

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

6-1. The Establishment of 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 IRP, was held at Hyogo House on 11-13 May 2005. IRP was officially established in Kobe.

6-2. The Governance Structure of IRP

IRP consists of 17 governments, UN agencies, and international organizations including ADRC (as of March 31 2018).^{*} IRP focuses on the following three priority activities for recovery: (a) Knowledge Management and Advocacy, (b) Training and Capacity Building and (c) Enhancing Recovery Operations.

As described in IRP Strategic Framework 2015-2020, IRP Secretariat is located in Kobe and responsible for convening IRP Steering Committee meetings and disseminating information on

IRP activities and knowledge products.

* IRP members: Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), Cabinet Office of Japan, Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central (CEPRENAC), Hyogo Prefectural Government, International Labour Organization (ILO), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Swiss Agency for Development and Coordination (SDC), the World Bank, United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), World Health Organization (WHO).

6-3. IRP Activities in FY 2017

6-3-1. International Recovery Forum 2018

Introduction

The discussions at the Forum revolved around “Build Back Better for Urban Resilience”, wherein experts, scientists, practitioners, and public and private officials served as resource persons. The outcomes highlighted a forward-looking perspective of “Build Back Better in Recovery” that encourages cities to directly address the challenges they are facing today, as these greatly contribute to vulnerability that will make future recovery efforts difficult. It also pointed that the “people’s process” approach in disaster recovery (which has been tested in many communities worldwide) may take time during the planning phase, but it can offer speedy implementation of activities when properly applied. However, it should not end there. Resilience implies consistent action – always looking forward and not back – to prepare towards the future: to *build forward better*.

The Forum was opened by **Mr. Stefan Kohler**, UNOPS Country Manager for Bangladesh and Chair of IRP Steering Committee, and followed respectively by the welcome remarks from **Mr. Mamoru Maekawa**, Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination of Cabinet Office Government of Japan, and **Mr. Kazuo Kanazawa**, Vice Governor of Hyogo Prefecture, on behalf of **Governor Toshizo Ido**. All the remarks highlighted the important role of IRP in coordinating and sharing knowledge on *build back better*, including the lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 and the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995.



Fig.6-3-1. International Recovery Forum 2018