The International Recovery Platform coordinated a thematic session at the 7th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 3-5 November 2016 in New Delhi, India. The session “Strategies and Actions on Build Back Better” was held on 4 November 2016. Six high-level speakers of the session shared their respective experiences and lessons relative to the key elements of build back better including: (i) policies and strategies, (ii) institutional arrangements, (iii) financing mechanisms, and (iv) implementation arrangements and recovery management. About 150 individuals participated in the session, where each speaker outlined key strategies and actions for build back better ranging from the areas of governance, gender, pre-investment, social inclusion, and sustainable development.

At the outset of the session, the IRP Secretariat made a presentation on the recently issued IRP Guidance Note on Recovery focusing on Private Sector. It was followed by the opening remarks by Ms. Setsuko Saya, Director, International Cooperation Division, Disaster Management Bureau Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, as Co-Chair of the IRP Steering Committee.

H.E. Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN Secretariat for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, reported that ASEAN is setting forward a regional policy on build back better based on the recovery and reconstruction component of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER).

The regional policy sets forth the process and the timeframe for assessment, recovery plan formulation, resource mobilization, coordination, and transition of recovery plan to development plan so that member states are guided through.

With the AADMER in place, member states are about to improve safer structural and non-structural measures during reconstruction. Other specific examples of regional efforts include Tripartite Core Group partnership in recovery from cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, as well as development of guides such as the Recovery Toolbox and the Disaster Recovery Reference Guide.

Mr. Sushil Gyewali, Chief Operating Officer of National Reconstruction Authority of Nepal, shared the key challenges of the Post-Disaster Recovery Framework 2016-2020. In terms of policies, the challenges include managing political interests, community expectations, compliance to build back better principle, and operations of the new National Reconstruction Authority that adopts a new perspective but remains its function under the old team. In terms of institutional arrangement, the challenges are institutional building against the pressure of delivery, as well as the capacity to deliver reconstruction that complements national resources with international expertise. In terms of financing mechanism, the challenges include ensuring international commitment, financing, and realistic recovery planning and implementation. In terms of recovery management, a robust and decentralized reconstruction coordination and implementation mechanism were designed and instituted as well as engaging community.
Mr. Austere Panadero, Undersecretary at the Department of the Interior and Local Government of the Philippines, highlighted the key initiatives that help addressing the gaps in DRR and recovery efforts. In terms of policies, land use plan is the ‘mother’ of all plans and the basis for ‘build back better’ at the local/community level. Additionally, hazard-proofing of public investments is advocated through planning-programming-budgeting linkages, as well as better Disaster Risk Reduction & Management and Climate Change Adaptation (DRRM-CCA) informed criteria for project development and evaluation. In terms of institutional arrangements, the barangay-level or village-level DRRM-CCA baseline information is being generated locally, and communities are strengthened through capacity building activities down to the household levels. In terms of financing mechanisms, initiatives such as Climate Change Expenditure Tagging (CCET) and the Seal of Good Local Governance through disaster preparedness audits are put in place. Finally, in terms of recovery management, a seamlessness of local development plans such as those drawn from Typhoon Haiyan experience in the Visayas and the “whole-of-government” approach under National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC) - Office of Civil Defense (OCD) are few of the many examples of tried and tested implementation arrangements.

Prof. Vinod Menon, Senior Advisor of Caritas India, pointed out that community-centered policies are essential. He introduced the “Community-Centered Risk Management Framework” for build back better, emphasizing inclusive recovery with special attention to the weak and marginalized groups. The framework was presented to be one of the solutions to address existing policy gaps as it facilitates: (i) coherence and convergence of policies relative to DRR, CCA, and SDGs; (ii) inclusion of the weaker sections of society as the hallmark of all recovery strategies; and (iii) support for resilience building of communities affected by ethnic conflicts, atrocities against vulnerable sections, violence and complex emergencies.

Mr. Achyut Luitel, Director of Practical Action Nepal, introduced the South Asian Disaster Report 2016, which outlines 12 recommendations for build back better in Nepal, namely: (1) promotion of multi-tier, multi-stakeholder policy directions; (2) harmonization and standardization of policy, legislative, and regulatory instruments; (3) ensuring institutional demarcation for phase-out planning and implementation; (4) institutions accountability for addressing DRR in development interventions; (5) focus on vulnerable within vulnerable; (6) enabling the potential and capacity of women as decision-makers; (7) making housing reconstruction owner-driven; (8) making schools safe for children; (9) building on local solutions; (10) move from cash transfer to risk transfer; (11) rebuilding micro and small enterprises; and (12) building disaster risk-informed development for resilience.

Ms. Shaila Shahid, Team Leader of Gender and Water Alliance Bangladesh, highlighted two policy actions, namely: (i) inclusion/awareness raising, by sharing a case in Bangladesh where participation of women in disaster management councils and local government, volunteerism, and representation in the management bodies are promoted; and (ii) capacity building focusing on understanding gender, identifying social relations between men and women, and how these relationships are socially constructed to encourage leadership role.

After active discussions, Mr. Stefan Kohler of United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), who is the Chair of IRP Steering Committee, offered the summary as the moderator for the session. First, recovery phase is an opportunity to build back better, which is essential to reduce vulnerability and to make the development more sustainable. This phase can be successful by inclusion of the weak and marginalized. Second, pre-investment is an important element for build back better to ensure development continuity, such as promoting risk-informed land use planning. Third, awareness, knowledge, and capacity such as in reference to gender and marginalized groups are essential in facilitating effective preparation to build back better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Finally, build back better in recovery is a large-scale institutional and technical effort, which requires all the stakeholders—government, civil societies, and private sector—to collaborate and work together, which was highlighted in the “whole-of-government” approach of the Philippines.

IRP New Publication: Guidance Note on Recovery: Private Sector

The Guidance Note on Recovery: Private Sector is the latest theme of the series. Like other IRP Guidance Notes, this document is a collection of case studies indicating the successes and challenges in disaster recovery with emphasis on the private sector.