Thematic Brief 6: Bridging the response mechanisms of communities and institutions

Building the preparedness of grassroots actors allows for a rapid and autonomous response by affected communities. However, crises often overwhelm the coping capacity of small groups of individuals. Making sure that coordination mechanisms are in place, which allow for the scaling up of responses by calling on wider institutional systems that can mobilize more resources, helps protect and assist victims, mitigate losses, avoid massive displacement and accelerate recovery.

Actions

- Clearly identify roles and responsibilities, to ascertain and address weak spots and bottlenecks in the institutional arrangements and allow for more effective action.
- Foster a culture of risk awareness in the affected community through training and education and by encouraging institutional commitment to learning. (See thematic briefs 4 and 5)
- Allow communities to actively participate in local disaster management and preparedness planning and implementation. *Example: Indonesia*.
- Build the capacities (e.g. through drills and simulations) of civil protection agencies, people at risk and institutions at all the levels of the disaster management chain, to make sure they know how to respond in times of disaster.[9] (See thematic brief 8)
- Engage communities at risk in training in managing displacement (e.g. on displacement site selection and organization of access to essential support), so that they are prepared to respond even before an institutional presence has been established. (See thematic brief 5)
- Promote communication systems and infrastructure that allow for disaster coordination, in order to establish channels that are more likely to be trusted by target communities and have a bigger impact in preventing and mitigating disasters. (See thematic brief 7)

[9] Guidelines for collective centre management and coordination are available for download from http://sheltercentre.org/library/Collective%20Centre%20Guidelines.

CASE STUDY 7: Multiple levels of disaster risk management in the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands

In the small island developing States (SIDS) of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, efforts to reduce disaster risk have to take into account a wide series of natural hazards, as well as the effects of environmental change. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is responsible for disaster mitigation, humanitarian relief and reconstruction activities, and IOM is active as an operational partner for the actual implementation of institutional DRM activities in these two countries.

At the same time, IOM works with civil society organizations at the municipal and local levels in the six main population centres (i.e. Majuro, Ebeye, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk and Yap) to increase their disaster response capacity and coordination mechanisms. The Organization also assists local organizations in conducting hazard, vulnerability and capacity assessments and in compiling multi-hazard DRM plans that are linked to state-level plans.

In order to further support government efforts in the implementation of the climate change agreement and DRR national policies and strategies, IOM is targeting approximately 10,000 school-age students in 50 schools with the Climate Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction and Education (CADRE) Programme. CADRE aims to support the adaptation and preparedness strategies of schools and communities that are vulnerable to climate change and natural hazards, and at empowering them to independently cope with and respond to natural disasters.

CASE STUDY 8: Planning evacuations sites in Nepal

It is estimated that up to 900,000 people will be displaced by a major earthquake in the densely populated and highly vulnerable Kathmandu Valley alone. Disaster risk in the country is driven by poverty, illiteracy, rapid population growth and unplanned urbanization. Being prepared for population movements in the aftermath of natural disasters is therefore an absolute priority for the Government and other emergency actors.

IOM has been supporting local institutions in providing assistance to the victims of natural disasters ever since the 2008 Koshi floods. Aware of the challenges posed by seismic risk, the Organization is now committed to enhancing local preparedness for earthquakes and has helped drafting emergency and response plans for the municipalities of Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Kirtipur and Madhyapur.

IOM has identified and prioritized 83 open spaces in Kathmandu Valley that can be used for humanitarian purposes following a disaster. These sites have been endorsed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) and now enjoy specific protection from further encroachment. The Organization is also coordinating with State and non-State humanitarian actors in defining the functions and purposes of each of these sites. For large and medium IDP sites, IOM has prepared detailed plans to ensure that space is effectively used, based on a series of workshops and on the work on a common mapping platform performed by all stakeholders in collaboration with the MoHA. Maps with logistic and planning information of each identified site can then be used by all humanitarian stakeholders to plan for a more effective emergency response.

CASE STUDY 9: Emergency operation centres in Indonesia

In order to strengthen disaster preparedness and response capacities and coordination, IOM is supporting the establishment of an emergency operation centre (EOC) in each of two provinces in eastern Indonesia. Within Indonesia's disaster management framework, EOCs serve as permanent support facilities that focus on emergency operation management, making use of modern information and communication systems, as well as specific standardized procedures and working mechanisms. At the provincial level, an EOC acts as an information and coordination hub that assists the Commander of Operations in the coordination, command and control of operations before, during and after an emergency.

Each EOC structure is designed to be earthquake-resistant and completely autonomous in terms of electricity (i.e. it has its own power generator) and water supply (i.e. it has an independent well and water tank on the roof). The buildings are equipped with up-to-date information and communications technology systems (in the form of computers, radio, telephones, Internet and satellite phones), which are used to maintain an efficient and reliable network of partners and experts, even in crisis situations. The EOCs are operated by trained Government staff and local partners.

In each of the provinces, IOM is also developing a disaster management information system that is integrated with national systems and harmonized with reporting standards, as well as an operational platform, composed of both State and non-State actors, with a strong disaster coordination and response preparedness capacity.