Post-disaster social reconstruction and social development

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Abstract: The Asia-Pacific region has experienced major disasters, both natural and man-made, in the recent past. Hundreds of families and communities, and several governments, non-government organisations, international organisations and aid agencies have been engaged in relief, rebuilding and rehabilitation activities with varying degrees of effectiveness and success. This article aims to reflect on some of these post-disaster reconstruction experiences; exploring how a social development approach can be employed for the post-disaster social reconstruction; and suggest regional social policies and strategies for multi-stakeholder cooperation to effectively address post-disaster issues at the local level. Although efforts made by several agencies in very challenging contexts are commendable, there are few examples to show the application of the social development approach. By discussing the social development approach, the paper argues that the conscious use of such an approach facilitates a better planning and preparation for anticipated disasters, rehabilitation processes and the comprehensive development of disaster affected areas, including environmental and psycho-social issues. Towards this end, it underscores the role of regional social policies and multi-stakeholder cooperation. The discussion has implications for local and international communities, which are engaged in pre-planning and preparation for disasters and post-disaster reconstruction.

Keywords: post-disaster, social reconstruction, social development approach, planning and preparation, rehabilitation, regional social policies and multi-stakeholder cooperation

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1. Introduction

Disasters, whether natural or human caused, are not strange to us, but what has been so strange in the recent past is their magnitude, severity and frequency, and irrecoverable huge human loss and suffering. The first eleven years of this century has witnessed several major disasters. For example, the Asian Tsunami of December 2004, Hurricane Katrina, USA, August 2005; rains and floods in India, July-August 2005; earthquake in Pakistan, October 2005; cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, May 2008; earthquake in China, May 2008; floods in the US, June 2008; black Saturday bush fires in Australia in February 2009; Haiti earthquake, January 2010; floods and mudslides in Brazil, 2011; earthquake, tsunami, and explosions at the Fukushima nuclear plants in March 2011; and earthquake in Nepal in April 2015. Pictures of these and similar disasters often come to our minds and remind us of loss of thousands of lives and immeasurable human suffering, and damage to property in billions of dollars. In fact, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction estimates the global economic losses from natural disasters range from $250 billion to $300 billion annually (United Nations, 2015).

Human endeavour to cope with these unfortunate events continues with a lot of support from individual

volunteers, communities, and government and non-government organisations at local, national and international levels (May and Walter, 1986; Anderson and Woodrow, 1989; Maskrey, 1989; Fischer, 1998; Practical Action, 2014; Khan and Ali, 2015). Due to climate change factors, further increase in disasters is anticipated and the importance of early prediction and communication and the preparation for disasters are often emphasised (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2013; United Nations, 2015). Mohan (2015a, p41) argues that "To ignore…the impact of climate change is to endanger human survival". This suggests that a good preparation for disasters is as important as post-disaster reconstruction. Rebuilding disaster affected communities has mixed experiences (Regnier, et al., 2008; Laksmono, et al., 2008) as it is often a difficult and challenging process, particularly for those who have lost their loved ones or are minors and dependent on others for their survival (Pawar, 2008). A good preparation has the potential to reduce human and material loss and suffering, and risk and vulnerability (Blakie et al., 1994; Cernea and McDowell, 2000). As earlier studies have warned, reconstruction needs to be planned and implemented in such a way that it prevents patterns of social inequality and exploitation (Oliver-Smith, 1990; May and Walter, 1986) and ensures a comprehensive development.

To reflect on both disaster preparedness and rebuilding experiences, a few questions may be raised: What was the preparation for these disasters? How is the reconstruction work progressing? Or what is the reconstruction outcome? While posing and seeking answers to these questions, this article aims to explore how a social development approach can be used to pre and post-disaster social reconstruction. Firstly, it reflects on disasters and post disaster reconstruction. Secondly, it presents a social development approach and its importance at the local level. Thirdly, it explores the application of the approach in disaster contexts. Finally, it discusses the implications for regional social policies and multi-stakeholder cooperation. In the conclusion it argues that the social development approach provides a better direction for disaster preparedness and post-disaster reconstruction as comprehensively covering environmental and human factors.

2. Reflections on Disasters and Post-disaster Reconstruction

It is important to reflect on disasters and post-disaster

reconstruction experiences with a view to learn from them and to reduce, or if possible, avoid human loss and suffering and damage to property. Generally, this reflective exercise often tends to focus more on disasters and their consequences and relatively less on preparedness and its outcomes.

