

ISSUES IN DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT: INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES

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Abstract

Progress in science and technology, wide availability of and access to knowledge and a favorable international approach towards cooperation and collaboration has led to a broad global consensus that disaster risk reduction is very much possible even in developing countries despite economic constraints and existence of conflicting priorities to fulfill fundamental needs of the society such as shelter, basic health, and nutrition. Contributory to this thinking are the contemporary common understanding and tools such as incorporation of disaster safety as a part of the fundamental rights of population, mainstreaming disaster reduction into development and poverty alleviation processes, community-based disaster risk management, and the acceptance that the acceptable level of risk varies across communities, societies and nations.

However, in many developing countries, the process of comprehensive disaster risk reduction is still very slow due to a variety of factors at play, among which the most important are a) continued lack of knowledge (especially with those who need it), b) lack of proper mechanism for propagation and internalization of knowledge, c) lack of proper environment for implementing Disaster risk reduction and preparedness initiatives, and d) lack of common approaches, commitments, and methodologies for implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives among the key players. The result is a dilution of efforts: knowledge exists but not with those who should use it, knowledge is not always compatible with the local needs because researches do not address the local problems, implementation is hindered by lack of resources and the resource-allocation is not compatible with the needs because again of the lack of knowledge with the resource allocators.

In this context, the role of information and knowledge management becomes the key factor for better addressing issues of Disaster risk reduction and implementation of DRR initiatives. "How to do" has become more important than "What to do". Translating "lessons learned" from past disaster events into practical implementation tools, focusing efforts in identifying "what to do" to the specific local problems, and sharing of successful approaches, methodologies, technologies including the traditional wisdom etc appear to be the strategies for improving the current conditions. The generators and providers of Disaster Risk Reduction information should consider these facts. At the same time research institutions and disaster

information initiatives should include in their work program not only generation and provision of disaster information, but also activities for promotion of the information use, validation of approaches and methodologies, development of consensus of standards, conduct collaborative specific researches (for example on stone masonry or non-engineered structures) with related institutions in developing countries and be involved in the process by creating specific working groups and organizing workshops.