



### Concept note

#### **Title: Building Urban Communities' Resilience to Disaster Risks: Challenges and Experiences towards the implementation of the HFA at local level**

#### **1. Introduction**

The reported number of affected people and damages caused by the severe impact of disasters arising as a result of natural phenomena (loss of human life, social and economic assets, means of subsistence, etc.) is often higher in urban than rural areas. This resembles the fact that the risk of disaster is mainly “social” because a physical event can only cause damage to a society if aspects of that society are exposed to its effects, irrespective of its origin, magnitude or intensity. The level of risk is always proportional to the threats and vulnerabilities, which, like the risk, constitute latent conditions in the society.

It is noteworthy to mention in this context that most of the urban centres, in developing countries, are facing the shortage of their capacities in terms of both technical as well as financial resources either to cope with natural hazards or to take proactive measures that mitigate the risks. The rapid haphazard urbanization processes many countries are facing, contribute to create multiple disaster risk at local and community level. There is a need to promote a more people-centred approach to disaster risk management to build truly resilient communities through local governance. In the context of ‘urban/local risk’ it is important to highlight that the political boundaries of an area cannot define our understanding of ‘local’ or the scope of risk reduction actions or, to an even lesser extent, the area of impact of a disaster. Local sustainable development and disaster risk management are processes that can transcend a limited political or geographical space, a given municipality or a specific community. They take the form of actions within an environment that combines specific cultural, social, productive, and environmental characteristics. They are determined by resources, strengths and capabilities and also by shared hazards and vulnerabilities in the urban-rural extended population. “*What was once dispersed rural poverty is now concentrated in urban informal and squatter settlements*”<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, building resilience at the local level maintaining relationships and interdependencies connected with coexistence of communities, ecosystems and the activities that are performed within them, has become one of the mainstays of recent disaster risk reduction approaches.

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: The World Bank, *Climate Resilient Cities, A Primer on Reducing Vulnerabilities to Disasters*, 2008

There are a few logical options available to cities and local authorities such as regulatory control in development of hazard prone areas, comprehensive land-use planning with regard to hazard environment, structural interventions for making the buildings and other infrastructure hazard resistant, and community based disaster risk management interventions for enhancing the household level of preparedness etc. However, such initiatives are not getting materialized often due to various reasons such as administrative limitations, political setbacks, resources constraints, insufficient capacities to deal with priorities, lack of accountability etc. Particularly within a community that has not succeeded in introducing development processes that incorporate disaster risk reduction and has built up a high level of vulnerability in its territories, the topic of preparedness assumes an even greater relevance. Improved preparedness initiatives both at city and community level can reduce potential damages and losses substantially.

Effective preparedness plan must incorporate the types of rescue and aid that will ensure not only the survival of local communities after a destructive event, but will also ensure sustainable recovery that can progress toward transformation and reduction of the pre-existing risks. There is a need for having a systematic and preventive approach for forecasting events with higher resolution and longer lead period, improved early warning and effective dissemination to reach most vulnerable communities: available emergency management systems need to be reinforced with scenario-based contingency planning approaches, setting up emergency services such as fire services, establishment of community level first responder mechanisms for supporting professional Search & Rescue teams etc. are ensured to be in place.

Furthermore, to guarantee sustainability to local and urban development processes, disaster risk reduction must be conceived as an on-going process of planning and implementing prevention and alleviation measures that must be designed to address the situations before, during and after a disaster. To build more resilient communities, it is indispensable to strengthen the process of information, strategic planning, dissemination and networking through empowering level decision makers as well as delegating some of the centralized DRM functions to local authorities.

*This side event is aimed at providing a platform for sharing experiences and lessons learned and facilitating a discussion forum among international, national, regional and local actors interested in urban and local risk reduction and the promotion of sustainable local development processes.*

