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Forum 2017

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International Recovery Forum 2017

~Build Back Better Towards Resilient and Healthy Communities~

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Background

Health is recognized in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in many other landmark international frameworks and agreements – indicating the urgency of addressing the complex challenges and gaps along this area.

Mandated to act as an international mechanism for sharing of experiences and learning on build back better among countries and all relevant stakeholders, IRP adopted “Build Back Better Towards Resilient and Healthy Communities” as the overarching theme of the International Recovery Forum 2017.

Objectives

The main objectives of the Forum are:

- Explore how “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction can be addressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and
- Explore knowledge and understanding of “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction through sharing of country experiences; and
- Explore strategies and actions on health in the context of “Build Back Better” through sharing experiences on integration health agenda into disaster recovery, including consulting on the updated edition of Guidance Note on Recovery for Health.

Summary

The Forum was commenced by three opening remarks. Mr. Stefan Kohler, Chair of the IRP Steering Committee, noted the significance of the topics covered in the Forum by referring to one of the Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 3 “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.



Mr. Shigeki Habuka, Vice Minister for Policy Coordination of Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, shared his reflection on recovery experiences in Japan.



The last remark was delivered by Mr. Toshizo Ido, the Governor of Hyogo Prefecture, who emphasized the importance of passing on the knowledge and lessons from the recovery

process to next generations and how Hyogo sought to achieve a ‘creative recovery’ from the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in 1995.

The Forum 2017 comprised of keynote speeches, panel discussions, and a presentation of IRP knowledge product. Two keynote speeches were delivered to highlight recovery challenges from recent disasters, specifically the case of Southern Thailand Floods in January 2017 and the case of Kumamoto Earthquake in April 2016.

To understand what it takes to promote resilient and healthy communities in the context of recovery, two panel discussions were organized, namely “Build Back Better for Resilient Community” and “Integrating Health in Recovery”.



The Forum was also an opportunity to present the consultative edition of the Updated Guidance Notes on Recovery for Health (coordinated by the IRP Secretariat) to elicit further inputs and feedback.

Keynote speeches highlighted challenges from recent disasters

In his keynote speech, Police Lt. Gen. Nadhapit Sanidvong (who spoke on behalf of the Minister of the Interior, Kingdom of Thailand) highlighted three key challenges brought by the floods, namely: restoring livelihoods, rebuilding infrastructures, and managing the overall recovery plan. Actions to address these challenges included land use readjustments, strict enforcement of King’s guidelines for flood prevention (e.g. monkey cheek and spillway), and allocation of budget for DRR anchored to the concept of build back better.



In the second keynote speech, Prof. Yoshiaki Kawata (DRJ, Japan) pointed out a unique challenge for recovery in Kumamoto due to persistent earthquake aftershocks – where over 4,000 aftershocks higher than magnitude 1 had so far been recorded. Restoring livelihoods and facilitating immediate logistical support to impacted communities were the challenges faced.

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Actions to address these challenges included the creation of a “Working Group on Emergency Response and Livelihood Support Measures” to facilitate deeper investigation and recommend solutions. One of the recommendations mentioned was to adopt a “push mode” approach, where the national government is expected to immediately send emergency support to impacted communities without waiting for a formal request from the local governments.



Panel 1 “Build Back Better for Resilient Communities”

This panel discussion focused on how to prepare to build back better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction as recognized in landmark agreements like the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The panelists included Prof. Yoshiaki Kawata (DRI, Japan), Mr. Jack Radisch (OECD, France), and Ms. Gerilee Bennett (FEMA, USA). This session was moderated by Stefan Kohler (UNOPS).