It is a common experience that any disaster results in shock, sadness, suffering and a deep sense of loss, particularly in those who have directly affected by it. Nearby individuals, families and communities who are able to help, readily extend their hands to save and support people. Depending upon disasters, such help may or may not be adequate. Organised rescue and relief operation by government and non-government organisations follows, but often the time-lag between the disaster event and rescue and relief operation is an issue. The lesser the time the better, but that is not often the case. One of the critical issues in any disaster is the reach-out of relief services to the weaker groups such as children, women, the disabled and the elderly, who are often bypassed as a type of "survival of the fittest" situation tends to prevail in the immediate post-disaster contexts. Sometimes, these groups are left out or do not receive timely services.

The coverage of the disaster event by the media follows and such mass communication produces mass sympathy and often helping response to disasters. However, several post-disaster experiences show that there is a sudden outburst of sympathetic responses by individuals, organisations and communities to such an extent that it produces further disorderliness and chaos, which makes the rescue and relief operation process difficult and complicated. Disaster experiences portray the challenges of coordinating a range of human and material help offered at once and it is important that relief services such as delivery of food, water and medicine, providing medical treatment and shelter, and psycho-social and emotional support and identifying children and connecting them to their parents, guardians or relatives are organised in an orderly and systematic manner, but often they are not. In some disaster situations, providing security and protection to properties of people affected by the disaster is important as sometimes some mean-minded people try to exploit the situation by appropriating items that do not belong to them.

In major disasters, it is difficult to undertake accurate assessment of human loss and damage to or loss of property, but such data and information are crucial for planning and providing necessary services to peo-

ple affected by the disaster. It also takes time to collect and analyse the data and organise it in readily usable form, but the realities on the field cannot wait for it and services need to be delivered to meet the dire need. When services and compensation are provided according to the collected data, it does not satisfy some people as it does not commensurate with damage to their property.

The responses of people and communities to disasters, in terms of human help, material help and donations, show that they are not often consistent and logical (Roar and Pawar, 2008). For example, irrespective of the nature and severity of disasters, sometimes people and organisations donate more for some disasters and sometimes less to other disasters, though the need in such disasters is equally great. A lack of adequate resources is a significant factor in rescue and relief operations and post-disaster reconstruction. This issue is often further complicated by the politicisation of external aid and politicisation of aid delivery and distribution in local communities. Often governance issues and corrupt practices tend to diminish the quality, quantity and pace of service delivery and the reconstruction process, at least in some disasters (Pawar, 2008). In relief service delivery and post-disaster reconstruction experiences, it is often found that there is a mismatch between what people need and what has been delivered to them, though sometimes services have been altered to meet the need. This not only occurs in material service delivery, but also in undertaking psycho-social assessments and in providing psycho-social and emotional support (for example, the use of Western assessment scales and cultural issues).

Another important issue in most disaster affected communities is that rescue and relief services end relatively fast, but they are not often followed by adequate psycho-social and rehabilitation services (Bava, *et al*., 2010). Many a time, time works as a healing factor for survivors of disasters. Dislocation of family members, identity of persons and tracing of people continue to be ongoing issues in major disasters. It is important to organise necessary and adequate services for the orphaned children and adults. Experiences of disaster-affected communities suggest that disasters have long-term impact on them (Bava, *et al*., 2010), the recovery process is often slow and it leads to some miss-out services, whether it is social, psychological, cultural, economic or political. Whatever services are delivered, they are often limited to acces-

sible areas and many people located in areas that are difficult to reach are left out (Pawar, 2008). Despite such inadequacies, many individuals, families and communities have demonstrated tremendous resiliency and coped well with the impact of disasters and have started a renewed life with traumatic scars. Some post-disaster experiences suggest that often the reconstruction process has not effectively engaged local people and communities in the reconstruction process, which is a major weakness and must be addressed (Maskrey, 1989). It is also important to look at the role of markets in disaster contexts as some greedy elements appear to exploit the situation by deliberately increasing the cost of some products. Disasters call for help and the alleviation of suffering, not exploitation (Oliver-Smith, 1990).

