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2nd International Disaster Resilience Forum Takes Place

Systemic and integrated approaches by all the stakeholders participating and cooperating voluntarily are essential to strengthen resilience required for preparing and responding to uncertain crises including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hosted by the Korean Red Cross, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Society (IFRC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Association (ADRRA), the 2nd International Disaster Resilience Forum (IDRF) took place on 7-9 July 2020 with the theme of "Systemic Resilience: A New Normal for a Better Tomorrow." The forum, focusing on "Collaboration, Integration, and System Engineering," aimed to foster a better understanding of the importance of systemic resilience and the role of different stakeholders in achieving it.

Credit: Korean Red Cross
Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Korean Society of Hazard Mitigation, and the Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC) and organized by the Asia Pacific Disaster Resilience Center (APDRC), the 2nd International Disaster Resilience Forum was held at the Seoul office of Korean Red Cross HQs on July 3. Held both online and offline, this year’s forum provided a stage of discussion on how COVID-19, the infectious disease that has been shaking the entire world, has affected the current disaster management mechanism, and which direction we should take in the future.

At the forum, Global care & Future of Africa Foundation (Korean NGOs), Daegu metropolitan government, the Korean Red Cross, IFRC, and the Italian Red Cross shared their experiences on local and international responses regarding COVID-19, which was followed by presentations on the COVID-19 response in view of the Sendai Framework of the UNDRR, the Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health EDRM) Framework of the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Basic Plan for Disaster Management of Korea. The panel discussion session included talks on the future directions to be taken for sustainable disaster risk reduction and improved community resilience.

For the overcoming of the pandemic, the participants called for the establishment of a government-civilian cooperation mechanism, voluntary participation by the citizens, and circulation of correct information, as well as a response guideline that can be flexibly applied according to on-site situations, stressing that the pandemic requires cooperation from various fields other than medical as well. Some pointed out the need for recognizing the importance of operating an organizational system that can strengthen the resilience with the horizontal connection and integration between related departments and ministries, and for establishing the preparation plans and conducting repeated simulation training for deeper comprehension of such plans. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the importance of approaches being inclusive across the fields and comprehensive other than fragmented. They emphasized to build its resilience that enables the local communities to prepare for and respond to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and to implement systemic and comprehensive approaches with all the stakeholders participating and cooperating voluntarily. The forum ended, with necessity raised for another discussion on the further effect of
COVID-19 on sustainable development goals (SDGs) and disaster risk management mechanism. APDRC seeks to hold another forum for further discussions in the latter half of the year to study the effect of COVID-19 from multiple perspectives.

The forum was streamed live to the world via an online platform and participated by staff of the Korean Red Cross, officials of the NGOs, and members of the Korean Society of Hazard Mitigation, as well as staff of the Red Cross societies from Asia Pacific region including Cambodia, Myanmar, Japan, and China, as well as European ones including Italy, Germany, and Sweden. The video record of the forum and the graphic facilitation video are available on the APDRC website.
How COVID-19 impacts Red Cross Red Crescent support

"Community Resilience' is the particularly appropriate for COVID-19 response"

The COVID-19 pandemic has a profound impact at every level and on every sector of society. On the back of a globalized economy the virus was able to spread to every country. It has unfolded as a systemic crisis, where one event becomes a trigger for another, and has done so at an unprecedented scale. Cities, and especially the most densely populated sections, have been the stage of large outbreaks. Governments have been struggling to address the health impact and cushion the economic shocks, often at the expense of other public priorities and future budgetary space. Despite this, the impact is immense, in Western and certainly in Southern countries, and successes of reduced infection rates and fatalities have shown to be fragile.

The corresponding humanitarian needs are substantial and wide-ranging, also because of secondary effects of government responses. They are first and foremost in the health domain, including hygiene promotion and behavior change like keeping distance, wearing face masks, or staying at home. The effects vary between communities, based on location and socio-economic status. It exposes social inequalities within societies, where the poorest brackets of society appeared to be also the most vulnerable in terms of susceptibility, and of access to health care and to basic services. Also, the economic effects reveal differences, with vast groups of (day) workers for whom self-quarantine directly impacts their ability to make a living. In many countries the pandemic has reversed economic growth and has acted as a poverty multiplier. For many people it has also acted as a vulnerability multiplier through increasing social stress, food insecurity, domestic violence, and stigmatization. The primary and secondary effects of COVID-19 are thus both a humanitarian and a development concern and will shape the international agenda for the foreseeable future.

The pandemic also presents challenges for organizations...
like the Red Cross Red Crescent: through their work staff and volunteers are also exposed to the virus, and at the same time travel restrictions impact on the ability to access hard(er)-to-reach areas, and overall the response needs to adhere to general precaution measures. For providing humanitarian support, focus is largely on health needs and hygiene promotion, but also stretches to livelihoods support. Data management is particularly important and contributes to anticipate re-emergence of infection. Furthermore psycho-social support is more closely linked to medical support and also focuses on professional care givers and volunteers. The local structure of the Red Cross Red Crescent is particularly important to be able to adapt to local needs, and much focus will be on urban settlements.

