A Global Dialogue on Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction Planning

Tuesday, October 5, 2010

Discussion Paper

Introduction

Several topics are laid out in this paper as food for thought to stimulate discussion during the Global Dialogue on Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction Planning to be held on October 5, 2010. In preparation for the meeting, the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) summarized several analyses of recent post disaster assessments from lessons learned exercises and a desk review of eight recently concluded post disaster assessments. This desk review included: Myanmar after Cyclone Nargis in May 2008; Madagascar after cyclones in 2008; Yemen after floods in October 2008; Namibia after floods in March 2009; Central African Republic after floods in June-July 2009; Samoa after a tsunami in September 2009; Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR) after Ketsana Typhoon in September 2009; and Indonesia after major earthquakes in September and October 2009. Recent analyses of PDNAs in Haiti, Senegal and El Salvador were done separately and seem to confirm trends similar to what the desk review found.

What is a PDNA

A Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) is intended to be a government-led exercise which provides a platform for the international community to assist the affected Government in recovery and reconstruction. It should provide a coordinated and credible basis for recovery and reconstruction planning, incorporate risk reduction measures and financing plans, and provide a systemic link to sustainable development, which includes an analysis of the disaster risk reduction framework of the country.
Questions for discussion

This paper presents what seems to be the current trend of Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNAs) in relationship to longer term recovery and reconstruction planning related to the three key themes that will be addressed during the meeting on October 5th:

1) the PDNA as an assessment tool – has the PDNA been a useful process and methodology to help the affected Government determine the socio-economic impact of a disaster?

2) the PDNA as a tool for recovery and reconstruction planning and financing – Has the PDNA been instrumental in helping the affected country and the international community develop an effective recovery and reconstruction strategy?

3) the PDNA as a tool for mainstreaming disaster resilience into longer term development strategies – Was the PDNA able to contribute to positive and lasting changes in the disaster risk reduction framework of the affected country?

By looking at some of the accomplishments and lessons learned from recent post-disaster assessments, one can take stock and outline next steps for improving what is already increasingly recognized as an internationally accepted standard.

Presented below are some of the key perceptions from this recent analysis.

The PDNA as a tool for assessing socio-economic impact of disasters

Since the PDNA process requires close coordination among all the participants with active involvement of government officials, international organizations and bilateral donors, it leads to greater cooperation among agencies and reduced duplication of efforts in determining the impact of a disaster. The Haiti PDNA could serve as a good example where almost the entire international community was united in supporting one sole assessment.

One analysis concluded that often the actual process of the PDNA exercise is as important as the PDNA report itself in terms of influencing in-country institutional and policy improvements; determining options for recovery, reconstruction, risk reduction and risk transfer; and mainstreaming the longer-term disaster risk reduction framework into country development strategies.
In the cases studied, the consensus is that the government officials became more aware of the enormous impact that disasters have on their country's economy both in terms of damages, losses, and the impact on the economy, as well as on households and communities and the needs for recovery and reconstruction. This may be attributed to their exposure to internationally recognized methodologies for damage/loss and human recovery needs assessments. Often, in the past, only the damages from a disaster had been calculated and the economic losses were not considered, let alone the needs for recovery and reconstruction.

In every PDNA, the process is managed slightly differently and there are also variances in the methodologies used. The PDNA process where day-to-day management of the process is under the lead of a Government focal point seems to be most desirable. Most PDNAs include a uniform application of the damage and loss methodology, variations were observed in determining the human impact and recovery needs and also the timelines applied for immediate, medium and long term recovery, as well as the horizon for reconstruction.

Sometimes there is a perception that the PDNA is a tool that donors require and not something governments would do on their own. However, in most cases governments realized the need for a credible analysis and there is a trend of increased Government ownership of the process as well as in-country capacity to apply the methodology. It is postulated that the PDNA process is able to assure the international community accuracy of reporting on the disaster impact and management of the reconstruction efforts.

**The PDNA as a tool for recovery and reconstruction planning**

PDNAs are not solely meant to mobilize international cooperation and funding but also help the affected country define its recovery and reconstruction strategy in the context of its overall development strategy.

The desk study confirms that recommendations from PDNAs are being used for recovery and reconstruction planning. For example, in the Central African Republic, the 2009 PDNA was recognized as an objective assessment of the damages and losses and of the required investments to meet needs for recovery and reconstruction. Thus it has become the basis for both the government and the donors to design their strategies and programs.
Moreover, it has been reported that the close cooperation among government agencies, international organizations and bilateral donors during the PDNA is often carried over into recovery and reconstruction planning. For example, in Myanmar a Tripartite Core Group (TCG) was established which has a Recovery Coordination Center (RCC). The RCC acts as a combined secretariat for recovery and has set up integrated regional hubs to strengthen coordination.

Haiti could also serve as an example where the PDNA was used as a blueprint for further recovery and reconstruction planning and implementation, making the partnership in rebuilding truly global and inclusive.

More and more, it seems that PDNAs not only influence how governments finance the recovery and reconstruction but also how the international multilateral and bilateral donors determine the amount and types of assistance to provide. Increasingly, they are serving as base documents for donor conferences to leverage additional assistance for recovery and reconstruction such as the one for Haiti in March 2010. In Yemen pledges of more than USD 270 million were obtained. In Myanmar, the involvement of international experts and direct surveys conducted under the PDNA gave more confidence in the assessment and definitely had an impact on the financial support available from the international community. Unfortunately this has not always been the case. The Government of Madagascar issued a call for funds after the PDNA in 2008, but there was no response from the international donor community. It might be worthwhile to analyze factors that influence the interest of the international community in a PDNA.

