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Daily #1

UNDRR Bulletin

UNDRR — UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

A publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development

Tuesday, 14 May 2019 Vol. 141 No. 13

Global Platform 2019 Highlights
Monday 13 May 2019

The Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction 2019 (GP2019) began preparatory events on Monday, ahead of the three-day high-level meeting that will take place from 15 – 17 May. Many forums and side events took place in and around the main conference venue of the International Conference Center Geneva (CICG), Switzerland, organized by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and partners including the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), universities and other international organizations. This bulletin covers discussions that took place at the fourth World Reconstruction Conference (WRC4), the second Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems Conference (MHEWS-II), and the Science and Policy Forum.

World Reconstruction Conference

The Fourth World Reconstruction Conference 4 (WRC4), themed "Inclusion for Resilient Recovery," opened on Monday morning with a Swiss yodeling performance.

In welcome remarks, Maria Luisa Silva, Director, UNDP, said WRC4's focus on inclusive recovery builds on previous editions of the conference, when access to all was recognized as key. Sameh N. Wahba, Director, World Bank Group, cited groups that are more likely to be left behind, including: the elderly; people with disabilities; people who live in remote areas; certain groups of women; and those who live in poverty. Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary

Mami Mizutori, SRSG for Disaster Risk Reduction; **Sameh N. Wahba**, World Bank Group; and **Asako Okai**, ASG, UNDP

Swiss yodeling performance at the WRC4 opening ceremony

General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Head, UNDRR, said post-disaster reconstruction efforts could be seen as opportunities to correct inequalities in societies. Asako Okai, Assistant Secretary General (ASG), UNDP, said that while national governments have made great advances in the past decade, better social inclusion in recovery is still needed. Carl Hallergard, Deputy Head of Delegation of the EU in Geneva, noted that recovery requires a whole-of-society approach

In the opening plenary, keynote speaker Pinarayi Vijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala, India, spoke of efforts to make the recovery of the August 2018 Kerala floods inclusive. Setsuko Saya, Cabinet Office, Japan, said a focus on inclusivity should be mainstreamed in all recovery policies, and underlined the need to support those who take care of vulnerable people. Edward Ndopu, UNSG SDG Advocate and disability advocate said a reconstruction of societal attitudes toward those most at risk is needed. Responding to questions from the audience, speakers then touched on: identifying those left behind; ensuring people with disabilities can be heard in decision-making spaces; and identifying the unique characteristics of recovery and reconstruction in post-conflict areas.

In a thematic session on ensuring the inclusion of displaced persons in recovery, panelists highlighted that top-down programs without local ownership do not work. Instead, they advocated participatory planning involving displaced communities as well as inclusivity in profiling and researching internally displaced persons (IDPs). On the latter, one speaker said revealing findings often relied on population group comparisons, as well as on analyses of "people and

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Setsuko Saya, Cabinet Office, Japan; **Pinarayi Vijayan**, Chief Minister, Goverment of Kerala, India; and **Edward Ndopu**, UNSG SDG Advocate and disability advocate

place." Another panelist noted the need to ensure land rights and housing tenure before disasters, and acknowledged the difficulties of implementing integrated approaches in difficult policy environments.

In the afternoon plenary session on inclusion for people with disabilities, academic Ian Cristoplos pointed to the need to move away from the vague and broad category of "vulnerable groups," and to engage with local partners working with persons with disabilities. Md Mohsin, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Bangladesh, spoke of best practices to prevent fatalities in the aftermath of cyclones and floods. Khil Bahadur, a visually-impaired man from Nepal, described his experience with receiving housing reconstruction aid from UNDP in the aftermath of 2015 earthquake. Alexandra Ocles, Minister of Disaster Risk Management, Ecuador, spoke of policies put in place to protect disabled people since a 2016 earthquake. Midori Hirano, Chair, Disabled Peoples' International, Japan, spoke of the need to pressure governments to abide by their commitments to protect people with disabilities.

