

6. The International Recovery Platform (IRP): History and Current Activities

6-1. The Establishment of the IRP

While the capacity of the UN system for disaster response and humanitarian assistance are widely recognized, there is currently a vacuum in terms of the UN's capacity and system-wide mechanisms for post-disaster recovery efforts, particularly those with a risk reduction focus.

Experience increasingly affirms that the post-disaster recovery phase provides a critical opportunity to shift the focus from saving lives to restoring livelihoods, and is an important time for introducing measures to reduce future disaster risk. Effective recovery can help close the gap between relief and development, and can transform disasters into opportunities for sustainable development. This occurs when efforts are made to support local and national recovery processes at an early stage, when risk reduction considerations are factored into all recovery activities, and when the synergies between development, humanitarian, and other actors involved in the response phases are properly channeled. A successful recovery effort, then, is predicated on having advance agreements and mechanisms in place so that the recovery process is effectively conceived and managed, and is initiated in a timely manner. This includes such measures as appropriate assessment methodologies, pre-established resource mobilization mechanisms, surge capacity to support UN Country Teams, and standing coordination mechanisms.

Shared concerns related to the UN approach and processes for post-disaster recovery have resulted in the formulation of a joint initiative, the International Recovery Platform (IRP), by the UN system, ADRC, and other partners, with the encouragement and support of Japan as well as other donors and key program countries. This initiative was discussed at the 2005 UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) during session 4.9 on Post Disaster Recovery. Representatives from the ADRC, UNDP, UN-HABITAT, ILO, and other concerned UN agencies expressed their respective agency commitments and support for the proposed international platform for recovery. The meeting resulted in a recommendation for the establishment of the International Recovery Platform (IRP).

In four months after the WCDR, the International Seminar on Post Disaster Recovery, in support of the IRP, was held at Hyogo House on 11-13 May 2005. The IRP was officially established in Kobe.