Profiling NGOs of Asian Countries: Commonalities and Rationale for Networking in Disaster Reduction and Response

Mr. Manny de Guzman
Vice President and Chief Executive Officer,
Alliance for Emergency Response and Training, the Philippines
Mr. Amod Mani Dixit
General Secretary, National Society for Earthquake Technology, Nepal

Introduction

The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Kobe office (UN-OCHA Kobe) have convened a conference workshop of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from Asian countries in pursuit of promoting and strengthening institutional networking and collaboration, particularly in the field of disaster reduction and response. Considered a first of its nature in the region, this meeting of NGO executives assumes strategic importance in the establishment of efficient and effective linkages and arrangements in the said fields at international and local levels. Moreover, it is one rare opportunity to facilitate sharing of experiences and developing innovative strategies for networking and collaboration in the region.

As a workshop reference, this brief aims to provide a general profile of NGOs in Asia, based on 120 organizations, including the workshop participants', which have been involved in various development-oriented activities. It determines the nature of their missions, activities, target sectors, and its relevance to disaster reduction and response strategies. Also, it presents some relevant critical issues that often concern the NGOs.

Like any study, this cursory examination of NGOs has its share of limitations. Serving as a quick profile, it is descriptive rather than statistical. However, at best, it presents an overview of a number of NGOs and the variety and kind of work they have been involved in, and to some extent their significant

commonalities.

Furthermore, given the current state of NGOs and their significant involvement in development, this paper endeavors to explain the rationale for networking amid increasing efforts on multilevel collaboration and cooperation in disaster reduction and response within the country, the region, and even beyond.

NGO missions and activities: nature and commonalities

In examining the organizational profile and mission statements of the NGOs included in this study, there are recurring themes evident in their statements of missions and operational objectives. They include poverty reduction, rural livelihood, women and marginal sector empowerment, education, environmental protection, equality, health services, humanitarian assistance, local governance, political and policy advocacy, and quality of life improvement. In general, their missions are development-oriented and concern capacity building for certain sectors or populations in need.

In examining their major activities, the recurring nature of NGO work includes: Community development, advocacy, emergency relief, training, research, planning, disaster mitigation, and capacity building at community level. The strategies employed by NGOs in undertaking these activities commonly involve networking, collaboration, coordination, and mobilization and provision of resources, including funds and aid. Moreover, with the preponderance of capacity building, advocacy and training as specific activities, it appears that more NGOs employ the development approach instead of the interventional approach for their program strategies.

Considering the above nature of NGO missions and activities, it may be inferred that the most significant commonality among the NGOs is their developmental orientation.   Generally, they are focused on the community and organizationally rooted at grassroots level. Moreover, they tend to be innovative and participatory in approach, and flexible and resourceful as an organization.   They are also often concerned with the poor, the needy and the

marginalized people or sectors.

In pursuit of development efforts, the NGOs share some common features in their roles. Based on the organizational profiles of the participating NGOs and the papers presented in the workshop, these features are the following:
- Intervening at the community level
- Delivering services cost efficiently
- Bridging national development programs and beneficiaries
- Mobilizing people for micro-level development initiatives
- Understanding grassroots concerns
- Catalyzing change
- Providing immediate humanitarian assistance
- Bringing attention to low profile emergencies
- Mobilizing resources at the community level
- Serving as channel for enhancing public awareness and education
- Building and strengthening the capacities of communities

These features can be viewed as the strength and advantage of the NGOs vis-à-vis the capabilities and efficiency of national government agencies in implementing community development programs. It is in this respect that NGOs are considered critical and effective partners of national and local government agencies in promoting and implementing development programs at the community level.

Linking the developmental orientation of NGOs with disaster reduction and response

The orientation towards development and the focus on the poor, the needy and the marginalized inevitably link NGO efforts to disaster reduction strategies and goals. Understanding the state of poverty as a condition of vulnerability of peoples and communities, allows NGOs to appreciate the relevance and importance of disaster reduction programs. For, when disasters occur, the poor suffers most. Furthermore, disasters aggravate poverty and effectively set back the socio-economic development of affected communities and countries.