In a thematic session on fostering social inclusion through culture in city reconstruction and recovery, panelists anticipated the simultaneous challenges of rapid urbanization, increases in climate-related disasters, and armed conflicts. Speakers from the World Bank and UNESCO then presented a joint Position Paper proposing a culture-based framework for city reconstruction and recovery, underlining that cities are cultural constructs and that culture must be both an asset and tool in urban reconstruction. Panelists from Japan and the Philippines shared their experience in successfully leveraging culture and cultural heritage in the aftermath of, respectively, the Kumamoto earthquake and conflict in the Marawi region.

Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems Conference

The Multi-hazard Early Warning System Conference began at the WMO and focused on progress made toward the Sendai Framework Target (g), increased access to multi-hazard early warning systems (EWS). Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General

of the WMO, highlighted key findings from the State of the Global Climate Report 2018 and reminded participants of the greater risk of disasters in years going forward as global temperatures rise. He emphasized the importance of the multi-hazard approach to EWS in future climate adaptation. Several panelists echoed its importance for addressing hazards such as drought and hydrological events.

Mussa Mustafa, Deputy Director-General, National Institute of Meteorology, Mozambique, discussed lessons learned from the recent cyclones Idai and Kenneth. Mustafa stated that power and communication systems went down early and consequently communities were isolated. He said there is an immediate need for restoration of early warning capacities, building institutional response resilience, and training of local communities as they often play an important role in disaster response.

A second panel focused on "The Last Mile," namely, the final link in the EWS chain of communication with local communities. Panelists cited the achievement of effective partnerships with satellite companies and WFP, which are bringing pre-planned solutions to communities facing disasters

Nicolas Bidault, World Food Programme (WFP)

Participants break out into small groups to debate priorities on impact-based forecasting.

through supplying training, capacity building, and improved bandwidth. Several panelists also highlighted the crucial need to partner with local community members so they increase communication within their community and assist in mapping of resources.

Panelists discussed the importance of time-scale consideration in disasters such as earthquakes, in which seconds are crucial, and the need to improve both satellite and cellular technology for EWS through partnerships with satellite companies and mobile network providers.

The afternoon session opened with the panel on enhancing the link between early warning and early action (EWEA) through impact-based forecasts (IBF). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN featured a video on its early warning action system for winter weather events in Mongolia, called *dzuds*, which explained how this system has been able to predict high-risk areas and enable preparations to provide feed for affected livestock. Panelists highlighted the value of acting before areas become vulnerable, noting that this aim can be better achieved with IBF.

Panelists spoke about the importance of improving information and data gathering, undertaking effective information dissemination to spur earlier action, drawing on local knowledge, and using community volunteers to both gather and spread information.

After small group breakout discussions, panelists focused on specific needs and obstacles to the adequate communication of early warnings. Panelists mentioned examples of governments and organizations that acted on information once it was too late, for example with food security predicted risks but action not occurring until predicted famine risks. A possible solution, panelists stated, is through decision makers and donors prioritizing funding for early action, observing that, "to save lives we need to be more comfortable with uncertainty." They highlighted that communication needs to be better tailored to the audience so it can spur action, rather than being overly technical.

The last afternoon panel focused on science, technology, and innovation. Panelists presented specific technologies for EWS for a variety of disasters. All panelists discussed the importance of mapping, big data, and machine learning for the improvement of EWS capabilities. Many focused on the switch to a multi-hazard approach, for example the multiple hazards from earthquakes beyond just the shaking damage to include potential losses from landslides. Panelists closed by urging improved data collection, especially in data-scarce areas, through crowd-sourcing and collaboration, noting that greater availability of data will lead to more effective warnings.

Science and Policy Forum

Moderator Andrew Revkin, National Geographic Society, invited panelists to share their views on how the world can avoid the syndrome of ignoring scientific warnings until disaster actually strikes.

