

INTEGRATING DISASTER MANAGEMENT INTO DEVELOPMENT: THE PROBLEM OF ENSURING THAT DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ARE ACTUALLY BEING ADDRESSED

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Getting Development On To the Agenda

With such media interest in disasters as there is in today's world, it is not surprising that most people are sure in their minds that they know what disaster is and what it means. Media images are strong and they appeal to the emotions. Thus, it is not a quantum leap to the belief that the set of actions known as "disaster management" is also understood. Most people would relate to the media images of disaster and relate disaster management to those images - disaster management becomes the management of the aftermath of a disaster that has actually happened. However, a problem may arise if those responsible for the preparation, development and implementation of disaster management programmes are also seduced by the media images. They cannot be blamed - for that is the point at which political and public pressure is exerted.

The greatest single concentration of public and political interest in disasters occurs immediately after a disaster occurs, a period lasting at the most for a few weeks. If the disaster managers are not successful in dealing effectively and efficiently with the aftermath of disaster then they are pilloried - they are judged by those few weeks, even if they have been patiently working for years, in the absence of a major disaster occurring.

Since the mid-1980s, a common conceptual approach to disaster management has sought to place it in a developmental context. This approach, while agreeing with the importance of responding to disasters when they occur, seeks to ensure that response is well organised and practised beforehand through the development and implementation of a strategy of preparedness. Furthermore, the approach seeks, first and foremost, to emphasise the importance of risk reduction through the implementation of a set of measures aimed at mitigating or preventing the negative effects of disasters. The ultimate goal of this approach would be to integrate disaster management into the process of development planning and programming. The problem has been how to turn the concepts into realistic action, how to develop a programme which is at the very least unpopular outside of actual disaster occurrence

and at the very most defined as irrelevant in popular and political perception or just simply ignored.

The Difficulty of Gaining Popular and Political Support for Developmental Disaster Management

In the recent disastrous earthquake in Turkey, national and local authorities have been severely criticised for their lack of preparedness, for their impotence and for the lack of resources to tackle the problem. Leaving aside the issue of the severity of the earthquake, its magnitude, when it struck and the fact that it struck a highly populated area, it is highly likely that the ability of the authorities to respond to a major earthquake was not a subject that was high on public and political agendas beforehand. Yet, Turkey has a history of severe earthquakes going back to pre-historical time, and a history of sporadic attempts to deal with the problem. This author visited the sites of four previous major earthquakes in 1978 to examine the country's policy towards post-earthquake resettlement.

Hurricane Mitch, one of the most severe Caribbean hurricanes ever recorded, struck and devastated large areas of Central America last year. Honduras was particularly badly hit. Dazed and tired government officials admitted that they were not prepared. Twenty-five years ago, in 1974, Honduras was also struck by a devastating hurricane, Hurricane Fifi, which killed in excess of 13,000 people. Significantly, after Fifi struck, dazed and tired public officials admitted that they were not prepared.

On closer examination, these two cases also have something to say about the relationship between disasters and development. In the case of Turkey, there is extensive knowledge of the damage that earthquakes do to buildings and it is very clear that it is buildings that kill people in earthquakes. It is also clear that this knowledge has been translated into laws, codes and regulations governing the way buildings are constructed and the quality of the materials that go into them. However, the information that we have indicates strongly that these codes and regulations have, to a great extent, not been adhered to, thus questioning the political and public will and interest in mitigation as a worthwhile action.

In Honduras, after Hurricane Fifi, little attention was paid to the then government's disastrous policy of emptying valleys of peasant farmers and replacing them with agro-industrial multi-national companies investing in fruit. The peasant farmers had nowhere to go but up the valley sides. As they settled, they cut down the existing vegetation in order to farm. When Fifi struck, it took the soil from the valley sides and dumped it in the valley. No account was taken of the consequences of the change in land use. However, the new strategy may have been politically more attractive. After Hurricane Mitch struck Honduras last year, it was clear that the lot of the

peasant farmer had changed little in 25 years. In addition, if the rural poor had become urban poor through rural-urban drift, their plight was compounded.