With a holistic perspective of the relationship between sustainable human development and disaster reduction, NGOs pursuing development-oriented programs could fully appreciate the impact of disasters on their target groups as well as resource investments, and the value of disaster reduction. Disaster reduction is a development-oriented approach that relates and integrates well with any development initiatives of NGOs that address the vulnerabilities and capacities of their target groups. Also, disaster response and relief undertaken in the context of development could become an empowering activity that protects their target groups as well as their socio-economic gains, thereby ensuring the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Considering the developmental orientation and roles of NGOs and the relevance of disaster reduction in the attainment of sustainable development goals, the challenge at hand for the NGOs is to synergise, to network, to collaborate, as well as to innovate for improved efficiency in delivering services directly to the communities and the sectors in need.

Relevant critical issues and concerns

There are numerous concerns of NGOs with respect to organizational viability, operational efficiency, and inter-relationship with donors, government and other NGOs, among others. Specifically, based on the outcome of the workshop, among the critical issues and concerns confronted by NGOs are the following:

- Funding for program activities and operational viability
- Logistics for efficient service delivery and local mobility
- Communication systems for local coordination and with focal points
- Long-term support systems that ensures sustenance of mission and initiatives
- Clarity of role, especially in crisis situations where several response and relief groups are involved
- Vision and mission which, in certain occasions, must be clarified or reviewed in terms of relevance and responsiveness to emerging issues and concerns
- Information sharing mechanisms that facilitates efficient and effective

coordination, knowledge transfer, and service delivery to target clienteles

- Transparency in organizational capabilities and financial accountabilities
- Overlaps or duplications in community efforts and roles which lead to competition rather than complementation
- Varied views and priorities that deter effective collaboration and focus on critical common concerns
- Structure as it relates to organizational efficiency and viability
- Standards for good practice in specific areas of involvement
- Relations with government that result in poor interdependence and coordination with national and local authorities
- Commitment of volunteers, especially in times of crisis
- Language barriers, especially with non-local volunteers
- Training in specialized fields of involvement

In consideration of the above, the NGOs involved in disaster reduction and response may have to address the following issues and concerns, among others:

Role definition and coordination. Discrepancies and overlaps in disaster response activities are commonly observed during and after a disaster. These are usually brought about by unclear roles and functions and weak coordination. Planning for effective disaster response as a development activity addresses this concern.

Declaration of disaster. The declaration of a disaster is usually the responsibility of government and serves as prerequisite for the participation of NGOs in disaster response and relief efforts. A dilemma sometimes occurs when the government refuses to declare a disaster because of political considerations. The determination of appropriate options and mechanisms for plugging in NGO response and assistance at the community should be considered in disaster plans.

Mistrust between government agencies and NGOs. Occasionally, suspicion

prevails in the relations between government agencies and NGOs, which results in delays in responding to disasters. In some instances, NGOs would claim that the government refuses to acknowledge their contributions and capabilities. Government, on the other hand, would maintain that NGOs are short-lived organizations and, therefore, could not be relied upon for long-term response. Therefore, promoting government and NGO collaboration in disaster reduction and response addresses this concern.

Disaster management capability training. Some NGOs would consider their capabilities for disaster reduction and response limited and wanting. They would usually require skills development in hazard mapping, risk assessment, as well as disaster damage and needs assessment. Skills training activities in these areas could be undertaken as part of organizational capability building and disaster preparedness.

Logistics, communication and transportation. A major problem which NGOs involved in disaster response would often face is the lack of effective communication and transportation systems that could connect resource centers and disaster sites, allowing both the outflow of information from the affected community and inflow of assistance to the area. This concern is often addressed through collaboration and networking with government agencies, including the military, and the private sector, including business corporations, with established the systems and available resources.

Disasters and development. This is often a controversial issue that tackles the appropriateness of disaster relief assistance, the impact of interventions to the affected communities, and the regard for local knowledge, capacities and capabilities. However, through increased awareness on the relevance of disaster reduction and response to development goals, and through enhanced knowledge and skills in disaster management, the NGOs will be able to modify voluntarily their strategies and approaches in accordance with good disaster management practices.

Why network?: rationale for the pursuit of multilevel cooperation and

collaboration in disaster reduction and response

The increasing prevalence of disasters has become a critical concern of peoples and governments, that transcends organizational and political boundaries. Considering the detrimental impact of disasters on society and environment and the current capacities of local communities and authorities to mitigate or counter them, the need for effective mechanisms for collaboration and cooperation among concerned sectors and entities, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and governments as well, has become even more important and compelling.   Networking as a mechanism to pull together organizational strength and capacities, including resources and expertise, of all concerned is considered a rational approach toward effective disaster reduction and response.   In view of the increasing necessity to address disaster concerns comprehensively and holistically, multilevel collaboration and cooperation through networking assumes greater relevance.