Experience also suggests that one of the vital aspects of disaster management is disaster preparedness in terms of weather predictions, early warning systems, effectively communicating the same to relevant communities, educating target communities, planning and organising evacuation plans and centres, the deployment of emergency personnel and basic services. Disaster preparedness helps to reduce human loss and suffering and, to some extent, damage to property. Finally, post-disaster reconstruction experiences in many communities show that often only a few aspects of communities such as housing, health, infrastructure and education are addressed in an imbalanced manner by neglecting or inadequately addressing the other dimensions of disaster-affected communities. Thus, a social development approach that incorporates all dimensions of communities in a comprehensive way may provide a better direction for disaster preparedness and port-disaster social reconstruction.

3. Social Development Approach and the Importance of the Local Level

The understanding of social development differs depending upon the authors discussing it and their disciplinary traditions (see Pawar and Cox, 2010a; Mohan, 2010, 2011, 2015). Social development is about systematically introducing a planned (sometimes radical) change process, releasing human potential, transforming people's determination, reorganizing and reorienting structures (Mohan, 2011), and strengthening the capacity of people and their institutions to meet human needs. It is also about reducing inequalities and problems, creating opportunities and empowering people, achieving human welfare and well-being, im-

proving relationships between people and their institutions and, finally, ensuring economic development. Anticipating, future planning, organising, systematic intervening, comprehensiveness, and overall welfare and well-being are some of the essential features. These features are relevant to disaster preparedness and post-disaster social reconstruction. Pawar and Cox (2010a, pp27–34) suggest that social development practice involves understanding and changing current conditions by setting and following clear goals, values and processes, and by developing and implementing plans and strategies at multi-levels and at multi-dimensions. These aspects of social development practice are elaborated in brief below (adapted from Cox, Pawar and Picton, 1997).

The goals of social development are to promote people's well-being or quality of life and enabling people to experience freedom to satisfy their aspirations and realise their potential. These goals need to be achieved by following the values such as:

(i) Respect for people and belief in their capacity to grow and develop,

(ii) A holistic understanding of human existence — physical to spiritual,

(iii) Acceptance of social and cultural pluralism and incorporation of the centrality of people's cultures and values,

(iv) Acknowledging the importance of ecological issues and people's link with nature and their environment, and

(v) Acknowledging that social relations are based on the right and obligation to participate, equality of opportunity, and the right of all to social justice.

The core aspects of the process are participation and empowerment.

Some of the strategies suggested are:

(i) Capacity building of individuals, groups and communities,

(ii) Local institution building and support for people's organizations,

(iii) Fostering self-reliance,

(iv) Creating an enabling environment within which all people can develop,

(v) Participating in the development and functioning of social institutions,

(vi) Promoting the provision of adequate resources and services accessible to all,

(vii) Promoting a pro-active role for the state in supporting participatory planning,

(viii) Engaging in the development and implementation of policies to enhance social development,

(ix) Coordinating development initiatives at all levels, and

(x) Strengthening civil society in all its various aspects.

The multiple levels are local, national and international, and within the nation level are regions, states/provinces, districts, the lowest administrative unit of governments and grassroots level communities and villages, which are referred as local level. The multiple dimensions include culture, politics, economy, ecology, education, health, housing, equity groups and citizens and their institutions. Based on these goals, values, processes, plans and strategies, and multiple levels and dimensions a social development approach as presented below in Figure 1 is conceptualised and suggested.
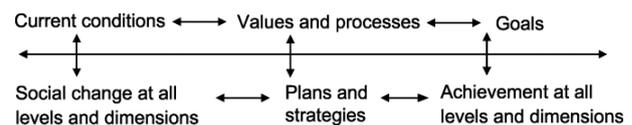

Figure 1. An approach to social development.
Source: Pawar and Cox (2010a, p28)

A social development approach as presented in Figure 1 includes an understanding of current conditions and bringing change in those conditions at all levels and all dimensions, and setting clear goals and achieving those goals at all levels and dimensions by following clear values and processes, and by developing and implementing plans and strategies. To understand current conditions, two questions may be posed: What are the current conditions? Why do such conditions exist? The analysis of such questions needs to be undertaken to develop and implement plans and strategies according to the values and processes so as to achieve the goals at all levels and dimensions.

