

REPORT

IRP Participation
World Reconstruction Conference
Third Edition



Brussels, Belgium

6-8 June 2017

INTERNATIONAL RECOVERY PLATFORM

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Executive Summary

The International Recovery Platform (IRP) Secretariat had actively participated in the third edition of the World Reconstruction Conference (WRC3), 6-8 June 2017 in Brussels, Belgium. The Secretariat extended support in organizing and documenting a number of independent sessions, including: (i) update from the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction; (ii) livelihood recovery and social protection; (iii) private sector as key partners in preparedness, response, and recovery; (iv) preparing and planning for recovery through strengthening institutions and capacities; and (v) policies and institutional arrangements for recovery.

The discussions at the sessions demonstrated how the concept of “build back better”, which is highlighted in Priority Four of the Sendai Framework, can be implemented in transformative manner that reduces risks and builds resilience and mindful that the next disaster can be of different nature from the previous one. Based on a number of experiences shared at the sessions, it was explicitly shown that build back better is not only about upgrading infrastructure with disaster resilient construction technologies but also about stronger governance systems, improved basic services, diversified livelihoods for people, and better social protection mechanisms for the poor and vulnerable families. To build back better, it is critical to understand the underlying causes of failures and take the opportunity in recovery phase to address these failures such as through risk-informed land use planning and improved build standards and enforcement. There are many factors that can contribute to a successful build back better effort by governments, including:

- ❑ Ability to develop specific institutional, policy, and legal frameworks for recovery process
- ❑ Capacity to support recovery interventions efficiently and effectively so that these sustainable
- ❑ Ability to coordinate multiple stakeholders that support and bring financial and technical resources to implement recovery programs

It was affirmed in the plenaries and sessions that one of the contributory factors to achieve “resilient recovery” (the overarching theme of WRC3) is the degree of preparation for recovery. Put simply, “preparedness for recovery” – as promoted in countries like India, Japan, USA, and New Zealand which developed well-planned and well-resourced institutional and financial systems – means putting in place the following instruments prior to disaster:

- ❑ Institutions, policies, and laws on recovery
- ❑ Financial mechanisms
- ❑ Dedicated personnel and resources

On the final day of the WRC3, this question was debated: What can we do to make recovery resilient? Obviously a generic solution is not possible because recovery is a complex and integrated process. As already known based on past experiences, various factors need to be considered to make recovery resilient such as: (i) preparedness and readiness to recover; (ii) context and capacity; (iii) systems and institutions; (iv) localization; and (v) inclusiveness or “all of us”. The complexity of recovery process may call for context-specific strategies and actions for resilience.

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Background

1. As a result of the strong advocacy efforts undertaken by the World Bank, UNDP, European Union and other partners, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction includes as Priority 4 a focus on “build back better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction”. This priority provides an important premise for engagement of all national governments, UN system and multilateral agencies to implement recovery in a transformative manner that reduces risks and builds resilience in an increasingly complex world of multiple and colliding risks.
2. There is a recognition that recovery is much more than returning to pre disaster conditions, it is about ensuring that affected communities build physical and socio-economic resilience to disasters. Recovery is a critical opportunity to build back better and reduce future disaster risks through development measures such as risk-informed land use planning and improved building standards and their enforcement. The concept of “Build Back better” is not only about upgrading infrastructure with disaster resilient construction technologies but also about introducing stronger governance systems, improved basic services, diversified livelihoods for people and better social protection mechanisms for poor and vulnerable families.
3. Governments play a key role in ensuring that the “build back better” concept is applied in post disaster recovery processes, particularly in effectively planning recovery processes, providing technical and financial resources and coordinating the recovery processes. Governments must be able to develop specific institutional, policy and legal frameworks and capacities to be able to support recovery interventions efficiently and effectively so that these efforts are sustainable and reduce vulnerability to future disasters. They must do this in a context in which recovery is becoming a complex undertaking with multiple stakeholders supporting and bringing together their financial and technical resources for implementation, and meeting rising aspirations of the people. Recovery not just restores, it also connects with development in a short period of time, often a challenging task for governments and other agencies.
4. The experience of recovery programs points to the widespread recognition that a well-planned and well-resourced institutional and financial system are necessary to support recovery. Disaster recovery is efficient if institutions, policies, laws and financial mechanisms are set up prior to the disaster so that dedicated personnel and resources are able to deliver recovery benefits to people in an effective and timely manner and in the context of a supportive policy environment. For countries experiencing complex emergencies, when conflict and disasters overlap, the recovery process is even more challenging because the social contract is broken and existing capacities or assets might have been weakened. Several Governments, particularly those who manage recovery often, are better prepared with setting up institutions, defining roles, policies and finances for recovery. “Preparedness for recovery” has been undertaken by India, Indonesia, USA, Australia and New Zealand, and a number of countries in Europe, Latin America and Africa. While being a relatively new practice, preparedness for recovery is

gaining significant traction – considering its benefits and the increasing frequency of recovery processes around the world.