As they facilitate and mobilize community involvement in development initiatives, NGOs assume a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of development strategies and interventions at the grassroots level.   However, as observed, NGOs have individual limitations in their respective areas of work and involvement.   It is in this regard that promoting and enhancing collaboration and cooperation among NGOs and other concerned entities through networking is considered a viable and effective strategy to overcome organizational constraints and ensure greater efficiency in achieving development objectives. In many cases, NGOs have shown competence and proficiency in development-oriented work and have acquired expertise and capacities in specialized fields.   Sharing this strengths through collaboration and cooperation among NGOs and organizations involved in disaster reduction and response would allow complementation in work and efforts and could bring about desired accomplishments and progress in the said field earlier.

Through networking, with the support of UN-OCHA Kobe office and ADRC as facilitator at the regional level, the following cooperation objectives could be pursued:

- Empower the network organizations by helping them build and enhance their capacities and capabilities through training, sharing of information, experience and expertise, as well as transfer of relevant technology;
- Assist and support participating the network organizations in generating response to humanitarian appeals;
- Promote common understanding on relevant and critical issues concerning the Total Disaster Risk Management Approach, such as disaster risk and vulnerability reduction strategies and multi-level and multi-dimensional coordination in disaster risk reduction and response among stakeholders;
- Promote, share and disseminate good practices of participating network organizations in areas, related to disaster risk reduction and response; and
- Build and sustain the cooperation and partnership among participating network organizations in areas of common areas.

In pursuit of these cooperation objectives, the network organizations could adopt the following strategies:
- Coordinate with national governments, organizations and groups concerned to ensure complementation of roles, activities and contributions to disaster reduction and response, especially at the community level;
- Initiate and encourage the efficient sharing of information on hazards, vulnerability, and disaster risks and occurrences, public education, training and research materials, announcements on training activities and opportunities, and available expertise and resources, at the national regional and international levels;
- Develop and share a reference directory of relevant NGOs at the country level, that provides information on contact persons, resources, capacity, capabilities and disaster reduction and response activities;
- Support the development of an electronic forum by the ADRC and UN-OCHA Kobe office, that facilitates the free exchange of ideas and information, as well as the sharing of resources;
- Assume focal point functions on behalf of the network at the national or local level; and
- Participate in relevant meetings and forum, including on-line forum on disaster reduction and response issues and concerns.

The development of enabling mechanisms and arrangements for networking will facilitate and sustain multilevel collaboration and cooperation among concerned NGOs and international organizations toward achieving desired goals in disaster reduction and response.

Best Practice of UN-OCHA and NGOs' Cooperation:
A Case Study of UN-OCHA Indonesia Office
Mr. Michael Elmquist
Deputy to the Humanitarian Coordinator and Chief, UN-OCHA Indonesia

It is indeed a great honor for me to start off this Plenary Session with a little talk about some of the best practices as I see them from our office in Indonesia. And I hope you will bear with me the fact that the example I am using is actually not a natural disaster, but what we call a 'complex emergency'. It doesn't really matter because I am not looking at the causes and consequences; but rather I am looking at the coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and the NGOs. And that is no different in complex emergencies and natural disasters. But since time is very limited, I'll go straight ahead and just give a little bit of background.

In Indonesia, there is a very important amount of internal displacement as a result of natural disasters, ethnic conflicts, economic and religious conflicts and a couple of separatist movements. And if you look at the map of Indonesia, it is a very large country with a population of 220 million people, spread over 6000 islands. In this vast country, we are dealing with the separatist movement in Aceh, ethnic conflict in Kalimantan, religious conflicts in Central Sulawesi, and in the Moluccas. And further than that, we have the separatist movement in Papua, which used to be called Irian Jaya until the beginning of this year. And finally, we also have to deal with refugees in West Timor. The total result of all this is the number 1.3 million displaced persons. Just as a footnote, the Indonesian language does not distinguish between IDPs and refugees. The word 'Pengungsi' is used for both. But we have, of course, for legal purposes, to distinguish. The total number here, 1.3 million, includes also about 143,000 refugees in Timor.