As discussed above, social development encompasses and covers multiple levels. Its most crucial level is the local level. The word "local" in local level social development does not carry any one specific connotation. Uphoff (1986, p11) saw it as signifying any or all of the following: locality (a set of interrelated communities); community (a relatively self-contained socioeconomic residential unit); or group (a self-identified set of persons with a common interest). In general terms, local level social development is development that takes place at the local level and is ideally initiated by the local level. It is not essentially or ideally action that occurs at the local level as a re-

sult or flow on of central level planning and decision making (UN Centre for Regional Development 1988, 14). As Midgley (1992) puts it, in what he refers to as the populist understanding of social development, "[Local level] social development is said to occur when local people collaborate to strengthen community bonds and take concerted action to improve their social and economic conditions." We would argue that the philosophical base of local level social development is that local people, through their community structures, are enabled to assume responsibility for their own development (cited from Pawar and Cox, 2010b, pp. 41–43). Although all other levels are important and their engagement is necessary, the emphasis and clear focus on local level is needed because in the overall development process, local levels are often neglected and comprehensive services are not delivered at that level. In the past, macro-level development initiatives have often failed to percolate or have taken a long time to do so. The participatory process also requires a focus at this level. Both the disaster preparedness and post-disaster reconstruction occur at the local level, though other levels are engaged in it. Overall, the vastness of local levels, their relative neglect thus far, high deprivation and need levels make a special case for an unequivocal focus at local levels. While some work is undertaken at some local levels, as stated above, the focus of work appears to be limited to one or two dimensions such as health, education or income generation (economic) activities. This limitation partly emanates from comparative approaches such as economic development (Todaro, 1997), health development, human development, capacity development (Sen, 2001), welfare and social work (as in other conceptions of social development by Midgley, 1995, pp28–36,), focusing on only one aspect of development. Whereas the local level social development approach suggests to include and address comprehensive dimensions of the community or local level by following the above stated goals, values and processes.

4. The Application of a Social Development Approach

Although the title of this paper is post-disaster social reconstruction and social development, the very essence of social development requires looking at pre-disaster preparation, which is generally referred to as disaster preparedness, as anticipating, projecting, advance planning and preventing problems, meeting needs in a timely manner and planned intervention are the basic elements of social development. Thus the application of the social development approach calls for looking into the two phases of disasters, namely disaster preparedness (DP) and post-disaster social reconstruction (PDSR). The social development goals, values, strategies, processes and outcomes are equally applicable to both phases.

4.1 Disaster Preparedness (DP)

There are several significant aspects of DP. It is important to build the risk management capacity of individual households and institutions (Vatsa, 2003). The foremost is the planning for accurate and nearly accurate disaster predictions and predicting disasters as early as possible. Knowing the likely occurrence of disasters in advance helps to prepare better and reduce human and material loss. Predicting disasters is not possible without well-trained personnel and well-developed technologies and access to such technologies. Thus it is important to recruit necessary personnel to train them and provide them with the latest technologies. When disaster predictions are available, it is equally important to disseminate that information to all target people and communities without any delay, particularly to rural, remote and isolated areas. Towards this, available information and communication technologies and electronic and print media need to be effectively used. Where such technologies and communication systems are not available, local indigenous communication methods needs to be used to disseminate disaster predictions.

Most importantly, disaster preparedness requires human and material resource mobilisation. Inadequate human and material resources can hamper the process of disaster preparedness. Targeted community conditions needs to be understood in terms of their strengths and weaknesses. Community mapping and engaging people to identify their resources, strengths and weaknesses are important steps in disaster preparedness. Identifying disaster prone areas and seasons, and educating people about ways of protecting their lives (and property if possible) are important aspects of disaster preparedness. Meticulous planning of the basic facilities and services in evacuation centres and orderly evacuation processes and of basic and orderly facilities and services in them needs to be undertaken. It is also important to identify and plan adequate support for vulnerable groups such as children, the disabled, elderly people and the sick. As part of the disaster

preparedness, it is important to introduce necessary market regulations so that some greedy elements in the society do not exploit the situation by increasing the prices of basic commodities. In the absence of such measures the poor are likely to be greatly affected by such artificial inflation.

Despite so much planning and preparation, often people experience unexpected disasters. Anticipating such events, adequate emergency plan and its effective operations need to be thought of, especially rescue and relief operations immediately followed by the disaster. Although most of the DP occurs or should occur at targeted communities, activities related to preparation needs to be coordinated at all levels, from local to international. Lack of coordination is a major issue in DP as government organisations, non-government organisations, the business, local communities and people are not often aware of what needs to be coordinated and the significance and place of coordination in the DP. In summary, the application of the social development approach to DP calls for planning for predicting disasters, personnel and technology, communication, resource mobilisation, evacuation, support to vulnerable groups, regulation of the market, emergency intervention and coordination.