It is clear that if people settle in locations in which threats from hazards exist, then they have either to live with the threats and their damage potential or develop actions to deal with them. The dilemma for disaster managers is that while the knowledge of the hazard threat may be good, the understanding that the threat can be addressed and dealt with may be poor - or if the threat is understood, it may be ignored because it is too costly to consider, too complex to think about or not expedient politically. The question to ask is whether we want to run the risk of unknown thousands of people dying every unknown period of time as a result of known threats which will lead to an unknown amount of destruction to local, national and regional economies. If the answer to this is "no", then the answers lie in a comprehensive and developmental approach to disaster management which is very different to purely responding to disasters as they occur. Even if governments sign up to the developmental approach, there is still a huge gap between the rhetoric and the concepts and the realities of risk reduction on the ground.

Disasters Belong to the Poor

The standard conceptual approach to an analysis of disasters and the disaster threat views the issue as a relationship between hazards on the one hand and a human population on the other. The analysis states that if people are living in potentially dangerous locations in dangerous buildings surrounded by dangerous infrastructure (if they have access to infrastructure at all) then the high disaster vulnerability that they display should be analysed according to the reasons why people are living in dangerous buildings and dangerous locations in the first place. The assumption is that people did not make deliberate choices to live in this way. Of course, people do make such choices for a variety of reasons - living in dangerous locations may be the result of perceived economic advantages and people may assess the risk as acceptable. Even in the more affluent societies of the Northern Hemisphere, people may have information about the risks but may still decide to reside in dangerous locations because these areas are scenically attractive.

The essence of the issue lies in the options people have available to them. Disasters, of course, affect everybody - they do not strike only one particular sector of society. But if people who have a wide range of choices or options about where and how they live possess all the relevant information about the risks that they need to make decisions, and still decide to live in risky locations, that is a very different position to those people who have very little information and no choice about where and how they live. Large numbers of people in this world are living in dangerous locations because they have no real choice.

High degrees of vulnerability are concerned with limited choices or options which in turn are associated with limited incomes and resources. In other words, the poorer

people are the more vulnerable they are. However, poverty here does not mean merely lack of incomes. It also means poverty of access - to resources, power structures, etc - and poverty of information - not having the knowledge on which to base decisions. In the face of disaster, such people display a degree of vulnerability that results in a degree of loss which makes recovery very difficult to achieve. The loss may be small in monetary terms but absolute in real terms.

In earthquake areas, government may have the foresight to introduce building regulations that govern how buildings are constructed and the materials that are to be used in construction. However, building according to the regulations may be costly, putting earthquake proofing beyond the reach of poorer people who may still build their own houses. However, the regulations still exist and are the law. Thus, people who cannot afford to build according to the regulations are forced to live outside the law making them open to the law's retribution. They may choose to live in areas broadly outside of the law's access, informal and peripheral locations, which other people have rejected for various reasons including high levels of risk. They end up living in dangerous locations in dangerous structures open to devastation from disaster.

On the other hand, people who do not build their own houses are at the mercy of the builders. Even though earthquake proof regulations may exist they are still costly and builders who wish to maximise their profits may seek to circumvent them. This may mean ensuring that city officials have to be kept satisfied but such investment may be less costly than building according to the regulations. The result is that people who have no say in the matter end up living in blocks of flats which are highly dangerous and at risk from earthquakes. There are indications that this may have happened in Turkey. Inevitably, people with limited choices and options are more likely to be exploited or are more likely to live under a high degree of risk with high levels of vulnerability. If this situation is to change, the way that comprehensive disaster management programmes are implemented becomes significant, and if these programmes are truly developmental then the way they are integrated into development programmes is of crucial importance.

Ensuring Commitment to the Implementation of Disaster Management Programmes Which Have Development Goals

Decisions on how to go about disaster management should not be taken lightly. Governments and organisations, which take the decision that they are only going to be concerned with responding to disasters as they occur, can be forgiven. Effective response will always be a crucial component of disaster management. Disasters will continue to occur and the emergencies they create will continue to require response. Politicians and the public at large will always relate to a response to emergency. Those involved in response will always have a sense of belonging, will always be aware of the appreciation of the world at large.

Governments can be forgiven for assessing the disaster risk as too great to be minimised effectively; therefore, if they invest in disaster management at all, governments invest in the mechanisms and the resources which will enable an effective response to disaster when it occurs rather than pouring resources into marginally minimising the disaster risks. Governments may determine that they have too many other priorities to consider large-scale investment in the reduction of risks from hazards, which they assess, cannot realistically be affected and may only produce large-scale disaster once every 30 years.