5. The overall goal of the WRC3 will be to identify effective and forward-looking approaches to achieve resilient post-crisis recovery in which climate and disaster risk reduction, fragility and conflict considerations are mainstreamed. With the following specific objectives:

- ❑ *Promoting building back better through recovery as a path to resilience and sustainable development:* The availability of resources and favorable policy climate following a disaster or a conflict makes it possible to introduce changes that build resilience against future shocks or crisis. Recovery processes, in fact, present the opportunity for introducing change and making the right development decisions through recovery programs that “Build Back Better” (BBB) by integrating resilience into the restoration of physical infrastructure and societal systems, and into the revitalization of livelihoods, economies, and the environment. This translates into building safer structures by enforcing disaster resilient construction standards; supporting vulnerable groups through insurance and social protection measures; empowering women and disadvantaged groups through joint titling of land, property, and assets; and improving and expanding basic services to build resilient communities. It is hence essential to ensure that a BBB approach is promoted and universalized through recovery to increase the resilience of nations and communities.
- ❑ *Making recovery inclusive for greater equity and equality:* To be effective and equal, disaster recovery must be participatory and inclusive. Recovery must also be fair and equitable, non-discriminatory, and address the needs of all disadvantaged groups. In order to do so, recovery programs must be based on the needs and priorities of the people affected by the disaster. It is, therefore, critical to engage the affected population in determining such needs and priorities and, as importantly, in the planning of recovery interventions to ensure that they truly respond to people’s needs. Through local NGOs and civil society groups, governments can create opportunities for active and meaningful participation of the communities through all phases of a recovery program.
- ❑ *Leveraging consensus on recovery as a means to implement Sendai and other global frameworks for development and resilience:* The Sendai Framework, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an impetus for countries to graduate towards risk informed development in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and, in so doing, the likelihood and impact that disasters have on their economies and people. SDGs are related to poverty, hunger, peace and all the important services such as health, water and sanitation, and education. Sustainable cities and communities are critically linked to how communities recover when they are affected by disasters or conflicts. Investing in the capacity to manage and reduce climate, disaster or conflict risk, and equally in strengthening the capacities of governments to plan and implement peacebuilding and recovery processes, is therefore essential for maintaining access to services and building

resilient communities. As recovery provides the opportunity to implement measures and develop capacities that reduce climate; disaster and conflict risk in the short, medium and long term and build back better, it should be conceived as an important means to implement these global frameworks and become an essential part of the discourse on sustainable development.

IRP Participation

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7. The discussions at the sessions demonstrated how the concept of “build back better”, which is highlighted in Priority Four of the Sendai Framework, can be implemented in transformative manner that reduces risks and builds resilience and mindful that the next disaster can be of different nature from the previous one. Based on a number of experiences shared at the sessions, it was explicitly shown that build back better is not only about upgrading infrastructure with disaster resilient construction technologies but also about *stronger governance systems, improved basic services, diversified livelihoods for people, and better social protection mechanisms* for the poor and vulnerable families. To build back better, it is critical to understand the underlying causes of failures and take the opportunity in recovery phase to address these failures such as through risk-informed land use planning and improved build standards and enforcement. There are many factors that can contribute to a successful build back better effort by governments, including:
 - Ability to develop specific institutional, policy, and legal frameworks for recovery process
 - Capacity to support recovery interventions efficiently and effectively so that these sustainable
 - Ability to coordinate multiple stakeholders that support and bring financial and technical resources to implement recovery programs
8. It was affirmed in the plenaries and sessions that one of the contributory factors to achieve “resilient recovery” (the overarching theme of WRC3) is the degree of *preparation for recovery*. Put simply, “preparedness for recovery” – as promoted in countries like India, Japan, USA, and New Zealand which developed well-planned and well-resourced institutional and financial systems – means putting in place the following instruments prior to disaster:
 - Institutions, policies, and laws on recovery
 - Financial mechanisms
 - Dedicated personnel and resources
9. On the final day of the WRC3, this question was debated: *What can we do to make recovery resilient?* Obviously a generic solution is not possible because recovery is a complex and integrated process. As already known based on past experiences, various factors need to be considered to make recovery resilient such as: (i) preparedness and readiness to recover; (ii)

context and capacity; (iii) systems and institutions; (iv) localization; and (v) inclusiveness or “all of us”. The complexity of recovery process may call for context-specific strategies and actions for resilience. For instance the World Bank, in the context of urban resilience, suggested the following actions to make recovery resilient for cities and urban communities:

- Prepare the community – e.g. raising awareness and drills
- Build institutions – e.g. recovery agency/department
- Financing system – e.g. facility for recovery
- Invest in recovery – e.g. mitigation efforts
- Social protection – e.g. inclusion of vulnerable groups in the whole process

