Highlights of IRP Engagements at the World Reconstruction Conference 4 and the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction 2019

13-17 May 2019, Geneva, Switzerland

Introduction

The sixth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2019) and the fourth World Reconstruction Conference (WRC4) were held in conjunction with one another in Geneva, Switzerland, the week of 13-17 May 2019. The events were organized by UNDRR (GP2019), and World Bank/GFDRR, UNDP, UNDRR and the European Commission (WRC4), with conference themes focused on the “Resilience Dividend: Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Societies” and “Inclusion for Resilient Recovery”, respectively. They offered a unique, full-week opportunity for the IRP and participants to dive deeply into progress and challenges in inclusive recovery.

The IRP Secretariat, IRP Steering Committee Members and Observers were well-represented at the conferences, contributing across the agendas and to the outcomes of these significant events, as both conveners and speakers. IRP held a successful Side Event at the Global Platform, thanks to the support of its SC Members and Observers. IRP also convened the 25th Meeting of the IRP Steering Committee.

IRP Side Event at GP2019: Securing an Inclusive Build Back Better Dividend

Disadvantaged, vulnerable people are frequently disproportionately impacted by disasters, and often with poor access to recovery resources and technical assistance. They are too often unable to benefit from efforts to build back better. The IRP-organized side event at the Global Platform, “Securing an Inclusive Build Back Better Dividend” convened an expert panel composed of representatives of national governments, civil society, and academia to address lessons learnt from diverse recovery experiences in working to secure more equitable recovery outcomes.

Mr. Haruo Hayashi, President of the National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Resilience, opened the session by introducing the vision for building back better developed for the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in Japan. He focused his remarks on evidence and lessons learnt on achieving ‘life recovery’ inclusively, which can be applied to contemporary recovery efforts. Mr. Kamal Kishore, Member, National Disaster Management Authority, India, spoke of the need for nimble institutional arrangements that can enable more holistic, integrated approaches to recovery, and can efficiently coordinate between agencies. Mr. Kishore proposed that recovery cannot be ‘better’ if it is not inclusive, and recommended that recovery planners should consider people and communities themselves as assets and contributors to recovery planning and implementation.
Mr. Mark Osler, Senior Advisor for Coastal Inundation and Resilience for the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, presented inclusive approaches to drive the translation of science into decision-making support. He noted that including communities in knowledge translation gives agency to disadvantaged communities, leverages local wisdom and experiences, and yields better risk information. Mr. Sushil Gyewali, Chief Executive Officer, National Reconstruction Authority, Nepal, shared evidence of the benefits of inclusive recovery in Nepal and the key initiatives that catalyzed better, more equitable outcomes. Ms. Emily Wilkinson, Senior Research Fellow, Overseas Development Institute, introduced the Caribbean Knowledge Network on Resilience and Recovery, a new community of practice taking a collaborative approach. It brings representative stakeholders together to learn from recovery experiences and plan for future recovery scenarios. Mr. Juan Caballero, Director of Programmes and Partnerships for Latin America, Build Change, shared innovative practices in inclusive housing reconstruction through owner and inhabitant-driven approaches. Mr. Tadanori Inomata, Advisor, Office for Global Relations, Nagasaki University, shared a ‘village-academia collaboration model’, in which academic faculty members, posted to affected villages, improve risk communication and promote inclusive recovery programmes.

The thematic session on Community-led Recovery at the WRC4 considered the leading role of communities as a key mechanism for achieving a more inclusive recovery and better overall recovery outcomes. The IRP Secretariat was invited to join a panel discussion, along with key representatives from JICA and Habitat for Humanity, and moderated by IRP SC Member GFDRR. The IRP Secretariat shared lessons gleaned from community-led recovery efforts, underscoring the complexity of the community-led recovery process, as well as important challenges and considerations in mobilizing communities and managing community-level recovery programs. The IRP Secretariat also shared good practices that have emerged from a range of global community-led recovery efforts, including examples from the 2001 Gujarat Earthquake and the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. The session outcomes were taken up by the WRC4 Joint Communiqué outcome document, including prioritizing community participation in recovery with access to information, decision-making opportunities, and engagement of community-led organizations.