4.2 Post-disaster Social Reconstruction (PDSR)

Although often disasters have eventualities and casualties, experience suggests that good DP facilitates the PDSR work better. As stated above, the goals, values, processes and strategies of social development need to be consciously applied to post-disaster situations as far as possible. Disaster affected people experience significant trauma, stress and loss, depending upon the nature and degree of disaster. Those who are engaged in PDSR work need to respect people, their culture, their relationship with land and people and the way they are, and aim to restore their well-being or quality of life by employing participatory and empowering processes according to people's pace as recovery takes time and significant support is needed. Several strategies such as capacity building, creating enabling environment, delivering adequate services, coordination, engaging civil society, fostering self-reliance can be gradually employed depending upon the context of each disaster situation. However, in any disaster aftermath the first focus should be on rescue and relief operations.

Well-planned rescue and relief operations, if necessary, need to be implemented immediately after the disaster, when it is safe to do so. Serious accidents could occur during rescue and relief operations and it is important to proactively prevent them. Towards this, knowing the conditions of the community in terms of topography, physical infrastructure and socio-cultural practices of people helps. Often rescue and relief personnel may come from outside the community and therefore, engaging capable local people, who have the knowledge of the local area, with the community is an important strategy. While providing relief services, it is important to give priority to children, the disabled, the elderly and the sick as they are often neglected or do not receive services in a timely manner.

Along with rescue and relief operations, when possible, it is important to understand the current conditions of communities to develop systematic plans and programmes for PDSR. Understanding current conditions of communities involves ascertaining information relating to loss of lives (both human and animal), loss of property, injury to people, damage to property, damage to crops, misplaced adults and children and identifying and linking dead bodies to survivors. Under the disaster conditions, this is a complex and challenging task as accurate information is difficult and inaccurate information results in inaccurate programmes and services and compensation, and sometimes genuinely affected people do not receive such services. In all this process, engaging local people and understanding and impartially engaging with local politics are important so as to make sure that undue political influence does not occur and factual data are not manipulated. In addition to these data, a comprehensive understanding of communities in terms of their demography, economy, culture, physical infrastructure, peoples' needs and aspiration becomes important as post-disaster reconstruction work in terms of social changes needs to be based on such information.

Establishing identity of dead bodies, linking them to relatives, where possible, organising funerals according to different cultural practices of communities are important aspects of the grieving process and they should be performed with due respect by engaging local people. Disasters may lead to orphaned children and adults, single parent families, mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder and disability due to injuries. Depending upon the size of the problem, appropriate facilities and services need to be provided either by creating necessary institutions or by referring them to services/institutions where they exist,

without causing further separation from their families and land. Ensuring good conditions in temporary shelters and introducing necessary measures to prevent health epidemics are equally important interventions in PDSR.

Since large-scale disasters call for large-scale interventions by a range of players, proper planning of coordination of these players is needed to prevent chaos in delivering services. Government organisations, non-government organisations, business organisations, volunteers, community people, and defence and security personnel are simultaneously engaged in post-disaster situations. Often the specification of the tasks and the targeted persons for these tasks may not be clear and may result in abuse, underutilisation or non-utilisation of resources. The social development approach helps to identify needs and issues and creatively link the available resources to meet the needs and address the problems. This is possible through a complex coordination of a range of players across all levels and dimensions and through the application of plans and strategies as discussed earlier and summarised in Figure 2.

A good disaster management is possible through planning proper coordination of international government organisations such as United Nations bodies and international non-government organisations, national government bodies at various levels (national, state, district and lowest administrative unit) national non-government organisations, community-based organisations and people in local communities. They need to communicate with one another (Jha, 2010) and work together on similar plans and strategies. In the current PDSR work, it appears that a lack of coordination and communication and a lack of common plans and strategies are common concerns. Often rescue and relief services are provided with varying degrees of effectiveness and efficiency and there is a sudden sympathetic unmanageable response from several players during relief operations, but all these are withdrawn or come to an end in a short period, and mostly people and communities are often left to fend for themselves. Although some agencies continue with limited programmes and services, they appear to mostly focus on physical infrastructure such as building houses, roads and community centres. What appears to be lacking in PDSR work is the development and the use of basic plans and strategies by engaging local people. In addition, as pointed out under reflections, only a few aspects of communities such as health, housing or edu-