Governments can be forgiven for taking the decision that they will promote developmental disaster management because that seems to be the direction the international community is going and there is pressure from major aid donors to do so. Every attempt can be made to make sure that a full and frank discussion is held to define risks and vulnerabilities and to ensure that government policy highlights the plight of the vulnerable and the requirements for effective mitigation and eventual integration into development planning. Eventually the developmental approach emerges in a legal framework and there is satisfaction that government has been far-sighted enough to implement a developmental disaster management programme aimed at reducing risks over time, at developing effective preparedness in order to ensure efficient response.

The problem arises when resources are allocated, particularly when there has not been a significant disaster for some time. Resources may grudgingly be available for disaster response, but for the longer term, requirements of preparedness and mitigation resources may be difficult to acquire. There are countless disaster management departments around the world whose terms of reference refer to programmes of prevention and mitigation and a host of other activities related to risk assessment, the analysis of vulnerability and the reduction of risks. However, there are no programmes in these important areas and the departments themselves are little more than conduits for emergency aid when disaster occurs.

Thus, adherence to the theoretical is easy to find - the rhetoric is strong. However, the fact remains that with resources so limited in the first place, there is little incentive to invest in developmental disaster management - the manifestation of the problem is so highly speculative. Even among aid donors this is a major problem. Many donor countries promote a developmental approach but the resources available for mitigation or risk reduction programmes are minimal compared with the millions of dollars available for disaster response. In the case of both donor governments and governments implementing disaster management programmes political influence is very apparent. Long term risk reduction aimed at reducing the vulnerabilities and building the capacities of the poor are not politically popular because the poor have little voice and influence and are politically marginalised.

Integrating Disaster Management Into Development - Taking the Hard Decisions

The integration of disaster management into development planning and programming can be effective and realistic but it requires governments and disaster managers to be

consistent to a commitment to see it through. Such a commitment requires consideration of the following points.

1. The disaster management programme that is eventually agreed upon should be accompanied by the commitment to implement the programme. This in turn requires a work plan to be in place overseen by designated officials who have the political authority to harness the relevant resources and manpower and to ensure that deadlines and objectives are met. The higher the level of the political authority the better the potential for success.
2. Secondly, embarking on a developmental disaster management programme has implications in terms of resources. If governments are serious about the implementation of such programmes then resources have to be available to ensure effective implementation. If resources are not available there is little point in pursuing such a programme.
3. A major problem in disaster management is its multi-sectoral nature. Few sectors of government or society in general can claim to have no involvement in a national disaster management programme even where that programme is largely orientated to response. This is particularly true of developmental disaster management programmes where a wide range of sectors should be involved in actual programme development and implementation rather than merely the provision of resources, which may be the case with programmes orientated chiefly to response. Thus, the ability to co-ordinate effectively is a major requirement as is the clarity with which the responsibilities and tasks of the sectors are laid down. This goes beyond the paper identification of tasks to a genuine elaboration of the disaster management programme as part of sectoral programmes. This is practical integration - an acceptance by the sectors that disaster management is an integrated part of their programmes to be implemented by them by staff whose job descriptions also carry the disaster management commitment.
4. Following from this, in recognition of the political issue of maintaining what may be an unpopular programme (or at least one, which is considered irrelevant), is the need to try to ensure cost effectiveness. This involves looking for ways in which disaster management can be implemented without the programme being a huge extra cost to government. Obviously, the integration of disaster management into sectoral programmes will assist this process as disaster management programmes quite properly find their place as an integrated part of normal sectoral activity. In addition, every effort should be made to ensure that the defined disaster management function does not develop into a substantial, identifiable separate bureaucracy which, outside of major disaster occurrences, can be criticised and targeted under budgetary constraints. Making the programme cost effective, which, in a government context, largely implies accessing and using resources and programmes that already exist rather than creating new ones, allows it to "hide" when the financial axe is being wielded.
5. There will be no effective developmental disaster management programme unless consideration is given to the true ownership of the programme. It has