At the same time other global trends present amplifying and compounding humanitarian effects, with climate change being the most prominent. In a parallel trajectory disaster and health risks have been affecting the poor and vulnerable for many years, eroding livelihoods that were already weak, and will continue to do so – in many places with increasingly devastating effects. In fact, COVID-19 exposes what climate change had deepened already. While most attention is now for COVID-19, the Red Cross Red Crescent must continue to remind states of their commitments for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

While ‘community resilience’, embraced by the Red Cross, regards much of its benefits through a disaster lens, the approach presents a multi-hazard, multi-risk and multi-crises assessment that makes it also particularly appropriate for COVID-19 response. Not only through direct fields of assistance like health, food, disaster reduction, but also through its more general dimensions of social cohesion, gender sensitivity, connectedness and inclusion of specific groups. Through this approach the Red Cross Red Crescent emphasizes its local-based structure, volunteer base and auxiliary role.

Finally, the COVID-19 crisis has triggered debates on the tenability of prevailing economic and social models that structure society, including on policies re. poverty, the importance of multilateralism, the role of nature / eco-systems and climate. These are debates in which the Red Cross Red Crescent may wish to raise its voice to focus on humanitarian dimensions. An additional intra-Movement debate may focus on sustaining collaborative modes of cooperation.

03

Preparation saves lives
Sanjaya Bhatia
UNDRR Head of ONEA and GETI

"We must prioritize resilient health systems."

The capacity of public health systems is crucial to reduce the impact of pandemics. Experience from past epidemics and the
current COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate how important it is to break down silos between disaster managers, health workers and other sectors. Ms. Mami Mizutori, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction and head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) urged national and local disaster management agencies to include health emergencies in the discussion on disasters, as a top priority, alongside earthquakes, floods, storms and other natural hazards. Governments must prioritize resilient health systems.

Promoting systematic integration of health into national and sub-national disaster risk reduction policies and plans is a key recommendation of the “Bangkok Principles for the implementation of the health aspects of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030”. The Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Framework (Health EDRM) of the World Health Organization is the overarching framework. While the frameworks are global, actions are taken at the local level. The Making Cities Resilient (MCR) Campaign has been supporting local governments since 2010 to better understand disaster risk. The Campaign unpacks the concept of ’Disaster Risk Reduction’ into the ‘10 Essentials for Making Cities Resilient,’ the basic fundamental elements that local governments must pursue to build and maintain resilience. It is accompanied by the Disaster Resilience Scorecard for Cities (City Scorecard), a tool allowing local governments to assess their disaster resilience. The Public Health Addendum supplements City Scorecard aiming to strengthen and integrate coverages of the many aspects of public health that are relevant to disaster planning, mitigation and response. It is guided by the Health EDRM Framework with the ultimate aim to ensure local government resilience planning integrates health aspects in disaster risk management (Download the tool).
Virtual Reality Experience Training Available for Wider Distribution

New VR earthquake training program is developed and ready to be distributed

The Asia Pacific Disaster Resilience Center (APDRC) has developed a new VR training program in cooperation with the VR team of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The newly developed program is based on a complex disaster in which high-rise buildings in urban areas are affected by earthquakes, and the subsequent fires. It contains guides to a number of situations, from preparing a ready-to-go bag before the disaster breaks, properly responding in case the building is shaking due to the earthquake, safely evacuating from the upper floors down to the ground floor after the shaking has stopped, using fire extinguishers in case of smoke due to the fire or flames in the evacuation path, to finding a safe place after reaching the ground floor. Information on the training program is available on the APDRC website. Thanks to the support from the Sungjoo Foundation, the training program has been translated into 12 languages: Korean, Chinese, English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Vietnamese, Thai, Laotian, Nepalese, Malay, and Mongolian. For the Red Cross society that wishes to use the new training program, please make an inquiry on the APDRC website.

VR gear support

Until 2019, APDRC has provided VR gears, laptops, and training programs to National Red Cross societies in Nepal, Mongolia, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines in order to facilitate VR-based experience training in these countries.

In 2020, APDRC plans to add three more National Societies to the list, providing each of the societies with two VR gears and laptops along with three kinds of training programs regarding earthquake preparedness, evacuating from a cruise ship, and fire in a theater.

Those National Society that wishes to be provided with the VR gears, please visit the APDRC website, fill out an application and establish an operational plan for the coming year, and send by October 31. Selected societies will be notified individually.

It should be noted that, in case of delay in the start of the selected society’s activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic in each country, the transfer of the gears can also be delayed accordingly.