Following insights were introduced:

- **Paying attention to logistical details.** It is recommended to explore logistical details (e.g. goods and materials transportation, daily operations, managing temporary housing, and sanitation) to build back better.
- **Good governance as the key to good recovery and promoting transparency in implementing recovery programs.** Corruption, or certain political and business interests can compromise build back better. OECD emphasized the need for regularly monitoring recovery process and funds. Transparency through resource tracking mechanisms can help address it. Good governance and transparency in recovery is also critical for the Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Understand the socio-cultural dynamics and adapt to the situation.** While existing policies and legal frameworks facilitate local decision-making, social dynamics and cultural conditions may hinder recovery process. FEMA presented community-based disaster recovery in the U.S. by introducing how flood-affected communities’ recovery through community empowerment, emphasizing the importance of community inclusiveness and pre-disaster planning.
- **Explore viable financing options with private sector.** Financing is among common challenges for recovery. The audience suggested exploring mechanisms for recovery programs involving private sector further.
- **Adopt socially inclusive policies.** The audience raised the importance of inclusiveness (ensuring “no one is left behind”) in recovery and reconstruction efforts to achieve build back better.



Panel 2 “Integrating Health in Recovery”

This panel discussion put emphasis on whether and how health considerations were taken into account in the recovery process. The panelists included Mr. James Newman (GFDRR, The World Bank), Dr. Hari Parajuli (Nepal Reconstruction Authority, Nepal), Mr. Shuichi Kasai (Japan Pharmaceutical Association) and Dr. Ryoma Kayano (WHO Kobe Center). This session as derated by Ms. Setsuko Saya (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan), who raised two key questions to the panel: Why is it difficult for the health sector to cover? How can the health sector contribute to the entire recovery outcome?

Following points were discussed:

- **Integrating health into disaster recovery programs for countries.** WB highlighted it, suggesting using tools such as PDNA.
- **Formally engage the private sector in recovery.** Following the recovery from earthquake in 1995, Kobe’s reputation as a “medical city” for its leading pharmaceutical industries contributed to the reconstruction of Kansai region’s economy as a part of national government’s initiative. Importance of engaging private sector in investing in recovery, including expanding collaboration between public and private sectors, was emphasized.
- **Seize the support from professionals.** JPA presented pharmacists’ roles during disasters, and the utility of “okusuritecho” (documented records of prescribed medicines), and “Mobile pharmacy” (pharmaceutical service vehicles that deliver medicines to remote areas with difficulties accessing large health facilities). “Mobile pharmacy” demonstrated many individuals’, institutions’, and groups’ willingness to assist health sector’s recovery. Exploring mechanisms promoting and managing volunteerism for health sector’s recovery, including preparing for professional volunteer initiatives prior to disasters, was suggested.
- **Enhance communication systems.** Disasters may overwhelm digital communication systems by damaging infrastructures. Implementing alternative communication systems functional during disasters, increased coverage and accessible to digitally-impaired populations, was recommended.
- **Encourage wider community participation and collaboration.** The urgency and demands for immediate progress can leave some groups behind in recovery, especially socially vulnerable groups. Wider community participation and inclusive recovery planning and implementation can help address it.
- **Prepare to and measure the progress of build back better.** Pre-disaster actions (pre-agreements and pre-contracts, including with private sector) can address many recovery issues. The question “How do we know we are building back better?” was raised. Using Open-ended Inter-Governmental Expert Working Group on Indicators and Terminology relating to Disaster Risk Reduction as a reference was recommended.
- **Need for more research on long term recovery phases.** WHO suggested the need for more research on long term perspective on recovery, including psychosocial effect on disaster survivors.



Closing

In closing, Ms. Setsuko Saya (Cabinet Office of Japan) shared her impression of the Forum. Firstly, she recognized IRP as a unique community, where people of different backgrounds and expertise come together to discuss and explore knowledge on recovery. Secondly, she affirmed the Forum is an avenue where knowledge and expertise on recovery can be drawn, shared, and applied. Finally, she observed that most of participants of the Forum were middle level practitioners that play critical roles in recovery efforts, who also learned about policies and political dynamics shared by top officials like ministers and governors. She encouraged wider participation in the upcoming Forums.



About the Forum 2017

The Forum was organized on 24 January 2017 at Hotel Okura in Kobe, Japan. It gathered over 140 participants from 33 countries, including government officials, practitioners, experts, policymakers, and students.