

Global Platform Highlights Tuesday, 14 May 2019

On day two of preparatory events for the 2019 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2019), participants met in various forums and events around the main venue of the International Conference Center Geneva (CICG).

The Fourth World Reconstruction Conference (WRC4) at CICG, the second Multi-Hazard Early Warning Conference (MHEWC-II) at the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the Science and Policy Forum at the Palais des Nations all entered their second and final day of discussions leading up to GP2019.

Other events associated with GP2019 preparations on Tuesday were a meeting of local authorities, an interactive session with parliamentarians, and several regional group and civil society consultations.

World Reconstruction Conference

In the morning plenary, participants discussed the risks and opportunities that derive from practicing inclusion as opposed to exclusion. Sixteen separate thematic sessions on various aspects of inclusive reconstruction took place during the day, and the closing plenary addressed inclusion as a right for all. This bulletin presents reports from the plenaries and two of the thematic sessions.

Plenary on Inclusion versus Exclusion: Moderator Margaret Arnold, World Bank Group, introduced the topic.

Babagana Umara Zulum, Governor of Borno State, Nigeria, pointed to exclusion as a root cause of the Boko Haram crisis in North East Nigeria, and said that communities should be key actors in, and beneficiaries of, the region's recovery.

Kiyoshi Murakami, City of Rikuzentakata, Japan, spoke of his city's inclusive reconstruction plan in the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami, noting that this emphasis on inclusivity had been inspired by "the philosophy of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)."

Mino Ramarosan, Huairou Commission, urged that grassroots women's groups be involved in the preparation to, and recovery from, disasters, pointing to the need to leverage their unique expertise and address their needs.

Pablo Suarez, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, facilitated an interactive workshop with the audience, in which participants broke into small groups to discuss hurdles and opportunities in disaster risk reduction (DRR), and then drafted questions for the panelists.

Speakers responded to questions on how to devise an inclusive reconstruction plan, and Charlotte V. McClain-Nhlapo, World Bank Group, summed up the various presentations and concluded the session.



Thematic session: Building back better (BBB) and inclusive recovery for small island states: Panelists from Caribbean and Pacific islands noted their countries are not only the most vulnerable to natural hazards, but are also at the frontline of climate change. Panelists gave their responses to a 2018 World Bank report entitled "Building Back Better: Achieving Resilience through Stronger, Faster, and More Inclusive Post-Disaster Reconstruction." One panelist noted that the term 'Build Back Better' (BBB) should be examined more deeply, taking into account the specific characteristics of small island developing States (SIDS), such as multi-hazard environments that may require trade-offs among the three objectives of building "stronger," "faster," and more "inclusively." Another underlined that BBB must be adopted as a preventive measure, rather than a post-disaster response. Other speakers noted challenges in translating BBB into practical terms when working with governments and NGOs that have limited capacity, or when grassroots women are excluded from the reconstruction process. Speakers also noted difficulties in assisting the most vulnerable when working in a context of antiquated legislation on land tenure or housing.

Thematic session: How can disaggregated data support inclusion? : Speakers from international organizations, NGOs, India, and the Pacific region agreed that unless disaster prevention and relief operations are able to understand "the shape of a problem" through data, they will not know where to start and whether progress has been made. Several panelists spoke of the need to collect disaggregated data before crises strike to ensure effective recovery efforts, as data collected during emergencies may be less reliable. The discussion acknowledged methodological hurdles to including marginalized populations in data collection, such as the need to invest time and expertise in identifying the right data



(L:R) **Amb. Léonard Emile Ognimba**, African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States; **Asako Okai**, Assistant Secretary General, United Nations Development Programme; **Bernice Van Bronkhorst**, World Bank Group; and **Ricardo Mena**, UNDRR

categories, and to take into account context-specific inequalities and vulnerabilities. One speaker presented the disability DRR programme launched in 2016 in Kerala, India, which, he said, had successfully prevented fatalities among people with disabilities during the 2018 floods in the region.

Closing plenary: In the closing plenary on inclusion as a right for all, moderator Maitreyi Bordia Das, World Bank Group, noted that WRC4 did not just consist of formal sessions but also of informal exchanges of ideas.

