

Grassroots Survey on Global Disaster Policy

LOCALIZING HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: SOME EARLY LESSONS FROM THE GRASSROOTS

HYOGO FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Hyogo Framework for Action was a historic cooperative agreement, signed on by representatives of 168 countries in Kobe, Japan in 2005, with the objective of achieving "Substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries"- by the year 2015. The five priorities of action indentified by HFA were as follows:

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation
2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning
3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels
4. Reduce the underlying risk factors
5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

WHY DOES LOCAL MATTER?

Living in vulnerable areas, being the possible victims and first responders to any kind of disasters, local communities have the highest stake in the overall task of reducing their risks. Within local communities, women, in such scenario, are further marginalized and deprived of any kind of recognition for the multiple roles they play in the overall communal resilience. The current programming around HFA is led by the central administrations. In such a scenario, ensuring local communities and women's involvement is essential to:

- integrating traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices into all DRR initiative
- identifying and promoting existing good practices in the community
- maximizing opportunities for empowering the traditionally marginalized like women, children, disabled, PLWHA etc.
- creating accountability and transparency mechanism for implementation programs
- creating accurate account of vulnerabilities faced by different section of the community due tradition, practice, location etc.

EVALUATING IMPACT

A grassroots inquiry into the status of HFA implementation was designed as a parallel evaluation to support and boost the grassroots and women's representation in the 'Views from the Frontline' survey designed by the Global Network for Disaster Reduction, Geneva. The process was envisioned as an action tool, more than a mere evaluation, participants are using it as a tool for promoting civic engagement around DRR at the local and national level.

The process involves:

- Focused Group Discussions on HFA and survey implementation covering over 1100 women and community representatives in few of the most at-risk communities in 16 countries across, Asia, Latin America and Africa
- Approximately 100 local and senior level government officials and over 40 local civil society organizations interviewed
- Some of the most vulnerable communities in Latin America, Asia and Africa represented

EARLY RECOMMENDATIONS

Some early recommendations emerging from the results obtained so far from countries like Honduras, Bolivia, Peru, India and Bangladesh is listed below:

1. In national DRR plans, provide local communities and organized women groups with resources and decision making powers
2. Recognize the role of empowered women's organisations and their practices in DRR decision making at the local level
3. In national DRR policies, adequately address underlying risk factors like food security, land use planning, climate change adaptation etc.
4. Inform and educate local and senior government officials on HFA and importance of partnering with local communities - (Peru)
5. Eliminate assumptions like illiterate communities are not capable of being a part of DRR planning - (Bangladesh)
6. Provide adequate support for indigenous communities in the form of education material in local languages, more resources and recognition of their traditional practices- (Bolivia)

The evaluation process is expected to be completed by end of March, 2009. The final report of the survey, complete with qualitative and quantitative analysis, is to be released conjunction with the second Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction meeting, to be held in Geneva from 15th to 19th June, 2009.

- Huairou Commission