Anyway, the case study I want to talk about concerns the IDPs in West Kalimantan, in the city of Pontianak. When I visited the place in November, this is what it looked like in the stadium in the city. And it has looked like that for

the last 3 years – totally crammed with IDPs under pretty poor conditions. The IDPs have been there so long that they have also established small shops and even a video-CD rental. So, the life of the IDPs is not too bad, as you might have imagined, and they've become quite established. But the local community around the place was not too happy that they couldn't use the stadium for sports events anymore, and there was a clash last June between some of the IDPs and the surrounding population, and it led to a rather threatening situation. The local population really became very hostile. Now, the IDPs are Madurese and they are not very well liked anywhere, with the possible exception of the Island of Madura.

A group of international NGOs became very alarmed about this. They were active already in Pontianak. No UN organization was active there. They came back to us with some rather alarming assessments of the situation. They felt that the local government was totally unprepared for the situation. And they reported to me that when they discussed with the local government the plans they had for resettlement of the IDPs, they asked the government, "Have you discussed it with the IDPs?" The answer was, "How can we do that? They are Madurese." In other words, these are not people you can discuss with. So, what we did then was to offer our services to facilitate some coordination with the NGOs, with the UN, and with the government. And in cooperation with the NGOs, we organized a large scale meeting with the government, with the donor countries, with the UN agencies and, of course, with the International NGOs. This meeting happened to take place on the day after the former President Abdurrahman Wahid had been replaced by the current President Megawati Soekarnoputri. And the minister who hosted the meeting was the then functioning minister and has now also been replaced. So, everything was a little bit in flux at the time.

Shortly afterwards, the new government announced a completely new policy on IDPs. They said that there are 3 possibilities. First of all, the IDPs should go back to their places of origin --- Priority No.1. Secondly, if they can't, then they should be able to settle in the local area where they happened to be. And only if these 2 possibilities don't exist, then the government would help them resettle in new locations. But what's more than that, the new coordinating

minister of social affairs, Mr. Yussuf Kalla, also said that all this will be accomplished during the course of 2002, by the end of which there will be no more IDPs in Indonesia.   And just to put extra pressure on the IDPs to follow these proposals, food assistance will be discontinued by the 31st of December, 2001.   This was the announced policy which the international community took with some alarm.   First of all, the discontinuation of food assistance was not seen as a legitimate method to encourage IDPs to move out.   But secondly, we don't believe that it is actually possible to accomplish this in one year.

What had happened in Pontianak was that the government had already constructed these beautiful roads and houses as relocation sites for the IDPs. But there were no IDPs in them.   The IDPs did not like these houses.   They didn't like the locations.   They didn't like the way they were constructed. They had not been asked.   They had not been involved.   The houses are, as you can see, just placed in an area where the infrastructure had not been properly prepared.   This is what the road looked like after a burst of rain. And, this is one of a very few IDPs we actually found there.   She had just moved in 2 days before.   She did not seem particularly happy with her situation.

So, what did we do then?   We brought different parties together, and lent our international UN credibility to the effort of the NGOs.   We also made sure that the projects by the NGOs related to West Kalimantan were included in our consolidated appeal.   And finally, we were also happy to get some special funding from DFID, and decided that the project by the NGOs in West Kalimantan would qualify for funding out of that source.   And we've just decided to give some money for that.   We also took on the continued role of advocacy towards the government, to ensure that the views of the NGOs, the IDPs and the international community were properly presented to the government.   And for that purpose, we've taken the initiative to arrange lessons and seminars which will be taking place probably in April in Pontianak, while we try to force the government to realize to what extent the policy can actually be implemented.

What has happened now, as a result of all these efforts, is the local government

in West Kalimantan has turned around and actually has said now that no relocation is taking place unless three conditions are fulfilled. First of all, that the IDPs themselves are happy with the project. Secondly, that the host communities are happy. And thirdly, that the relocation site is economically sustainable. The pictures you see here are from a completely new relocation site which was chosen by the IDPs themselves. The IDPs are working in the construction of the new houses. The local communities were quite happy with that. And even though it doesn't look like it, we believe that this area can become economically sustainable. Some drainage work will have to be done. What you can see are poles sticking out of water. This is a future community hall. There is also going to be a mosque, a health center, and a school. All these will probably be finished by the next time I visit. They are building houses at a rate of 20 new houses per week, so it is going very fast. Water tanks are being shipped along the river to this new relocation site.