Mami Mizutori, SRSG for DRR, urged participants to reach out to audiences beyond the DRR community, and noted the potential value of combining academic approaches with traditional and indigenous knowledge.

Flavia Schlegel, International Science Council, noted the need to work in an interdisplinary manner, bring together the natural and social sciences, and encourage the work of young scientists.

Jacqueline McGlade, University College London and Maasai Mara University, Kenya, and **Andrew Revkin**, National Geographic Society

Jacqueline McGlade, University College London and Maasai Mara University, Kenya, encouraged deliberative governance processes to better plan and implement post-disaster responses, for example, on providing opportunities for smallholders and farmers to produce food in the aftermath of disasters. She highlighted the potential of promoting community access to Earth observation data through initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership and UNEP's GEO reports.

Panels then took place on the Global Science and Technology Road Map, the case for better data, and the need for consistent scientific terminology on hazard.

On the road map, Rajib Shaw, chair of the Scientific and Technological Advisory Group (STAG), described its purpose as a guide for the science and technology community on how they can support implementation of the Sendai Framework.

Other speakers elaborated on how the roadmap had been developed and presented work done by the various regional STAGs to further the four Sendai Framework priorities of understanding disaster risk, strengthening disaster risk governance, investing in DRR for resilience, and "building back better." Several panelists highlighted work done through the 10-year Integrated Research on Disaster Risk programme, including its publication of seven working papers. Jörgen Sparf, ESTAG, announced the online publication on the Prevention Web portal on "Socio-Economic and Data Challenges."

In the session on better data, Muhammad Dimyati, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education, Indonesia, presented Indonesia's experiences and achievements in using data for DRR. He presented six policy directives from President of Indonesia Joko Widodo, which allow for development planning to be based on DRR, and for greatly increasing the involvement of academics in predicting the threats and impacts of disasters. He highlighted the Government of Indonesia's creation of a data portal on disaster risk.

Ailsa Holloway, Stellenbosch University, presented the results of a survey that had identified 24 academic programs in Asia and Africa on disaster risk, with 79% of such programs being in countries at high risk of disasters. She called for action to provide funding support for women working in disaster risk, and to promote engagement of the social sciences and humanities, which, she stated, are poorly represented in the field.

Other speakers addressed the need to produce and use "data that matters," and the need to communicate data as part of a deliberate strategy within DRR initiatives. Participants discussed: how data may be used to promote accountability, especially in relation to action on climate change; the need for political will; and the steps involved in moving from data to action.

On hazard terminology, Virginia Murray, Public Health England, announced that an online survey will be open from June to July 2019 as a crowdsourcing approach to scientists who may be willing to contribute to developing consistent terminology. Wenjiang Zhang, WMO, described his organization's efforts to improve the accuracy and range of long-range forecasts. Noboru Takamura, Atomic Bomb Disease Institute, Nagasaki University, described his university's testing of mushrooms and creation of a "mushroom map" to identify radiation levels, and its liaison with community members in a village affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster one year after the event.

Other speakers affirmed the need for consistent hazard terminology and gave examples of how this would be valuable. Participants considered the need for 'hyperlocal' data and the scale at which risk is experienced, and they expressed concern about 'data deserts' in poor countries where many people do not necessarily have access to digital devices, noting that traditional methods of data collection are still needed.

At the close of the day, the publisher Elsevier launched a new journal, 'Progress in Disaster Science,' which, it was explained, would contain peer-reviewed original research and commentary by invited guest writers.

Rajib Shaw, Scientific and Technological Advisory Group (STAG); **Annisa Triyanti**, Global STAG; **Qunli Han**, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk (IRDR); **Antonia Yulo Loyzaga**, National Resilience Council; **Chadi Abdallah**, Arab STAG; **Jörgen Sparf**, Europe STAG; **Hirokazu Tatano**, Global Alliance of Disaster Research Institutes, and **Mark Pelling**, Global Challenges Research Fund