IRP Engagement at the 2018 AMCDRR

3-6 July 2018, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

At the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR), 3-6 July 2018 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, the International Recovery Platform (IRP) organized and supported a series of events to highlight recent developments on “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. This issue of the IRP Herald provides highlights from the IRP-hosted Side Event at the AMCDRR, IRP’s presentations in a Special Event and the Ignite Stage, engagement with the Market Place, as well as UNISDR’s featured technical session on Preparedness and Build Back Better. IRP was also able to convene an informal gathering of the Steering Committee members in attendance.

Side Event: Recovery as an Opportunity to Prevent Risk

IRP organized a side event at the AMCDRR to showcase recovery initiatives, pre- and post-event, that contribute to preventing risk and sustaining development. Panelists discussed the ways in which recovery contributes to resilience through build back better efforts, while giving due consideration to specific contexts, and recognizing unique features of different locations in terms of vulnerabilities and risk factors. Mr. Shinichi Takahashi, Vice Mayor, Sendai City, opened the event, describing three recovery initiatives to strengthen resilience following the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. The IRP Secretariat reported on the outcomes of the International Recovery Forum 2018, which focused on Building Back Better in Urban Resilience.

The interactive panel members included Ms. Myat Moe Thwe, Director, Department of Disaster Management, Republic of the Union of Myanmar; Mr. Arghya Sinha Roy, Disaster Risk Management Specialist, Asian Development Bank; and Mr. Mahesh Pradhan, Programme Officer UN Environment. Ms. Thwe reflected on recovery efforts from Cyclone Nargis, and the opportunities they presented to strengthen community resilience in housing, infrastructure, and livelihoods. Mr. Roy explained that post-disaster assistance for recovery can create opportunities to strengthen resilience but success is dependent on longer-term commitment; robust, flexible approaches for reconstruction; good governance arrangements; adequate and timely availability of financing; and facilitating knowledge and strengthening partnerships.

Mr. Pradhan reported that effective disaster waste management during the recovery process can enhance resilience by integrating disaster contingency planning in national and city-level waste management strategies; improving routines for sorting, collecting, and storing disaster waste; reducing the impact of waste on the environment during recovery; and utilizing engineered landfills. Ms. Setsuko Saya, Director, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan and co-Chair of IRP Steering Committee, moderated the event. Reflecting upon the proceedings, Ms. Saya highlighted the importance of strengthening resilience by preparing to build back better pre-disaster. Ms. Saya urged participants to take preparations to build back better one step further and “build forward better”, underscoring one of the recommendations of the 2018 IRP Forum, as vulnerabilities should be addressed today.

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Lessons and Challenges

Ignite Stage: Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning: Lessons and Challenges

IRP argued that effective recovery begins before disaster happens. Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning (PDRP) addresses common recovery issues associated with time, resources, and capacity. The presentation highlighted five lessons on PDRP, notably: recovery strategies and decisions can be made now; the planning process facilitates stronger stakeholder relationships; it helps explore modalities for financing recovery; it ensures accountability; and it promotes build back better for resilience. However, in practice, PDRP is often not conducted frequently enough; communities fail to recognize the value; often a lack of local resources or mandate to encourage participation; it is not integrated in DRR plans as most are stand-alone plans; and it requires regular conduct of drills and revision of manuals. PDRP raises awareness and appreciation of the operational value of recovery preparedness. It enables an effective coordination structure and facilitates rapid, informed action in an otherwise demanding and chaotic environment following a disaster. It requires commitment, including consistent drills and updated manuals.

Market Place: IRP a Network for Build Back Better

The IRP booth at the Market Place showcased IRP knowledge products, publications, and good practices in build back better in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. IRP distributed 300 IRP brochures, 320 USBs and CDs containing knowledge products on recovery, 20 copies of Guidance Notes on Recovery for Private Sector, and over 150 copies of IRP Herald to the more than 500 people who visited the booth. The booth exhibited posters, banners, video, newsletters, flyers, and guidance notes on recovery.

Technical Session 4: Preparedness and Build Back Better

The AMCDRR Technical Session Four focused on Preparedness and Build Back Better. Among the key messages shared by the panelists included the following highlighted actions to contribute to build back better:

- **Assess and improve:** In Nepal, the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) enables the Nepal Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to understand the impacts of the earthquakes and identify what groups of people are most in need. It informs what projects need priority and improvement. In Kumamoto Prefecture, the assessment led to the adoption of “Creative Reconstruction”.
- **Engage community and “leave no one behind”:** The Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) engages the community in recovery. NRCS’s experience adds value to the national recovery programs through consensus on the recovery framework.
- **Reduce environmental impacts:** Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) highlighted that recovery is a development issue, and like development projects, recovery projects must reduce environmental impacts using tools such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Integrated Strategic Environmental Assessments (ISEAs).
- **Enhance Capacity:** One of the programs under ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) is the ASEAN Standards and Certification for Experts on Disaster Management (ASCEND) designed to ensure that recovery managers possess essential capacities to carry out respective tasks.
- **Specify what is “better” recovery:** The European Commission specified coverage, time, collaboration, and financing as qualifiers for “better” in recovery.

Special Parallel Event: Enhancing Resilience through Disaster Waste Management and Building Back Better

The IRP Secretariat spoke in this special event to highlight the importance of enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to build back better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The presentation focused on how disaster waste can be an asset to recovery and efforts to build back better, supporting its arguments with cases documented in IRP’s Guidance Note on recovery for Environment. The presentation looked at how disaster waste can often be recycled or repurposed to supply reconstruction and efforts to build back better, and reduce stress on landfills. Disaster waste can often be sold to introduce much-needed cash into recovery, and green waste can be composted. Investment in ecosystems and in resilience projects, including build back better, is a major opportunity for development and climate finance.