

Universal Aggravated Risks

According to the United Nations, more than 230 million people suffer from natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, droughts and destructive storms every year.

The consequences of these natural catastrophes are aggravated by global warming, population density in hazardous areas, rise of poverty and destruction of the environment. Unfortunately, the risk of disaster remains both one of the most threatening and also one of the least understood.

We could observe the dramatic effects of the South East Asia Tsunami in 2004 (about 230,000 dead and missing persons) and the chaos caused by the hurricane Katrina in 2005 in New Orleans. More recently, in 2008, we have witnessed the devastating impact of cyclone Nargis to the people of Myanmar and the damage caused by a 7.9 Magnitude earthquake to the province of Sichuan in China.

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)

The HFA is the key instrument for implementing disaster risk reduction, adopted in 2005 by the Member States of the United Nations. Its overarching goal is to build resilience of nations and communities to disasters, by achieving substantive reduction of disaster losses by 2015.

Urban risk prevention is one of the main goal of the implementation of the action plan and local governments have a key role to play.

The HFA offers five areas of priorities for action:

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.
2. Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.
3. Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.
4. Reduce the underlying risk factors.
5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

With the support of ProVention programme, local authorities are engaged to collaborate with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) system. The system works with national, regional and international partners in carrying out support functions to provide coordination and assistance in the promotion of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework.

The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

It is the main global forum for Governments, United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, regional bodies, civil society, the private sector, the scientific, and academic communities. UCLG, together with ICLEI, Metropolis and Citynet, participated in the launching of the Global Platform in 2007.

It aims at expanding the political space dedicated by governments to disaster risk reduction, in all sectors, and contributes to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals particularly in respect of poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

The Platform, as a global forum, will advocate for effective and timely action by nations, communities and all stakeholders and partners to mitigate risk, manage vulnerabilities and reduce disaster.

Costly risks



The costs generated by natural disasters are also increasing. The total amount of the funds used for reconstruction after hurricane Katrina rose to 200 billion dollars while the Kobe earthquake recovery efforts amounted to about 160 billion dollars. In developing countries, the annual cost of the disasters can represent a major part of GDP. These amounts correspond to 10 times the GDP of Kenya and to the GDP of Malaysia for 2006.

In China, in 2008, the earthquake of the province of Sichuan killed about 69,146 people and injured 374,131 people. It left 6.5 million homes flattened and 23 million damaged. 20 million people were displaced in the country because of the earthquake and the threatens of "quake lakes". The Sichuan earthquake will have a huge economic impact too, analysts say that the cost of reconstruction will rise to 20 billion dollars and will cost between 0.4 and 0.7 percent of China's GDP.

Decentralization as a prevention tool

We can reduce or avoid the lethal impacts of natural disasters with stronger disaster risk management. Acting at the local level is the best way to help people to protect themselves from the risks by reducing their vulnerability through pre-existing knowledge and strengthening the capacity of local and regional authorities.

Local governments are particularly interested in capacity development to obtain performant tools to reduce the risks.

The Partnership for Risk Reduction (United Cities and Local Governments, Earthquake and Megacities Initiative, ICLEI, Metropolis and CITYNET) initiated a program for Local Action on Disaster Risk Reduction to help cities and local communities in starting a long-term process towards reducing the level of risk caused by natural hazards.

The action for greater risk resilience of cities

The Local Action for Disaster risk reduction has three main goals:



1-Launch worldwide awareness campaigns for local authorities about risk reduction. The objective is to develop a knowledge and consciousness about risks and how to reduce dangerous practices (examples: constructions in risk zone, poor building standards).

2-Strengthen capacity at the local level to better manage risks by transferring technical know-how to local actors and decisions makers. The objective is to strengthen their knowledge and existing capacities in order to help them to plan risk reduction policies.



3-Build and strengthen a global platform for local authorities and their partners in order to promote a sustainable strategy for disaster risk reduction within the broad international context. Risk reduction must be considered as a key priority of local development.

Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction

Since 2004, EMI has been engaging a consensus-based, city-wide Disaster Risk Management Master Plan (DRMMP) in Metro Manila, Philippines, and also a Capacity Development Program for partner local governments.

Based on its experience in Metro Manila, the DRMMP process is currently being replicated in other major cities, namely, Kathmandu in Nepal (started in 2005) and Amman in Jordan (started in 2007) as well as in Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.

ICLEI is working with local governments in mainstreaming resilience building including the use of various instruments such as tools policies and procedures to strengthen disaster risk reduction. CITYNET has been implementing various capacity buildings programs for local governments, as the CITYNET Disaster Cluster and the City-to-City cooperation (C2C) initiatives. CITYNET and UCLG worked with Banda Aceh in Indonesia in helping and supporting in Post-Tsunami Reconstruction Project.

Human Responsibilities

Natural hazards are not the only cause of the rising number of victims and reconstruction costs. Human responsibility contributes to worsening the impact of natural disasters to cities and communities.

Political inaction, wrong development choices, low economic level, and poor understanding of the risk amplify the risk of disasters. Coordinated mitigation and preparedness measures can greatly reduce the impact of disasters on human lives and properties.



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Project Proponents

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UCLG :
United Cities and Local Governments is the main international organization who works for the promotion of the decentralization and the empowerment of local authorities through the world. UCLG is represented in 136 countries of the 192 members of the United Nations.

Metropolis :
Metropolis is the world organization of the Majors Metropolises and also, the metropolitan section of UCLG.

CITYNET :
Created in 1987, CITYNET is an organisation based in Yokohama, Japan and acts for the connection of local authorities.

EMI :
The Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative is an international, not-for-profit, scientific organization dedicated to the reduction of disaster risk in the world's megacities and major metropolises.

ICLEI :
ICLEI is an international organization of local governments who are oriented towards sustainable development.



Local Action on Disaster Risk Reduction

Partnership for Risk reduction



Eruption of the Galeras Volcano near Pasto, south of Colombia, the 1st of January 2005.