## **2. Organising institutions and their approach to the problem**

### **Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC)**

ADPC advocates for local authorities in urban areas to focus more on disaster mitigation, preparedness and response mechanism in making urban disaster risk reduction a priority in the process of urban development. ADPC has gained invaluable experiences and lessons learnt over the years through implementation of regional programs which has become practical and cost effective demonstrations of urban vulnerability reduction. ADPC has been experiencing with higher success rates to implement projects in cities where political leaders have demonstrated high political commitment to take up the issue of vulnerability reduction as a priority in spite of resource constraints. Those who have a stake in urban development have to be associated with the process of hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment as well as planning for responding to reduce the impacts of natural disasters. General awareness has to be raised so that the communities can understand the importance disaster risk management and act accordingly. The preparedness initiatives should flow down to the community and household level, and the social norms should be built for building resilient urban communities by not only improving the urban services but also making the urban built up safer. More efforts are needed for mainstreaming DRR into urban local governance and assigning the responsibility with urban local authorities for reducing the impact of natural disasters. Achievements in implementing DRM programs in urban context always follow tremendous challenges. However, the successes so far gained by ADPC demonstrate the ways of attaining high

level of confidence through meeting the challenges and having an appropriate strategies to overcome them accordingly.

### **International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation (ITC/ILO)**

Capacity development is an on-going process, which include enabling mechanisms that allows learning from day-to-day experiences and actions. This process contributes to theoretical knowledge and development, practice, which is periodically assessed and constantly reinforced. ITC/ILO training is based on the management of local development and disaster risk reduction from the viewpoint of the sustainability of human interventions in environmental, economic, social and political aspects and also in the optimisation of endogenous resources within the territories.

The major resources of any community are the inhabitants and local stakeholders who play an important part in the development processes. The community stakeholders have thorough and important knowledge of the area and are familiar with the factors that generate risk and limit development. Consequently, they are the best managers to guarantee sustainable development and harmonious coexistence of society and the environment. This does not marginalize the importance of other agents of local development but recognize their role as complementary. The active involvement, dedication and team work among all stakeholders in the area will ensure realization of sustainable local development and disaster risk reduction.

Since year 2006, the ILO and the ITC/ILO are actively contributing to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action at the local level through training and capacity building programmes by looking at the potential role of local authorities and with the scope of strengthening capacities at the local level in disaster-prone and affected areas to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.

### **Disaster and Development Centre, School of Applied Sciences, Northumbria University, UK**

The purpose of the Disaster and Development Centre (DDC) is to develop through research, teaching and learning the knowledge and skills to address hazards, disasters and complex emergencies from the perspective of different development debates and experience. This field of inquiry and associated expertise, by necessity non-disciplinary, is guided by the needs of civil society and institutions in addressing vulnerability and disaster response.

The DDC explores the association of sustainable development with improved human security through risk management, resilience, emergency response systems, and longer-term recovery strategies both locally and in an international context. DDC activities include postgraduate studies and training in disaster management and sustainable development and community wellbeing in disaster and development, academic-practitioners links spanning four continents, collaboration with the UK emergency services, internationally funded research projects, and consultancy.

### **3. Expected results and outcomes:**

The main objectives of the side event are to:

- Share experiences and best practices worldwide in implementing programs for building disaster resilient communities, with a special focus on urban settings.
- Show how urban/local communities lead resilience activities can be integrated to local development planning to avoid the impact of localised risk
- Discuss the importance of local decision-makers, practitioners and socio-economic actors joint initiatives to achieve the objectives of HFA (2005-2015)
- Present challenges and open the debate among the group of participants on the real implementation of the HFA (2005 – 2015) at the local level.

#### **4. Partners involved/ Presenters suggested**

- 1) Urban Disaster Risk Reduction team of ADPC- Combined presentation on Urban Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives in Asia
  - 2) Comprehensive Disaster Management Program of the Government of Bangladesh- Earthquake vulnerability reduction in Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong and Tsunami vulnerability reduction in coastal cities in Bangladesh
  - 3) Dagupan City Government- Disaster Risk management approach by a city prone to multiple hazards
  - 4) Local Risk and Resilience Governance (Dhankuta Municipality and Pachkhal Village Development Committee case studies), DDC, Northumbria University
  - 5) Initiatives for strengthening the capacities at the local level to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels"- ILO/ITC
  - 6) Consultation version of the guidelines for localising HFA, explanation from Asia Regional Task Force on Urban Risk Reduction
5. **Co –Chair :** Dr. Bhichit Rattakul, Executive Director, ADPC and Mr. Alfredo Lazarte – Hoyle, Director (Crisis), ILO
6. **Facilitator:** ADPC / ILO
7. **Number of participants:** 25-30
8. **Equipment:** LCD Projector, Screen for projection, Sound System
9. **Date and Time:** Thursday 18th June , room 13, from 800-09:30am).