

ADDRESS BY Mr. Jerome Sauvage,
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on

“ENHANCING PUBLIC-PRIVATE-PARTNERSHIPS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION”

Respected Chairperson Mr....., Ministers and Heads of delegations from visiting countries, distinguished dignitaries on the dais, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), I would like to compliment the Government of India the significant opportunity to exchange experiences on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction concerns. Vulnerability reduction is a key practice area for UNDP, which has accorded primacy to developing knowledge, expertise and resources on disaster risk reduction.

Collaboration is at the heart of Hyogo Framework as it mandates – I QUOTE “the establishment of public-private-partnerships to better engage the private sector in disaster risk reduction activities; encourage the private sector to foster a culture of disaster prevention, putting greater emphasis on and allocating resources to pre-disaster activities such as risk assessments and early warning systems”. UNQUOTE

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan observed – “Much has been learnt from the creative disaster prevention efforts in developing countries Prevention policy is too important to be left to Governments and international agencies aloneTo succeed, it must also engage civil society, *the private sector* and the media”.

Recognizing the potential of the corporate sector to effectively contribute towards disaster management endeavors at all levels, the United Nations relies on the **Global Compact** of ‘shared values and principles’ to support the participation of the private sector and other social actors to engage in partnership projects aimed at global development goals, sustainable development and responsible corporate citizenship.

UNDP has also launched an initiative called **‘Corporate Partnership in Emergencies’ (COPE)** to enable the Corporate World to play its part in crisis and disaster recovery by making contributions to meet the needs of the communities hit by natural disasters or humanitarian crisis. UNDP is committed to deepen and up scale this process.

With the belief that sustainable development, poverty reduction, good governance and disaster risk reduction are mutually complementary, UNDP has been engaging all development actors especially the private sector to mainstream risk reduction not only to secure their own industrial infrastructure, assets, production processes and human resources but to also disseminate the same across all sectors of socio-economic life.

Since disaster management is a multi-dimensional and all-encompassing endeavour requiring a multi-stakeholder approach, the reach and influence of private sector permeates day-to-day life of common people and helps shape community attitudes, approaches and thinking.

In India under the Government of India-UNDP Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Programme, UNDP supports and facilitates partnerships between all stakeholders including the corporate sector into the National Disaster Management Framework.

Under GoI-UNDP DRM, national-level corporate sector organizations like the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) have been actively involved in promoting disaster risk reduction approaches within the private sector as well as among communities at large. We are replacing traditional post-disaster engagement of corporates with disaster management with a more constructive, meaningful and pro-active approach of risk reduction and mitigation. A systematic effort has been made to impart a community focus to disaster management activities of corporate organizations as well as individual corporate entities.

Also of note is the corporate contribution towards strengthening disaster response capabilities in the country by uploading private sector resources on to the India Resource Disaster Network (IDRN). A large number of companies are supporting response and recovery initiatives and are helping the communities make a fresh beginning.

A novel orientation of the public-private-partnership approach for disaster risk reduction is to vest the initiative with a stronger, more sustainable, economic underpinning. The training of construction artisans especially the masons is an example meant to promote safer construction practices and an abiding element of skill improvement to further their market employability. By improving their knowledge, skills and aptitude we not only help mainstream disaster risk reduction concerns at the cutting edge level but are also paving the way towards their social empowerment and economic well-being. The approach is a practical, hands-on, with emphasis on '*learning through doing*' and demonstrative models of buildings with and without requisite earthquake resistant features.

Similarly, engineers, architects and Project Managers are also being sensitized and made to undergo a process of 're-education', as one of the participants put it, to promote safer built environment by paying adequate attention to safer construction techniques at all stages.

In the aftermath of the Orissa Super Cyclone, UNDP-GoI DRM took on a novel initiative for capacity development and skill enhancement of masons by organizing them into Self-Help Groups (SHGs). A unique feature has been the seamless integration of gender concerns in the initiative by training and organizing women masons in their own SHGs. At some places, the trainings organized through private companies have helped the trained construction artisans to network with the dealer/distribution network of the company to ensure regular flow of employment opportunities. In addition, the masons have developed the potential to convince their prospective clients on use of safer and qualitative construction practices.

These notable examples of public-private-partnerships have not only ensured construction of disaster-resistant shelters but also imparted greater confidence among the masons, reinforcing their livelihood options and securing their future from poverty. The wide array of initiatives launched has promoted disaster risk reduction and created a tangible spin-off effect on livelihood generation and resultantly on poverty reduction. A similar process was undertaken in Tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu.

To promote safer infrastructure development in the construction sector, public-private-partnerships are promoted with the involvement of the Construction Federation of India (CFI) and the Builders' Association of India (BAI). The resources and expertise of these organizations are harnessed to train engineers, architects, construction artisans, etc.

Promoting such mechanisms through a sustained partnership with private sector also helps prevent environmental degradation.

In spite of these accomplishments more needs to be done and can be done, for example in developing appropriate institutional and policy mechanisms for PPP and to widen the space for all stakeholders to contribute to the national agenda of disaster risk reduction. The common and overarching objective of a safe nation requires synergies of action and to convert the challenge thrown by successive disasters into an opportunity for further strengthening.

I thank the Conference organizers for this opportunity to deliberate upon this issue and hope that this will get translated into a concrete work plan for holistic disaster risk reduction.