IRP Engagement at the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

22-26 May 2017, Cancun, Mexico

The International Recovery Platform (IRP) had actively engaged in the Fifth Session of the Global Platform with the overarching theme “From Commitment to Action”, by: (i) putting up a booth at the Market Place; (ii) delivering a talk at the Ignite Stage; and (iii) organizing a side event in line with Priority Four of Sendai Framework. The IRP events were aimed at advocating for:

- Closer cooperation with development partners, regional intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations, and regional platforms for disaster risk reduction by promoting effective build back better outcomes
- Wider dissemination and information sharing of knowledge and experiences on build back better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction

These IRP events provide inputs to the discussions and outcomes of GP2017, in particular advancing discussions for Priority Four of the Sendai Framework.

**IRP Booth at the Market Place**

The booth featured knowledge products (e.g. guidance notes and tools) on build back better and resilient recovery. The materials were drawn from IRP members and partners. At the end of GP 2017, the following were achieved:

- Distributed over 400 CD-Rs containing case studies, tools, and guidance on build back better
- Handed out over 500 printed brochures on IRP and recovery (e.g. IRP and members’ brochures, guidance notes, and reports)
- Showed promotional videos on Build Back Better as well as other related videos from IRP members

- Displayed banners bearing key messages on IRP works on build back better

**IRP Ignite Stage Presentation**

At the Ignite Stage, the value addition of IRP Guidance Notes on Recovery was demonstrated by presenting the case of Japan, and why it can build back better. Based on the analysis of the case studies on recovery from Japan, the following insights were drawn. Firstly, Japan demonstrates “readiness to recover”. This can be observed in the number of existing pre-disaster recovery plans and pre-agreements prior to disaster such as the one prepared by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in preparation for the Nankai Trough earthquake.

Secondly, Japan deliberately ensures adjustments and improvements in policy, infrastructure, and societal systems during recovery phase. This is clearly evident when Government of Japan updates the building codes and relevant legislations following a disaster through the history. Finally, Japan persistently promotes a “culture of resilience” by integrating readiness for recovery in people’s lifestyle. This is promoted through massive information dissemination, awareness-raising, and regular drills.

**IRP Side Event**

The IRP Side Event was jointly organized with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Vice Mayor of Sendai City opened the event by sharing recovery experiences of Sendai City. In this session, innovative programs on build back better – as presented by the speakers from JICA, India, and Guatemala – commonly highlighted “good governance of recovery process” as one of key factors for successful implementation. To achieve this, the following actions were specified.
It is important to promote local ownership of the recovery process. The findings based on JICA’s comparative study of Hurricane Mitch, Indian Ocean Tsunami, and Typhoon Haiyan revealed that local ownership of recovery process is fundamental to achieving build back better.

Ownership of the process promotes a more decisive and accountable decisions. It implies learning from past experiences to effectively achieve the recovery vision. It was argued that the stronger the local ownership, the lesser the role of international actors. However, it was noted that local ownership does not necessarily mean denying external support and assistance.

It is necessary to ensure responsibility with authority.
The experiences of India pointed that responsibility with authority includes strong institutional system that effectively handles political dynamics and continuity of efforts. It includes ability to delegate roles such making use of experts, consulting with stakeholders, community engagement, timely decision-making, effective coordination, and application of lessons from previous experiences.

It is useful to adopt a National Disaster Recovery Framework.
The Framework helps promote effective governance of the recovery process as this specifies the recovery protocols, roles of stakeholders, and tools to use for planning. In the case of Guatemala, the country adopted a National Disaster Recovery Framework in 2013 and was effectively put into practice during the recovery from the San Marcos Earthquake of 2014. The same municipality was impacted by earthquake in 2012. The Framework facilitated a more effective recovery for the following reasons: (i) it resulted to a more coordinated role sharing among agencies of the public sector due to prior knowledge and understanding; (ii) it allowed better distribution of resources in short-term and mid-term phases; and (iii) it reduced information gaps. With Guatemala’s experience and readiness to build back better, the country was able to provide technical assistance for recovery in neighboring Ecuador following the earthquake in April 2016.

“Build Back Better” in the Chair’s Summary

As indicated in the Chair’s Summary of GP 2017, risk information contributes to recovery preparedness and guides efforts to build back better. However, in order to be effective, build back better efforts require a whole of society approach, including the engagement of all stakeholders, strong partnerships to support scientific and technical research and its applications, and clear political commitment before and after disasters. In addition, the following important elements are identified in the Chair’s Summary to enhance build back better efforts:

- Risk-informed preparedness and recovery plans
- Strengthened multi-stakeholder platforms at both national and local levels, in accordance with Sendai Framework, for effective collaboration and coordination among national, local governments, and communities
- Having a policy framework and legal system for reconstruction in place in advance to facilitate the recovery process
- Community capacity development
- Local ownership

While the IRP side event provided inputs to the discussions in relation to Priority Four of Sendai Framework within GP 2017, direct inputs were derived from the Special Session on Enhancing Disaster Preparedness for Effective Response and to “Build Back Better” in Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction. This Special Session was co-chaired by Japan, Ecuador and a representative from Private Sector. Comprising high-level speakers from Zambia, Jordan, USA, and the European Commission, the session came up with the following seven recommendations:

i) enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery is important for achieving the global targets in Sendai Framework. In particular, the urgency of ensuring preparedness and recovery plans are risk-informed by 2020 is key to achieving target (e); ii) multi stakeholders’ platform for policy dialogue both at national and local levels is effective for collaboration; iii) all of society engagement including women, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people should be secured; iv) importance of preparing a policy framework and legal system for reconstruction before an event (pre-disaster recovery planning embedded under policy framework); v) importance of capacity building in communities; vi) international cooperation for disaster risk reduction was pronounced. A large-scale disaster might be beyond the capacity of one country, and in many cases, damage itself, goes beyond boundaries; vii) implementation in coherence with policies for “Sustainable Development Goals” and “Climate Change”.

Corollary to this, the consultative version of Sendai Framework Words into Action on “Build Back Better” in recovery was announced. This was developed collaboratively by many recovery experts and advisors of a voluntary Working Group facilitated by UNISDR. IRP contributed to this process. The guidance outlines four related tasks. The first task is to develop an all-stakeholder, national-level Disaster Recovery Framework (DRF). The second task is to enable and foster Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning (PDRP) efforts among all stakeholders. The third task is to institutionalize formal and inclusive processes and systems to effectively assess post-disaster damages and needs to formulate broad recovery strategies. The fourth task is to institute or strengthen policies, laws, and programs that promote, guide, and support build back better in both the public and private sectors, at various levels.

This consultative version is for further inputs by community of practice (http://www.preventionweb.net/go/53213).