cation are focused rather than focusing on comprehensive development of communities.
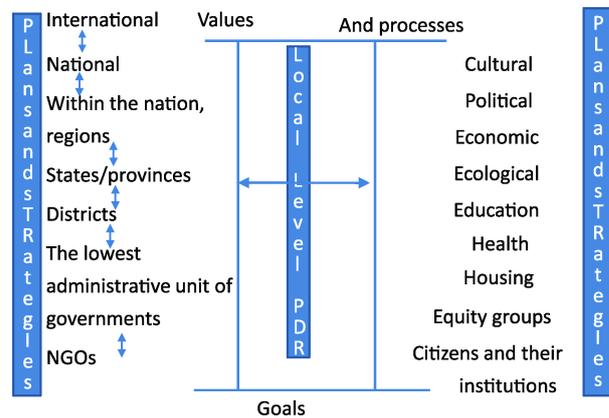

Figure 2. The social development approach to post-disaster social reconstruction.

By employing the social development approach to PDSR, a proper coordination among all the levels needs to be developed with clear and common values and processes and goals. Such planned and coordinated effort at the local level communities is focused on nine comprehensive dimensions of communities so as to facilitate their PDSR.

During the PDSR and long term rehabilitation, all these dimensions are equally important and the listing in Figure 2 does not suggest any priority or order. Similarly, the International Recovery Platform (IRP, 2011) has identified nine recovery themes, which are not as comprehensive as the dimensions conceptualised under the social development approach, which incorporates many of the IRP themes. The following is a brief discussion of each of these dimensions. By understanding the culture of local communities, it is important to strengthen and/or rebuild cultural aspects of people. These relate to their religious practices, relationship with ecological systems, belief systems and artistic and cultural expressions through arts, music and play. They appear to be important avenues for venting their grief, shock, stress and trauma, and coping with their life situations. Many other dimensions are linked to people's culture. Thus conscious cultural development is an important aspect of PDSR.

Developing political aspects of the community beyond voting and partisan politics is important in PDSR. It includes awareness raising, awareness of facilities and services meant for them, their rights, entitlements and obligations, what opportunities have been created and what opportunities are needed, who

is doing what for them and how they need to be and can be part of the PDSR. It is also important to develop community-based organisations and interest groups to address their PDSR issues. People need to be politically engaged to enable and empower them, and their resilience needs to be diverted for political engagement. Along with the political engagement, economic development is crucial in PDSR. Disaster affected people seem to be less interested in receiving material donations and services, except during the initial phases of the disaster, and more keen on employment or self-employment opportunities and assistance that leads to clear employment outcomes. It may be providing training in a particular trade, equipment such as a fishing net or a boat or a small amount of loan with easy or flexible requirements (for example, very low interest and non-surety based) as grant. Well-planned public infrastructure projects could create long-term employment opportunities for local people. Market mechanisms need to be well regulated for the benefit of the community. Although housing is important, merely building houses (often with low quality) or only focusing on housing projects is an inadequate response to the PDSR. Economic and housing development projects need to be carried out by taking into consideration people's culture and local ecology. People's relationship with their land and water and flora and fauna, as well as their sustainability, should be the basis of economic development activities.

Instead of piecemeal and reactive responses to health and education, long-term quality health and education provisions should be provided in post-disaster communities. A crucial aspect of health is psycho-social development of individuals, families and communities, which is closely connected to strengthening their confidence, resilience and hope. Psycho-social development approaches focused on individuals are relevant, but in disaster and post-disaster situations, they are not adequate and may not be appropriate in some cultures. Thus innovative mass psycho-social development approaches are needed (for example, systematically organising community funerals by respected and accepted religious leaders, periodic mass support sessions and empathic presentations by resource persons, etc.). Good quality health and education infrastructure (not temporary shelters) in terms of school buildings, water and sanitation, and hospitals/health centres equipped with latest technology should be provided. In a way, this is a good opportunity to utilise national and international funds for developing quality education and health services in post-disaster communities, making sure that these funds do not end up in corrupt hands. Equally important are recruiting well-trained teachers and health professionals, and introducing measures to ensure nutrition standards in children, regular schooling and maternal health.

As pointed out earlier, for certain equity groups such as children, women, the elderly, the physically challenged and the sick, needs-based services and provisions needs to be developed and provided to ensure that they become part of the main stream of the society. Addressing all these dimensions in a coordinated manner should be geared towards developing good citizenship and local institutions and good relationship between the two (Zhang and Wang, 2010). Rather than using post-disaster communities for the political popularity of some political leaders, it is important to develop and foster citizenship of people and their institutions in their communities.

