SESSION SUMMARY

Session Title: From Local Government to Civil Society, from Urban to Rural Settings: Making Recovery Inclusive
Session Type: Thematic session
Date and Time: Monday, May 13, 16:00-17:30 pm, Room 1

Key Speakers and Agencies:

Moderator:
o **Dr. Laura Olson**, Associate Faculty, Royal Roads University School of Humanitarian Studies

Speakers:

o **Mr. Kiyoshi Murakami**, Special Representative of Mayor & Senior Executive Advisor for the City Rikuzentakata – Iwate, Japan
o **Mr. Shinichi Takahashi**, Vice Mayor, Sendai City, Japan
o **Dr. Vinod Menon**, Former Member, National Disaster Management Authority, India
o **Mr. Bijay Kumar**, Executive Director, Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)

The session focused on the active participation of marginalized groups in disaster recovery and reconstruction. It highlighted the importance of privileging bottom-up approaches, and the need to build local government capacity wherever possible. Giant strides have been made in recognizing the nature of marginalization and its impacts that can reverse human development gains due to disasters. When it comes to inclusion in recovery, there is still much to learn, and many improvements to be made. The session is a call to action, to identify and implement the changes that will turn words into action.

Kiyoshi Murakami opened the session by sharing details of the reconstruction plan for the city of Rikuzentakata in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami of 2011. The pillars of the plan were to build back better, to create a resilient city, and to ensure inclusiveness and accessibility for all so that no one is left behind. The landscape was rebuilt on a height by breaking up by cutting into a mountain and using the world's largest conveyor belt to carry the soil for the reconstruction of the raised city. Action plans for intended inclusion were developed with diversified groups to finalize the basic plan and basic policies. He highlighted the creation of a global campus to disseminate lessons learned to Japan as well as to other countries. He emphasized the basic concept, which is to build a city where inclusion is the norm. Building back better involved the creation of new industry, an inclusive community, the universal design of the town, and developing international friendships. The goal is to focus on SDGs and make Rikuzentakata a model city of Japan.

Question from the moderator: What kind of advice and support do you think is essential to the leaders of local governments hit by a catastrophic disaster, and how can we deliver what we most need to be effective? How do the needs of local governments differ from those of larger cities, and how can we properly prepare to support those needs? Answer: Everyone was a victim. Even the officials of the local government were victims. No one had the capacity to do anything. We needed to think of an integrated process to rebuild the whole city, how to deliver basic needs like food and water, but also temporary housing. The mayor was very flexible, and we listened to everyone before we reached out to the government. An emergency radio station was built to communicate with the people. We accepted integrated, holistic help from Nagoya city, where a team of 50 officials came to help us deal with the situation.

Shinichi Takahashi highlighted the Sendai City program for restoring disaster victims' livelihood in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March 2011. Disaster victims were moved to prefabricated housing, where service representatives made door-to-door visits to understand and assess the problem. This resulted in the classification of the affected into four categories, based on whether the feasibility of home rebuilding was high or

low, and whether they had a high or low level of autonomy in their daily lives. Support was designed based on the needs of disaster victims, contributing to the commitment that no one will be left behind during recovery. He emphasized the role of stakeholders, whose cooperation enabled comprehensive and effective support to disaster victims.

Question from the moderator: How has having your name in the Sendai Framework for DRR changed your attitude toward DRR and recovery? How do you feel about it? Answer: We have trained citizens to take charge of disaster prevention operations, and are educating children, who will bear responsibility for the next generation. We are emphasizing self-help, where members of the community help each other. We have adopted this as our main policy.

Vinod Menon emphasized the need to identify vulnerable sections of disaster affected communities. He contended that recovery can only be inclusive if five conditions are met viz. there is political will to involve citizens and vulnerable sections in designing, developing, implementing, and monitoring post disaster recovery interventions; when DRR and Response and Rehabilitation are inclusive; all stakeholders recognize the differential vulnerability of vulnerable sections of disaster affected communities; the development planning process incorporates DRR interventions through consultative and participatory processes; and the unmet needs of unreached communities can be addressed by all stakeholders. He also shared good practices of inclusive recovery efforts such as peer to peer exchanges with elders in the Philippines, a Community Resilience Fund for grassroots women leaders in Asia, Africa, and Central America, and employment opportunities for transgenders in India.

Question from the moderator: What are the root causes for the lack of inclusive recovery interventions, and what would empower those leading recovery to improve practice and increase inclusiveness? Answer: The root causes of lack of inclusion are the dominant power dynamics across agencies

and the political scenario, the attitude that those affected by disaster are helpless, hopeless and a liability, and donor fatigue. We need to understand that they are assets, and offer an opportunity to practice inclusive recovery. In addition to outcomes, we need to create an accountability framework for all stakeholders. There is also great need for improved data capture, affirmative action, empowerment of the people by giving them titles to land, and the need to consult vulnerable communities, for inclusion to be a reality.

Bijay Kumar drew an eloquent comparison between the 1999 cyclone in Orissa that killed over 10,000 and the Fani cyclone of 2019 that killed 60 people. He attributed the enormously reduced loss of life to three causes: better risk-informed infrastructure building, the existence of political will to analyze from the perspective of groups which were disproportionately affected, and a shift of power and entitlement in reconstruction towards those who were most impacted by the disaster. He closed with a fervent plea for all organizations and stakeholders to come out of their silos and work together to incorporate DRR into each area and sector. He emphasized the need to look beyond quick response and quick fixes, and to go through the time-consuming and labor intensive task of involving communities in designing and leading recovery processes so that long-term impact can be achieved.

Question from the moderator: What are the root causes for the lack of inclusive recovery interventions, and what would empower those leading recovery to improve practice and increase inclusiveness? Answer: The aim is strengthening resilience, but we need to ask resilience from whose perspective? It is important not to treat disaster as an event and disaster response as an event festival. We need to integrate DRR into solutions so that finance, resources and capabilities are dedicated to it. Rather than BBB, we should focus on building forward, and make life and livelihood resilient.

The session showed how tremendous impact has been achieved whenever inclusion has been part of the disaster recovery process. However, participatory processes are still considered messy, difficult and time-consuming, and recovery tends to be top-down. We need to flip the agenda

and make it bottom-up, and go from talking about it to doing it. The notions of 'expert' and 'stakeholder' promote the idea of those with assets, resources and technical capabilities who get a seat at the table. The term 'beneficiary' highlights that the receiver benefits from the process but is not directly involved in it. 'Outcome' and 'accountability' are buzzwords, but outcomes for whom and accountability to whom? Targets, goals and deliverables are useless unless they answer to the needs of vulnerable groups. The term to focus on is 'agency'. We need to empower people to act on their own behalf, to be agents.