6. Sustainability, particularly over the initial period of the programme is also important to success. The development integration of disaster management will not be achieved over night - it will take time and will undoubtedly falter at times. It is important, therefore, to ensure that mechanisms are established soon after the programme is launched to ensure that the programme can be sustained until integration can be achieved. Sustainability is largely about keeping the issue alive. Two useful approaches to keeping the issues in the public mind are training and public awareness. It is useful to try to integrate training as soon as possible using existing training and educational institutions. Training can take place at any time but disaster management can be killed off if the only training is spasmodic and only occurs when money is available. Effective training does not happen once every five years. Integrating the training process ensures that people are being trained on a regular basis and it will not be very long before a substantial cadre of people exists who know what the national priorities in disaster management are and what their roles and responsibilities are in the implementation of disaster management programmes. Public awareness can ensure the same process within affected communities. Ultimate ownership of the programme by those who might be affected has already been stated as a priority. Ongoing public awareness, with the momentum shifting to community representatives, can lay the foundations of this ownership. However, public awareness must be a two way process which establishes dialogue. Too much in public awareness is focused on officials passing on to communities what they feel communities should know. This denies what communities know already. The aim of effective public awareness is to reinforce what people already know. Again, the object would be to use existing structures wherever possible. As sensible elements of a disaster management programme early on, integrated training and public awareness actions can go a long way to ensuring the sustainability of disaster management and its integration into development.

7 Finally, it is very important to avoid the trap laid by placing too much of an emphasis on mitigation. Any comprehensive disaster management programme includes mitigation as an essential component and there is little doubt that mitigation can, in many instances, go a long way to reducing risks from hazards that have the potential to become disasters. However, it would be a serious mistake to assume that mitigation and development are synonymous. Mitigation actions aim to reduce the impact from future disasters; development aims to build community capacity and to promote self-reliance in relation to social and economic parameters. The two elements sit well together. The integration of disaster management into development planning will hopefully mean that future development projects will be assessed in terms of the risks to those projects and how those risks can be addressed and reduced within the projects' activities. Mitigation provides the means by which the risks can be addressed and reduced. What mitigation clearly cannot do is to build the development foundations upon which mitigation can be effective. In relation to earthquakes, there is little point in implementing mitigation measures such as building codes or land use planning unless the underlying vulnerabilities are addressed as well. Mitigation cannot affect the overall vulnerabilities of people and will not change the limits to choices and options. The importance of this cannot be stressed too strongly - the precursor to any effective risk and vulnerability reduction is not purely the implementation of a comprehensive disaster management programme. Rather, it is the implementation of a sound development programme. The importance of this lies in the ease with which political expediency can cloud the issue and convince even those who carry a high vulnerability that the issue is covered.

Concluding Remarks

Integrating disaster management into development is a difficult task and yet it is the most logical conclusion to a programme of comprehensive disaster management that which has, as a major goal, risk and vulnerability reduction. The ultimate key is political will and the concomitant understanding that development goals and disaster management goals are the same but that there is a symbiotic relationship between development and disaster management which makes integration not only desirable but necessary. Risk and vulnerability reduction cannot be achieved solely by the implementation of development programmes that take little or no account of the risks and vulnerabilities. Similarly, risk and vulnerability reduction cannot be achieved solely by the implementation of comprehensive disaster management outside of a development context. Development goals relate to building capacity and self-reliance within communities. Disaster management goals, by addressing the risks and vulnerabilities help to protect that capacity building and self-reliance. Both sets of goals are long term and require extensive commitment in the face of many competing priorities. Also, the populations most affected by disaster are likely to be those whose political voice is weak and who are on the political periphery. Keeping the issues alive is not easy, particularly when major disasters were experienced last a long time ago, when growth is being achieved and when democracy appears to be flourishing. Staying with a disaster management programme through to integration in the face of limited resources is no easy task.

It is pertinent to remember that since the launch of the United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme in 1990, which had as an aim the incorporation of comprehensive disaster management programmes into the development process in many countries around the world, it has not been possible to point the finger at one single country yet and say, comprehensively, that country is on the road to achieving the development goals upon which the programme was built. That is not to say that progress has not been made in many countries. But it does mean that time is needed, that there will be many setbacks because of factors such as political change, and that even when we are sure that a programme has taken root, it will be difficult to measure the achievements made. The question to be asked though is are we prepared to continue to sit and watch while people die and livelihoods and property are lost without addressing the reasons why people suffer in this way. If the answer is "no", then we have set ourselves a very difficult and complex agenda indeed.

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