

Remarks for Sameh Wahba
Fourth World Reconstruction Conference
Geneva May 13-14, 2019

I am delighted that the overarching theme of this year's World Reconstruction Conference is Inclusion for Resilient Recovery.

It is an opportune though somber moment to reflect on this as many parts of the world are ravaged by extreme weather events – Idai, Kenneth, Fani and more.

The focus on inclusion resonates not just with the SDGs and their rallying cry – “Leave No One Behind” – but also with the twin goals of the World Bank – ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity.

Who is at risk of being left out? Whom should we be including?

We know from years of experience on the ground that some groups are more likely than others to be left behind – they include the elderly, person with disabilities, people who live in remote areas (often they belong to indigenous groups or to ethnic minorities), certain groups of women, people who live on ecologically fragile lands and of course, those who live in poverty. Other individuals and groups could be excluded on the basis race, caste or sexual orientation. How do we make sure such systematic exclusion does not affect recovery after disaster?

As our report *Unbreakable* shows, poor people are not only more vulnerable to natural hazards, they also tend to have access to fewer post-disaster support mechanisms. They tend to experience disproportionate welfare losses and often have to resort to “negative coping mechanisms” such as reducing food intake, cutting down on health care, or reducing education spending.

These challenges are compounded when disaster strikes an area which is in conflict or at risk of conflict. How can we ensure that the disaster and the recovery do not exacerbate existing tensions? We recently developed a framework with UNESCO called – CURE (culture in city reconstruction and recovery) that places culture at the foundation of reconstruction and recovery efforts in post-disaster and post-conflict situations with the aim of integrating place-based and people-centered approaches, and we are working to operationalize it across our portfolio.

How do we ensure that the relief and rebuilding process helps to build back better and more inclusively? How do we use the process of resilient recovery to build inclusive societies and institutions?

A new report called Build Back Better shows based on an analysis of 149 countries that, *building back stronger, faster, and more inclusively* would reduce global well-being losses by 31.2 percent from US\$555 billion to US\$382 billion.

We need to make sure we put systems in place before disaster strikes. This includes not only adaptive safety nets, but resilient housing and infrastructure, and accessible buildings to enable fast and inclusive evacuation and delivery of goods and services after the fact.

Here I should highlight that the World Bank made ten ambitious commitments to disability inclusion last year. The most significant one for resilient recovery is that we committed to ensure that all World Bank financed public facilities in post-disaster reconstruction will be disability inclusive by 2020.

I should also mention our support to building safety net programs. Across the world, we have focused on systems that can enable governments to rapidly reach the poorest people in times of natural disasters. For example, Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Program (HSNP), can be scaled up in case of adverse weather conditions. In Fiji, an evaluation shows that three months after Cyclone Winston took place, beneficiaries of the safety nets program were more likely to have recovered from the shocks than households that did not receive the additional assistance.

We cannot emphasize the power of communities enough. Their power becomes even more important in resilient recovery. In the aftermath of one of **Thailand's** worst floods in 2011, a community-driven rehabilitation program, supported by the World Bank and implemented by the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI), provided financial support for small infrastructure projects, housing repairs for flood victims still struggling to recover. The **Vietnam Urban Upgrading Project** (VUUP), also supported by the World Bank, focused on community participation, especially in monitoring the time and frequency of floods, identifying contextual causes, and developing housing designs with community inputs. VUUP also facilitated economic activities in flood-prone areas to mitigate the effects of flooding, particularly through loans to communities to engage in productive work.