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Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) ENGLISH only
Panel Remarks by Andre Krummacher

Introduction:

The last decade saw a shift of focus from emergency management to disaster risk management with an emphasis on activities that would mitigate or prevent disasters. At the national level, this shift in focus necessitated political will and the formulation of new policies and allocation of resources to institutional mechanisms that support risk management activities. Indeed, globally, and in particular among OSCE participating states, significant progress has been made on the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) priority 1 (making DRR a policy priority and institutional strengthening) and HFA priority 5 (preparedness for effective response). These are usually dealt with at national level and in a top-down manner because there seems to be a general perception among many policy/decision makers that national governments should be main actors in DRR: They are considered to have:

- a duty to ensure the safety of citizens;
- the resources and capacity to implement large-scale DRR;
- a mandate to direct or co-ordinate the work of others;
- and they create the necessary policy and legislative frameworks.

However, this thinking makes two misleading assumptions about communities:

1. It sees other forms of social organization as irrelevant to preparedness and emergency response action. Spontaneous actions by affected communities or groups (e.g., search and rescue) are viewed as irrelevant or disruptive, because they are not controlled by the authorities.
2. It is believed that disasters produce passive 'victims' who are overwhelmed by crisis or dysfunctional behavior. They therefore need to be told what to do, and their behavior must be controlled.

DRM must be a multi-stakeholder process: it is not only about government - many actors have a role to play, including local communities. Over the past two decades, the concept of Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) has emerged and is now generally recognised in the fields of disaster preparedness and mitigation and, increasingly, also in disaster response and recovery.

What is CBDRM?

CBDRM = A process of disaster risk management in which at risk communities are actively engaged in the identification, analysis, treatment, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risks in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance their capacities. This means that the people are at the heart of decision making and implementation of disaster risk management activities.

A CBDRM approach responds to local problems and needs, capitalizes on local knowledge and expertise, improves the likelihood of sustainability through genuine 'ownership' of strengthens community technical and organizational capacities, and empowers people by enabling them to tackle these and other challenges. It is about listening to people.

What is the rationale for a CBDRM approach?

- Local communities are the first line of defense in preparing and responding in the event of disaster. In the hours following a disaster search and rescue and the provision of immediate assistance to the injured and homeless are almost entirely carried out by family members,

relatives and neighbours. This is particularly the case in small-scale localized and recurring disasters which do not appear in the media or trigger a government response. However, these are the most common disasters and result in most losses, affecting livelihoods and hampering local development. If the local people are properly sensitized about the precautions and preventive actions to be taken in case of any hazard, the loss of life and damage to property can be drastically reduced.

- Top-down disaster risk reduction programmes often fail to address the specific vulnerabilities, needs and demands of at-risk communities. These vulnerabilities and needs can only be identified through a process of direct consultation and dialogue with the communities concerned, because communities understand local realities and contexts better than outsiders.
- Even the most vulnerable communities possess skills, knowledge, resources and capacities (HR, indigenous knowledge, etc.). These assets are often overlooked and underutilised and, in some cases, even undermined by external actors.

It is therefore crucial that at-risk communities are actively involved in the identification and analysis of the risks they are facing, and participate directly in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risk activities*.*

To be most effective, a process of capacity building and public awareness exercises must take place before disasters occur, and continue during and after such catastrophic events. Extension and other change agents can help facilitate this process. Civil society such as NGOs, but also the private sector and of course (actually most importantly) government agencies, can be such extension and change agents.

Challenges of CBDRM
- The bottom-up CBDRM approach needs to be plugged into/linked with the top-down government/national DRR approach. The biggest problem is to locate the interface where to make the link between these approaches to make then complementary and interconnect.
- Ensuring a large scale role-out/replication of what are often micro-projects or pilot initiatives. Capacity as well as resources need to be available
- Limited institutionalization of the approach with national line ministries/DRR agencies often due to lack of a) DRR legislation at sub-national and community level (this reference is also lacking in the HFA but will hopefully considered in the HFA2 debate); b) insufficient buy-in; c) lack of capacity and resources

Summary of three (3) key messages:
- DRM is a multi-stakeholder process that needs to involve local communities; it must be inclusive.
- Communities have skills, knowledge, resources and capacities to engage in DRM, especially when it comes to small scale-localized and recurrent disasters. CBDRM optimizes resources.
- There is no blueprint to CBDRM and there are many challenges, especially in regards to up-scaling and linking with the 'official' national-level DRM system.