I don't want to go into the details of the relocation. But I think the most important point is to illustrate how what started as an initiative among a group of NGOs was supported by the UN, with UN-OCHA playing the role of facilitator, and it had the effect of really influencing the local government's way of operating. Now, the role of NGOs has been somewhat reduced because they feel that what the government is doing now is on the right path, and they don't need to take so much of an active role anymore. We cannot quite say, "Yes, the mission has been accomplished." But at least it has developed in a very positive direction and the threat we saw in June last year does not exist anymore. The vast majority of the IDPs have now moved out of the centers they occupied before, to the new relocation houses. And they seem to be quite happy with the new solution. We still need to analyze the lessons learned. And one key lesson in my view is that there were very special considerations in Pontianak that do not exist in the rest of the country. And you cannot think that just because we managed to relocate the 50 thousand IDPs in Pontianak, that the rest of the 1.295 million IDPs can be relocated quite as easily. That is not going to be the case.

However, in conclusion, this is a very brief example. But it shows that in

Indonesia we have established an extremely close cooperation between the UN agencies and the NGOs. It's very important because, in fact, the NGOs carry out more fieldwork, more groundwork than the UN agencies. And to discuss humanitarian assistance in a country like Indonesia without involving NGOs would be totally futile. Let me add that in the very recent floods that we have been and are suffering in Jakarta, and some other places in Indonesia, we have also built on the cooperating networks that have been established for other purposes. And when we convened the so-called United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT), it was not the UNDMT, it was the DMT with the UN, the government's representatives, and the NGOs. And it turned out to be an extremely efficient forum where the government representatives could tell exactly what are the shortcomings in regard to humanitarian assistance to the flood victims. We could go round the table and check what each of the parties was going to do in response to the needs, and having completed the round, we actually could see that the needs were being met in a well-coordinated fashion. So there, thanks to the network and cooperation mechanism that we have built for the purpose of complex emergencies, we were able to coordinate a response to a natural disaster very quickly and very efficiently. With that, ladies and gentlemen, I rest my case, but if there are any questions, I would of course be happy to entertain them. Thank you very much.

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction:
A Requirement for Sustainable Development and a Tool for
Regional and Non-Governmental Organizations
Mr. Salvano Briceño
Director, UN ISDR Secretariat

Introduction

Following and sustaining the gains of the IDNDR (1990-1999) and the Yokohama Conference (1994), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) was established and confirmed through the UN GA resolutions (1999 and 2001, respectively) with two mechanisms: the Inter-Agency Secretariat (UN-ISDR) and the Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF-DR).

The mission of ISDR is to develop a culture of prevention and to build resilient societies and communities by promoting increased awareness of the importance of disaster reduction as an integral component of sustainable development, with the objective of reducing human, social, economic and environmental losses due to natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters. This task needs to be undertaken by involving progressively all relevant institutions and experts, available and interested in the subject and based on values and criteria that are developed further below

The main functions of the ISDR Secretariat are to serve as an international clearing-house for exchange of relevant information on the subject, provide policy and technical advice through its network of experts and focal points, increase public awareness, training and education, and facilitate inter-agency collaboration and partnerships.

NGOs have contributed greatly to the work of the IDNDR and continue to participate actively in the IATF, for example. They relate however, mainly to NGOs of an international nature such as IUCN, ICSU and their technical expert members, such as the Global Fire Monitoring Centre. At the regional level,

almost all regions and sub-regions have active NGOs involved in the work on disaster reduction. The ADRC and ADPC are good Asian examples. In some countries more than others, NGOs are actively involved in the work of national platforms of the ISDR.   Such is the case in Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy or the United Kingdom, and also in developing countries like Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Philippines, South Africa and some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.   In other countries, NGOs are doing very good work also but not necessarily as members of national committees or platforms or even in a team effort with local or national governments.

Main aspects and issues of ISDR:

Disaster reduction aims at enhancing and supporting several types of activities, some related with disaster management, others not. Disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness are intimately related with disaster management and therefore require the active and effective participation of all disaster management institutions and experts. However, vulnerability and risk reduction address needs that some times go beyond disaster management and are the tasks of urban and land-use planners, educators, scientists and researchers, psychologists, lawyers, economists, architects, sociologists, engineers, agronomists, health professionals, etc., and are not necessarily related with disaster response needs and measures. For example, combating poverty or climate change are essential risk and vulnerability reduction tasks, they are not however, the responsibility of disaster or emergency managers (although these must be fully aware and promote the engagement of other specialists in those tasks).