One can cite several interesting innovations that have come about in terms of financial assistance to the affected countries. In Indonesia a multi-donor trust fund was set up with over USD 700 million; in Myanmar one for USD 100 million is functioning well. This “Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund” runs community based livelihood programs in the country; a Recovery Information and Accountability System (RAIS) tracks funds from donors and project progress. In Yemen, the government established a reconstruction and recovery fund for effective and transparent use of funds.

Some governments have taken concrete steps to introduce new risk financing instruments; some others are currently evaluating various options. Madagascar created a disaster contingency fund in 2008. Samoa has established an “Unforeseen Needs Fund” which is equal to about 3 percent of the government budget; though it is not only for disasters.
The PDNA as a tool for mainstreaming resilience into longer term development strategies

A PDNA not only defines recovery and reconstruction needs in the context of a recovery and reconstruction strategy, it also analyzes the upstream and downstream needs for risk reduction and risk management.

The desk study seems to confirm that PDNAs have led to better clarity regarding the roles among agencies and ministries for enhanced disaster response preparedness and longer-term mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into country development strategies.

The eight-country review found that PDNAs had significant impacts on the disaster risk reduction frameworks of the affected countries. All the PDNAs included an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing disaster risk management (DRM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) frameworks bringing them into sharp focus both within the country as well as at international levels. It is felt that this helped the governments to take steps to address weaknesses with the support of the international community.

This is especially true in countries such as the Central African Republic, Yemen and Lao PDR which were in the early stages of institutional development for disaster response preparedness and risk reduction. In the Central African Republic, the 2009 PDNA clearly laid out responsibilities and the need for capacity building for urban flood management and has led to several ongoing capacity building programs.

Based on PDNA recommendations, Yemen has taken an initial step of establishing an inter-ministerial committee to oversee the formulation and implementation of disaster risk management (DRM) policies and plans and for mainstreaming DRM and disaster risk reduction (DRR) into the activities of the various ministries.

Lao PDR was in the initial stages of forming a modern and comprehensive DRM institutional and legal framework. Following the PDNA in 2009, there was substantial change in that institutional framework. The National Disaster Management Committee (NDMC), which is responsible for developing policies and coordinating DRM activities, was moved from the Ministry of Social Welfare to the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Based on recommendations of the PDNA, Samoa has established a housing support fund. Indonesia has set up streamlined procedures for providing assistance to provincial governments.

It seems that PDNAs have also served to highlight issues such as building codes and construction standards making it a catalyst for institutionalizing and codifying building standards and regulations and
establishing new agencies to oversee them. The PDNA in Indonesia determined that 60 to 80 per cent of the damages were in the housing sector. This led the Government of Indonesia to establish a new national construction agency. The Indonesian government is also in the process of codifying new building and construction standards. In Madagascar, a new decree was enacted in 2010 making cyclone proof norms mandatory for all public buildings.

A significant impact of PDNAs is the capacity and awareness generation among government officials at federal, provincial and local levels. For example, after the Namibia PDNA, there was a perceptible shift in focus of government officials from disaster response to disaster mitigation. The Samoa PDNA commended the DRM framework already in place and recommended measures to improve it, which are under review by the government. This included a need for an improved early warning system. In Lao PDR a newly established Water Resources and Environment Agency, which includes the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology that is responsible for river basin management, may play a better role in preparedness and early warning for floods and droughts. Indonesia has a long history of disaster preparedness and has just enacted its second National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction covering 2010 to 2012. Indonesia has officially included the PDNA process as part of any post disaster reconstruction.

In countries with weaker DRM frameworks, less significant results of the PDNA can be seen. However because of recommendations made by the PDNA reports, there is heightened awareness of necessary changes. For example, the Namibian government organized a flood lessons-learned workshop where a flood preparedness, response and mitigation action plan was prepared. Yemen is working to achieve a new approach by integrating food security, climate change and natural hazards into new project proposals.

**Future Scope**

There have been many advances over the years and there is no doubt among all stakeholders that a joint process is necessary to avoid the duplication and uncoordinated approach that was often seen in the past. Yet, some would propose that the establishment of accepted standard procedures for organizing, funding and conducting post disaster assessments is still a work in progress.

On the other hand, no two disasters or country situations are identical. Thus, should we expect that PDNA processes methods and reports will necessarily differ in their scope and coverage? Is there a need to strike a balance between the comparative advantages of homogenization of the PDNA process
and report formats (to facilitate comparison and analysis) and the equally important need for remaining flexible in order to remain demand driven and context specific?

It seems that affected governments are more and more taking the lead in requesting and managing a PDNA (with support of the international community). Yet, is there still a perception that the PDNA is something that donors require and not something governments would do on their own? If so, how do we mainstream the PDNA process into regular government procedures? Beyond the designated disaster management body how are key Ministries such as Finance, Planning, Investment involved in and “owning” the process?

All PDNAs provide attention to risk reduction, sometimes in the form of a separate chapter within the assessment report and in other cases by including it in sector needs identification. During the PDNA process there is increased awareness of the relevance of risk reduction as a means to reduce vulnerabilities. Is this enough to ensure that the longer term disaster risk management agenda will be strengthened and that actual investments become more disaster resilient? Is there scope for improving the risk reduction element of the PDNA?