Based on the above, it may be argued that the social development approach provides a better direction for DP and PDSR. Implications of such an approach for regional social policies and multi-stakeholder cooperation are discussed in the following section.

5. Implications for Regional Social Policies and Multi-stakeholder Cooperation

Renewed regional policies and enhanced multi-stakeholder cooperation are needed not only because of the social development approach to DP and PDSR, but also because of the climate change that leads to disasters and precarious situation of people in small island states in the Pacific and in poor and relatively resource-less countries. Two broad norms may be suggested to develop such regional policies. Firstly, regional policies should be based on certain basic values emanating from human rights and international cooperation, understanding and law. Secondly, political consideration or motivations should not have any place in formulating and implementing these policies.

In my view, clear regional policies need to be developed to address five common needs or issues. Firstly, as many countries do not have adequate human, material and technological resources, and people's donations and sympathetic responses are not consistent and reliable, it is important to create dedicated regional disaster funds and resources and build them on a regular basis so that any country can access

these funds and resources, according to mutually agreed norms, for DP and PDSR. Access to adequate resources will help to implement the social development approach. Secondly, although many countries and United Nations bodies have their own disaster management and coordinating institutions, a clear regional policy is needed to develop an international network of disaster coordination institutions and ongoing communication, training and exchanges among them. Joint declarations (see for example, The European Commission, the United Nations Development Group and the World Bank, 2008) need to be translated into action. Thirdly, while many countries could potentially become the victims of disasters and some countries are more disaster prone than others, these countries do not have access to latest technologies, which may be used to predict disasters and communicate early warnings. Thus broad regional policies would greatly help to facilitate technology transfer and sharing of technologies. Fourthly, since climate related disasters are expected and people in small island states are at greater risk, regional policies are needed to carry out international evacuations and settle climate change refugees in another country. Lastly, in many disasters, there is always an issue of time lag between the disaster event and rescue and relief teams' response to such an event and the length of the time rehabilitation support is provided. Although this time lag will vary depending upon many factors such as the nature and location of disaster, resources and disaster preparedness, it would be useful to develop a regional policy for minimum standards for responding to disasters and minimum standards for providing rehabilitation services on a continuing basis. Some steps towards this direction are currently present (ASEAN, 2009, p16).

These and similar regional policies cannot be developed without multi-stakeholder cooperation and participation (EPC and TCG International, 2004), and without multi-stakeholder cooperation, adequate and effective response to disasters may not be possible. But it is difficult to be prescriptive as to how to develop such cooperation. Thus I have suggested five basic principles for enhancing multi-stakeholder cooperation, as follows:

(i) Treat all stakeholders with respect and dignity.

(ii) It is important to be inclusive of all stakeholders. On the basis of interests and needs, all stakeholders should be given equal consideration.

(iii) Prevent harm to any stakeholder as they have a right to not be subjected to mis-treatment.

(iv) Stakeholders have a right to participate, particularly in decisions that affect them.

(v) Fair opportunity should be provided to all stakeholders without discrimination (Matwijkiw and Matwijkiw, 2010).

It is hoped that the application of these principles enhances multi-stakeholder cooperation for DP and PDSR.

6. Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, the magnitude and frequency of disasters have been increasing and so are human efforts to manage them. Towards this, this paper has explored how the social development approach can be employed for the DP and PDSR. By reflecting on post-disaster social reconstruction experiences, it has identified several issues and pointed out that disaster preparedness helps to reduce the impact of disasters. The main thrust of this paper is that the social development approach can be used for DP and PDSR. To make this case, first it has presented the author's conceptualisation of the social development approach and then it has discussed how it can be employed for DP and PDSR. The application of the social development approach calls for understanding and changing current conditions of communities by employing well-developed plans and strategies, by setting clear goals and by adhering to values and processes. It also calls for the engagement of all levels across all dimensions of local communities. To practise and promote such an approach, it suggests to develop renewed regional policies and to enhance multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Many disasters often cause loss, sadness and despair, particularly for those who are directly affected by them, and present complex and challenging situations to those who are engaged in dealing with them. Disasters on the one hand, hinder development processes already underway but on the other hand, provide opportunities for rebuilding and redevelopment. I hope the ideas presented in this paper contribute towards reducing loss, sadness and despair; easing complexities and challenges of disasters; and a comprehensive development of people and their communities with due regard to the environment.

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No conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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