The task of disaster reduction is of long-term nature thus needing a progressive approach, involving gradually interested institutions and connecting short-term objectives and activities with medium and longer-term goals and products.   It addresses all sectors of society, no single sector can do it alone, government, business, academic, scientific and technical institutions, NGOs, CBOs, media, schools, etc., and at all levels, from local to international

Even though disaster prone communities need to be at the front of the effort, the human, social, economic and environmental consequences of natural disasters most times affect the wider society, nationally and globally, and not only by the amount of resources required to address the response and rehabilitation consequences. They therefore require integrated policies at global as well as national and local levels

A current general estimate indicates that of $100 invested in disaster management, only $1 goes to reduction measures and $99 to relief and response activities, and this mostly in developed countries. It is therefore urgent that a process be set to reverse this trend reducing the increasing cost of relief efforts (with the negative dependency consequences that they bring along) and ensure that more resources can be allocated to development needs.

This need becomes even more acute when we realize that the expanding urban population, the increase in poverty, the environmental degradation and the expected climate change will only increase the intensity and frequency of natural disasters for many years to come

It is therefore essential that while improving and enhancing preparedness, response and reconstruction/rehabilitation measures, attention be increasingly paid also to the reduction of the vulnerabilities and risks that are at the heart of the disasters. This can only be effective if done in a concerted and participatory manner aiming at clear and specific long-term objectives, and with strong political priority recognition by communities

Developing a culture of prevention aims at addressing some of the most important obstacles for sustainable development, which are among others, ignorance and selfishness. It aims also at giving a preponderance to values such as respect, tolerance and solidarity over competition, individualism and aggressiveness

The ISDR was created to assist in this process and we are embarked in a planning process to gradually facilitate the identification of specific long-term

objectives with recommendations and guidelines to all sectors in society and at all levels, and this we expect to achieve by the year 2004 when the ten-year review of the Yokohama Conference will be undertaken

Meanwhile, short-term objectives for 2002-2003 that will lead to the longer-term process include: (a) a global review and report of disaster reduction initiatives world wide (a partial example is contained in a summary document on LAC that was prepared for a regional conference in Costa Rica last December); (b) the mainstreaming processes for inclusion of disaster reduction in other main global agendas, namely: the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August 2002), the climate change, desertification, human settlements - Habitat agenda, poverty reduction and gender strategies being developed by international organizations; (c) the strengthening of the IATF to involve and develop strong and effective partnerships among relevant institutions (such as at the regional level in Asia, the ADPC, the ADRC, the UN community and many of the organizations you represent); and (d) the development of regional and national outreach programmes with partners.

Main obstacles

– Lack of awareness and ignorance on the relevance of the subject, which does not allow for communities to put pressure on political and economic leaders who in general focus their attention on the short-term;
– Disaster reduction that is an essential component of sustainable development needs to be agreed upon by opposing political constituencies in any given society as an over-arching priority for the nation or community above other conflicting differences;
– Competition for resources and protagonism due mostly also to ignorance and which can only be overcome by strong partnerships that are the best way to attract the resources and ensure visibility for all and at the same time be able to address effectively the long-term needs;
– Lack of understanding that a real partnership goes far beyond signing a memorandum of understanding or entering into a formal agreement and requires constantly sharing of the knowledge, the resources, as well as the

achievements and the failures;

– Incomplete or short-sighted vision of many multilateral and bilateral donor agencies that fail to identify specific (quantifiable and measurable) long-term goals and to connect short-term investments with medium and longer–term objectives. A general vision does not substitute for specific long-term objectives and tasks and short-term activities do not necessarily build into medium or longer term processes; and

– Lack of understanding that long-term objectives of this nature require team efforts and that building a team requires focusing on the team building process in the first place, before going out together to address outside challenges. If we believe that the only way to go is with a long–term perspective and that we can only address it in team and partnerships, we then need to spend time building the bonds and connections among the partners that will in turn allow to be more effective

NGOs, government agencies, academic institutions or international organizations all depend on the same basic resource: their people and it is their people's skills and strengths and shortcomings that either help to solve or that will create the problems, therefore understanding people's behaviour must be an essential component of any managerial or leadership activity in the fields of disaster reduction and response.

ISDR needs the participation and leadership of NGOs at all levels. At the global, regional and national levels the NGO participation needs to be selective and therefore, NGOs need to agree among themselves, in a participatory and democratic process, on how and who should represent them in those levels, leaving all others actively engaged in complementary activities, mainly at the local levels and possibly taking turns to participate in the more general levels gradually.