Alexandra Ocles, Minister of Disaster Risk Management, Ecuador, described various policies established in her country to guarantee the rights of all people in disasters, citing emergency plans that were circulated in indigenous languages.

Asif Saleh, BRAC International, Bangladesh, said his country has vastly improved its disaster preparedness, bringing fatalities from cyclones down from 350,000 in 1970 to 191 in 2009. He attributed this improvement, in part, to the role NGOs played in creating a bridge between governments and communities.

Fatou Sow Sarr, University of Dakar, Senegal, warned against disaster response policies that deepen existing inequalities by, for example, ignoring the perspectives of women and people with disabilities.



Fatou Sow Sarr, University of Dakar, Senegal

Toshizo Ido, Governor Hyogo Prefecture, Japan, spoke of the unequal impact that earthquakes have on the elderly and people with disabilities, and underlined several policies implemented in Japan to assist them in times of evacuation. Panelists then responded to questions from the audience related to building effective relationships with communities and addressing cultural or behavioral barriers to disaster relief.

Bernice Van Bronkhorst, World Bank Group, noted that over 2,000 participants had attended the conference. She welcomed the “nuanced perspectives” on bottlenecks and best practices for inclusive recovery that emerged from the sessions.

In a closing address, Asako Okai, Assistant Secretary-General, UN Development Programme (UNDP), urged that “we need to take inclusion beyond symbolism,” for example, by investing in community-based organizations. Leonard Emile Ognimba, Assistant Secretary-General, African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), noted the positive commitments made throughout the conference towards the goal of inclusive resilience. Speaking on behalf of Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for DRR, Ricardo Mena, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), reiterated that investing in inclusion must be a long-term and multifaceted effort. Van Bronkhorst then announced the release of a joint communiqué by the organizers, namely the World Bank, UNDP, UNDRR, and the European Commission, on key outcomes from the conference.

Multi-Hazard Early Warning Conference

The second day of MHEWC-II continued in a series of panel discussions and a closing plenary at the end of the day.

Making early warning systems (EWS) multi-hazard: Panelists from Indonesia, Chile, and several other organizations stressed the high importance of good communication among agencies and between agencies and the public. Several panelists stressed that public communication must be simple and usable, and should avoid any potential confusion, thus saving more lives. Some mentioned government buy-in and support for EWS as key to success, adding that these systems must be innovative and well-maintained in readiness for future



(L:R) **Denis Chang Seng**, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC); **Guillermo Navarro**, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Chile; **Pascal Peduzzi**, UN Environment Programme (UNEP); **Dwikorita Karnawati**, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency, Indonesia; **Michel Jean**, WMO; **Delia Arnold**, Aristotle ENHSP; **Charlotte Norman**, National Disaster Management Organisation, Ghana; and **Bapon Fakhruddin**, Integrated Research on Disaster Risk

disasters. Two panelists from intergovernmental organizations emphasized that the development of EWS must consider the possibility of the cascading impacts of hazards.

Panelists listed some challenges to making EWS multi-hazard: financial and human resource constraints; a focus on technological innovation over social innovation and traditional knowledge; and a lack of investment in observation equipment.

One pitfall of moving to a multi-hazard EWS, a panelist from Indonesia stated, is potential confusion and lack of trust from the public. For example, she said, a citizen might receive EWS warnings regarding both tsunami and tidal wave impacts, and is then left questioning which message they should respond to and what action they should take. Several panelists concluded that it is essential to “get communication right” in shifting to a multi-hazard approach.

Measuring the effectiveness of MHEWS: Laouan Magagi, Minister of Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Risk Management, Niger, presented a keynote address on measuring effectiveness of MHEWS and especially emphasized the return on investment (ROI) for implementing such a system. In Niger, he stated, floods are becoming common in addition to regular drought events and EWS has a large focus on farmers. Magagi said that with an EWS, the agricultural sector can increase its earning potential through better planning for hazards. Panelists from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, and international financial institutions supported these statements on cost savings with calculations on ROI for EWS. Many affirmed the necessity of government buy-in to EWS for financing and success of these systems.

