

COURSE : DISASTER MANAGEMENT (MA/MSc PART I)

Paper : I

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Topic : Disaster Risk Governance

INTRODUCTION

‘Disaster risk governance’ can be defined as the way actors at all levels manage and reduce disaster and climate related risks. Literature from closely related conceptual areas such as risk governance and disaster governance also provide insights into disaster risk governance.

A number of key points arise from the literature on disaster risk governance. From the general guidance literature notable points are:

- There are certain key entry points for mainstreaming disaster risk governance. These include policy development, institutional development, advocacy and knowledge, supporting implementation of measures and supporting broad participation.
- Development and disaster risk are closely related and impact each other in several ways. For example, development can lead to urbanisation which can present new disaster risks. Development initiatives should incorporate disaster risk considerations.
- Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction/management are closely related, as would be the governance processes and mechanisms in these areas.
- Disaster risk governance relates to many levels and actors. It involves the governance mechanisms and processes of national decision-makers, local communities as well as inter- and intra-governmental organisations.

Shifts in functionality have also been observed in disaster risk governance at global, national, and local levels. This descriptive analysis presents a broad view of the dynamic transformation underway in governance at the global and local levels. Delineated below is a brief highlight of the noted changes among the levels of disaster risk governance.

- The global level evidences two significant changes. Primarily, the monolithic structures of global governance have shifted to encompass a wide range of organizations, which can be brought together for specific purposes. Accompanying this networked capacity of multiple groups is the emergence of a globalized DRM system.
- The local level is showing an increase in ability to govern and develop creative solutions for complex local problems confronting individual urban areas. Rapid urbanization is resulting in strong growth in smaller cities, which are also facing

elevated levels of risk with the increased density of population and built environment. A wide diffusion of capacity across the spectrum of growing cities has been necessitated by the complexity of risk that has evolved.

- While the national level may be experiencing the disconcerting effects of the above changes, new opportunities exist to act strategically in strengthening links between global and local capacities. The national level can be a critical central node that enhances DRM coordination and strength. National DRM providing a strong complement to the predominant global and local capacities can offer important gains for overall DRM effectiveness.

Whether these changes reflect a period of convergence, or random disconnected changes on a global scale, it is incumbent to understand the nature of the changes and the opportunities presented for improving DRM approaches. Further, these governance changes suggest there could be important implications for DRM at the national level.

New ways to integrate DRM efforts between sectors and levels of governance are beginning to emerge. The World Economic Forum has recognized the challenge of global–local coordination in its most recent *Global Risk Report*:

The systemic nature of our most significant risks calls for procedures and institutions that are globally coordinated yet locally flexible. As international systems of finance, supply chains, health, energy, the Internet and the environment become more complex and interdependent, their level of resilience determines whether they become bulwarks of global stability or amplifiers of cascading shocks. Strengthening resilience requires overcoming collective action challenges through international cooperation among business, government and civil society.

Adaptation can be in temporary arrangements, as was seen in the response to piracy off East Africa. More permanent solutions, such as the formation of the G20 in response to the recent global financial crisis, are also evidenced. The primary evolution is that capacities can be supported and enhanced through the interconnections of the global–national–local spectrum when needed.