The International Recovery Forum 2016 was organized in a context where the International Recovery Platform (IRP) has recently adopted its Strategic Framework 2016-2020. Under this framework, IRP seeks to strengthen its global position as a “recognized provider of information, including lessons and best practices, in the field of build back better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction”. While there has been a recognition of recovery as an opportunity to build back better, knowledge and capacity gaps continue to remain as key challenges – making it difficult for governments of impacted communities to plan and implement the later stages of recovery and reconstruction.

Background

Recognizing that “Build Back Better” must consider a wide range of factors to be effective, the Forum explored greater understanding of the concept while delving into three themes: (i) initiatives undertaken; (ii) development continuity; and (iii) lessons and guidance. Practitioners, experts, and policymakers from different parts of the world were invited to the forum to share knowledge and experiences along the three thematic discussions, which were moderated by Ms. Shukuko Koyama of ILO, Mr. Stefan Kohler of UNOPS, and Ms. Kyoko Kondo of ADRC respectively.

Themes

Highlighting that “Build Back Better” is a complex process, this initiative needs to be tailored to the type of hazards, coverage, locations, cultural traditions, and socio-political dynamics. Recognizing the complexity of the recovery process, the panelists emphasized the importance of promoting effective governance of build-back-better processes.

Ms. Elizabeth A. Zimmerman of Federal Emergency Management Authority shared an approach where the disaster-impacted communities led the recovery efforts and requested the particular assistance they needed from government authorities.

Director Romeo Fajardo of the Office of Civil Defense emphasized the critical role of coordinating the efforts of the members of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council of the Philippines.

Mr. Md. Akram H. Chowdhury and Mr. Shohel Ahamed of the Build Back Better Foundation stressed the importance of the leadership role played by the parliamentarians in mainstreaming “Build Back Better” approach into policies, legislation, and financing mechanism.

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2. **“Build Back Better” helps facilitate development continuity**

The speakers of this thematic session indicated that development can be enhanced by integrating “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Preparing for the possibility of Tokyo Metropolitan Earthquake or Nankai Trough Gigantic Earthquake, Mr. Kawata argued that the strengthening and maintenance of social infrastructure such as lifelines, ICTs, and local communities’ social capital are essential.

Mr. Joe Leitmann of the World Bank reported the relevance of strengthening the nation’s recovery systems to facilitate development continuity. In particular, he pointed out the need to: (i) develop a domestic capacity to implement disaster assessments; (ii) prepare recovery frameworks prior to disasters; and (iii) arrange predictable and accessible financing.

Ms. Mayra Valle of the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disaster in Central America (CEPREDENAC) stated that development continuity requires committed partners to adopt “multi-sector mechanism and institutionalized action protocols to increase the efficiency of the recovery process”.

Finally, Ms. Chikako Takase of United Nations Centre for Regional Development argued that the recovery process from Nepal earthquake of 2015 can be one of the cases to observe in terms of the linkage between environmentally sustainable transport and development continuity.

3. **“Build Back Better” can be localized using various strategies**

This thematic session affirmed that there are many existing strategies, tools, and technologies to aid recovery process. The key messages from Ms. Antonia Yulo Loyzaga of Manila Observatory in localizing “Build Back Better” were: (i) adopt a systems approach to analyzing risk and vulnerability; (ii) support the translation of science into policy and practice; and (iii) craft metrics responsive to multiple sectors across space and time.

Mr. Hiroaki Maruyama of the International Research Institute of Disaster Science, Tohoku University, presented the initiative called Global Centre for Disaster Statistics which was established in April 2015 at Tohoku University.

Mr. Jo Scheuer of UNDP presented some innovative approaches in localizing “Build Back Better” including, alliances with private sector to improve communications as well as establishing recovery observatories with NASA and other scientific partners.

Mr. Stern Kita of the Department of Disaster Management Affairs, Malawi shared the importance of putting in place a recovery framework that specifies the financing framework. He reported that the recovery framework of Malawi is progressing partly because the financial needs are based on priority interventions identified by the district and national sector stakeholders, and gaps have been established by analyzing sector needs against known recovery resources commitments.

**Conclusion**

The Forum reaffirmed that there is a range of knowledge, experiences, strategies, programs and case studies on “Build Back Better”. However, the challenge is how to translate knowledge into action. Concrete policies, schemes, mechanisms, and programs are often needed to achieve this. While governments and communities are expected to deliver concrete actions, IRP can extend support by: (i) facilitating the exchange of experiences and discussion on recovery challenges and “Build Back Better” opportunities; (ii) advocating for closer cooperation with development partners, regional intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations, and regional platforms for disaster risk reduction in promoting and building capacity; and (iii) disseminating information on build-back-better.

**About the Forum**

The Forum was held on 26 January 2016 at Hotel Okura in Kobe, Japan, with over 180 participants, including government officials, practitioners, experts, policymakers, and students from 37 countries. Mr. Stefan Kohler of UNOPS opened the Forum, and it was followed by a welcome message delivered by Mr. Kaoru Saito, on behalf of Mr. Toshinori Ogata, Deputy Director-General for Disaster Management Office of the Cabinet Office of Japan.

Like the previous forums, Governor Mr. Toshizo Ido of Hyogo Prefecture addressed the participants regarding the creative reconstruction and the importance of implementing both soft and hard measures in DRR. In between the discussions, two dignitaries delivered special presentations, namely Mr. Tatsushi Nishioka of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan who delivered a message on “World Tsunami Awareness Day” and Mr. Neil McFalane of the UNISDR who made a presentation regarding the outcome of the Third UN World Conference on DRR and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 focusing on Priority Four’s “Build Back Better” in Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction. In his presentation, he shared expectations to IRP which will play an important role in advising on the progress and challenges in the implementation of the “Build Back Better” priority of the Sendai Framework, along with the New IRP Strategy Framework. Mr. Kaoru Saito of the Cabinet Office of Japan closed the Forum.