Governance for MHEWS: This panel discussion featured many national and regional government representatives who reiterated the need for increased coordination and collaboration among agencies and the public, academia, and various stakeholders. Panelists reminded participants that messaging should be simple and relevant, and the recipient must be able to understand what action is expected of them.

Dwikorita Karnawati, Indonesia, highlighted the importance of the national government decree to better engage all agencies in coordination on EWS and announced a soon-to-be-signed decree on MHEWS, rather than just a tsunami EWS. Alher Wariou Fatiman, Niger, spoke about the value of community warning systems and traditional knowledge and the need for their incorporation into EWS planning by local and national governments. Fatiman highlighted the crucial involvement of women as they are often facing and managing risks, arguing that these systems must take into account the role of women and traditional knowledge to be successful.

The last discussion touched upon the designation of critical facilities, so that the public receives the timeliest hazard information. Panelists stated that governance and coordination is important but that it must be flexible because each hazard is different and has disparate impacts.

During the closing session to the conference, moderators presented lessons learned and highlights from each panel. Ania Grobicki, Green Climate Fund (GCF), reiterated the importance of community participation in order to “turn the last mile into the first mile.” She asked participants to support the replenishment of the GCF so that it can continue to fund EWS and national climate adaptation plans. Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General, WMO, detailed plans to elevate the importance of EWS at future climate meetings and the upcoming WMO Congress, noting that this is “not the end of the story” on EWS as it is crucial for climate adaptation.

Science and Policy Forum

On the second day of the Science and Policy Forum, two panel discussions took place, and the Forum concluded at mid-day.

Technology for disaster risk reduction (DRR): Katja Samuel, founder and director, Global Security and Disaster Management Limited, moderated the session. Panelists discussed the enormous possibilities afforded by technology, but also the vulnerabilities created by new technologies and society’s increasing reliance on them. The International Telecommunication Union reported, for example, that only



Katja Samuel, Global Security and Disaster Management Ltd, moderated the session

20% of e-waste is being treated appropriately, and called for moving toward a circular economy in which “urban mining” will allow for recovery of needed minerals and materials.

Speakers discussed the role of platforms in bridging the gap between various research and development communities engaged in mapping and Earth observation systems, and in bringing together DRR agencies with technology developers. They considered that, while technology can be used to promote resilience, specific technologies, such as mobile phones or electronic payment systems, are not necessarily being designed to be resilient. One panelist cited the example of a building fire in Seoul, Republic of Korea, which had caused extensive disruption of computer networks and failure of electronic security and online payment systems.

Responding to participants’ questions, panelists highlighted global inequity in use of digital technologies as an important issue to address. One speaker raised the possibility of using digital capabilities to quantify the value of public infrastructure to businesses, suggesting this opened up the option to “personalize risk” and thus incentivize private-sector finance to upgrade public infrastructure.

Science and Technology for Resilience - Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Societies: Shuaib Lwasa, World Resources Institute, chaired the session and Andrew Revkin, National Geographic Society, moderated discussions.

Speakers discussed examples of national action, including Cuba’s multi-disciplinary research project that assessed the vulnerability of coastal zones, and Japan’s national platform for DRR.

América Santos Riveras, Vice-Minister of Science and Technology, Cuba, described the evolution of DRR policy in her country, beginning with disaster management plans, then moving to DRR in 2005 and, since 2015, including the evaluation of future risk. Policy steps, she said, have included prohibiting new buildings in highly vulnerable areas, and reforestation “to the maximum” to protect soil and water resources.

Toshio Koike, Director, International Center for Water Hazard and Risk Management, presented Japan’s National Platform for DRR, which links local government, business and industry, and civil society, and is chaired by the Prime Minister.

Other speakers highlighted the need to connect each stage of DRR action to the next so as to avoid implementation failure and to update and implement safe building standards in developing countries.

Concluding the session, speakers agreed on the need to improve the effectiveness of dialogue between science and policy.



Booths presenting a resilient home design challenge in the CICG exhibition area