction work
- capacity-building activities, including training, within UN agencies, country teams and governments

b) Existing indicators with reference

- working group on international recovery platform constituted by ISDR as a subgroup of the Inter-agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, May 2005 (Reference: Mr. S. Nishikawa, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan)
- establishment of database for good practices on recovery and reconstruction, May 2005 (Reference: Mr. S. Nishikawa, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan)

6. Partnerships

- Representatives from UNDP, UNCHS, ADRC, ADPC, ILO, and other concerned UN agencies expressed their respective agency commitment and support to the proposed international platform for recovery and reconstruction.

7. Any other relevant and brief comments.

This proposal for an international platform for recovery and reconstruction represents an excellent example of a partnership between an enlightened donor government (Government of Japan) and a wide range of UN agencies.

8. a) Name and affiliation of presenters and titles of presentation

Prof. Ian Davis, Disaster Management Center, Cranfield University (Chair)

Mr. Tomio Saito, Vice Governor, Hyogo Prefectural Government, Japan: “Developing a system for international cooperation in reconstruction”

Ms. Margaret Arnold, Program Manager, Hazard Management Unit, World Bank: “Post-Disaster Recovery: Learning from the Past”

Mr. Anil Khumar Sinha, Senior Technical Advisor, ADRC: “Comparative Study on Recovery and Reconstruction: Challenges and Way Forward”

Mr. Alfredo Hoyle, Director, a.i., InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction, (IFP/CRISIS), ILO: “El Salvador 2001 Earthquake”

Mr. Nihal Rupasinghe, Additional General Manager, Central Engineering Consultancy Bureau, Construction Division, Sri Lanka: “Tsunami Disaster in Sri Lanka on 26th December 2004”

Mr. Praveen Pardeshi, Senior Adviser, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Secretariat: “Indian Ocean Tsunami - Key Challenges in Recovery Planning -” – presentation on behalf of UNDP and ISDR

Mr. Satoru Nishikawa, Director for Disaster Preparedness, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan: “Concept of Int’l Platform for Recovery and Reconstruction”

Mr. Andrew Maskrey, Chief, Disaster Reduction Unit, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP: “UN Proposal on International Recovery Platform” – presentation on behalf of UNDP, ISDR and OCHA

b) Name and affiliation of person filling in the form

- Mr. Emmanuel M. de Guzman, consultant, ADRC