WRC3 and Key Messages

10. More than 800 participants from civil society, national and local governments, academia, the private sector and international organisations from around the world gathered in Brussels from 6-8 June 2017 for the Third Edition of the World Reconstruction Conference (WRC3). They addressed the role of post-crisis recovery and reconstruction for resilience building and disaster risk reduction and shared experience with a view to advance the implementation of the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The conference was jointly organised by the European Commission, the World Bank’s Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP).
11. The WRC3 took place against the backdrop of a continuing rise in the number of people affected by disasters around the world. From 2012 to 2014, close to 1000 disasters impacted more than 326 million people across the globe. The cost of physical damage caused by these events is also rising, from an estimated EUR 18 billion on average per year in the 1990s to about EUR 90 billion per year in the first decade of this century. Today, physical damages and economic losses together range from EUR 220 to 270 billion per year. As climate change, urbanization and migration accelerate, the need for recovery will continue on an upward trajectory. Despite ongoing and expanding efforts to minimize hazard impacts through disaster risk reduction, the recovery function remains relevant and necessary.
12. The WRC3 hosted 29 sessions organised around four main themes – 1) Recovery interventions; 2) Recovery in conflict and fragile situations; 3) Recovery preparedness; and 4) Leveraging political consensus on Sendai Priority 4. It also included special sessions on Nepal and Somalia. Participants aimed to identify effective and forward-looking approaches to achieve resilient post-crisis recovery in which climate and disaster risk reduction, fragility and conflict considerations are mainstreamed.
13. The key messages from WRC3 are:
 - Resilient recovery is an imperative for sustainable development:** Resilient recovery addresses setbacks caused by disasters for building back better, while offering an opportunity to stimulate political will in investing in long-term resilience. Resilient

recovery involves strengthening capacities to deal with future risks thereby supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Also, resilient recovery requires humanitarian and development actors to work together in reducing risks and vulnerabilities. At the same time, adapting to the adverse effects of climate change will require massive efforts and investments in disaster-resilient and **resilient infrastructure**.

- ❑ **Situations of conflict and fragility require special attention in recovery processes:** Conflict and fragility aggravate the impact of natural disasters by increasing vulnerability and make recovery processes far more challenging. Responding to fragile and conflict situations goes far beyond dealing with the physical impact of the conflict; it requires addressing policies and institutions as well as the underlying causes of conflict and risks of future conflict. Policies must adapt to the context of a fractured society and institutional settings. **Conflict sensitivity must be built into all recovery activities** to avoid unintended negative consequences for an open or latent conflict.
- ❑ **Preparing for recovery pays off:** In view of the increasing frequency, intensity and cost of disasters, investments in recovery preparedness are required, in particular in the most vulnerable and least-developed communities and countries. Strong institutional arrangements, financial mechanisms and policies support quicker and more effective recovery.
- ❑ **Better prepared communities recover faster:** The strength of local communities in responding to and protecting against natural hazards and climate change is key. In the event of disaster, studies show that 90% of survivors are rescued by their own neighbors, and this level of engagement continues through recovery. Local communities should be considered equal partners to governments in resilient recovery. **Local ownership and leadership** are essential for creating lasting solutions to cope with risk and shocks.
- ❑ **Women's participation as actors in recovery is essential for building back better:** The marginalisation and vulnerability of women living in poverty is worsened in the wake of conflicts, disasters and complex emergencies. Understanding the underlying drivers of the differentiated impacts of crisis and conflicts on women is a prerequisite for identifying ways to leverage the potential of women's leadership for more sustainable and inclusive recovery, peacebuilding and community resilience.
- ❑ **Cultural heritage is a central element of resilient recovery and reconstruction:** Cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, have increasingly been affected by disasters and have become the direct targets of systematic and deliberate attacks in numerous conflicts. The Sendai Framework underlines the importance of addressing the resilience of this critical infrastructure. Reconstructing cultural heritage is essential for a resilient recovery as it represents both an asset to be protected and a resource to strengthen the ability of communities and their properties to resist, absorb and recover from the effects of natural or human-made hazards.

- ❑ **The potential for partnering with the private sector should especially be pursued,** particularly in the area of **Risk Financing**. There is a clear economic case for resilient reconstruction and recovery, similarly to disaster risk reduction. Building Back Better, and Disaster Risk Reduction are relevant to economic planning, and could better involve the private sector actors as well as the competent authorities. An all of society engagement is important, in particular with the private sector. Resilient recovery and risk reduction call for **risk proofed and resilient investments**.

Way Forward

14. As way forward, the participants at the WRC3 may take the cue from message of the European Union Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis who recommended three key action points:

- Strengthen Resilience
- Understand Risk
- Work with Private Sector

Photos at the WRC3







International Recovery Platform Secretariat

DRI East Tower 5F
1-5-2 Wakinohamakaigan-dori
Chuo-ku, Kobe 651-0073
Japan

TEL: +81-78-262-6041
FAX: +81-78-262-6046
E-mail: info@recoveryplatform.org
URL: www.recoveryplatform.org