

## What Community Thinks about a successful Community Based Disaster Risk Management: Voices from the Fields of Ghana and India

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There is a growing consensus amongst researchers and planners to incorporate local community in disaster risk management and climate change adaptation planning, yet its actualization largely remains a dream. Large amount of money and time are have been spent on community based disaster risk management, but little or no success is seen. Even the so-called successful cases have rarely been scaled up or replicated in other place. On the other hand, the local communities and end-users often complained that the so-called community based disaster management programs were just an eyewash of the disaster management authority to get legitimate and socially approved decisions, whereas community's opinions had little bearing on the decision making process. Some of the major benefits claimed received by community based disaster management exercises are improved risk awareness and preparedness, conflict resolution, collaborative knowledge development, cost effectiveness, better accepted decision and joint ownership and so on. But none of these claims are empirically validated. There exit no little hint about which steps and procedure are taken and how and what outcome benefits it can yield. Most of the cases, it is just presumed that the participatory exercise is just a means to an end, introducing it would automatically involve community in the decision making process. Community Based Disaster Risk Management is also being practiced and carried out different ways. Researchers often differ amongst themselves about the structure, functions, and rules of the participatory exercise. Some scholars advocate for

an active involvement of the community in planning and management process, whereas some suggest only passive involvement of the in the process. Researchers also varies in opinion about the content of the participatory exercise. Carrying out participatory exercises or tools is also considered as an art, where the communication skill of the facilitator, the place for the exercise, time span- short or long, and language used – native or foreign, all matters to decide what a certain tool would be able to deliver. Because of these variables, differences are not only observed between different participation, a single a same participatory tool is differently exercised at different places by different facilitators. Participatory disaster risk mapping is a great example of this. This popular participatory exercise has often been carried out with different objectives and different steps depending on places it is conducted, time when conducted, the agency and facilitator who conducted and so on.

The multifaceted nature of participatory tools, the variety of ways to operationalize them and its numerous untested claims and benefits created enormous confusion amongst the researchers and practitioners to put the idea into practice. One after another, a new participatory tool or technique is introduced claiming better results and having better implementation potentiality without giving inadequate explanation on structure and steps of the exercise and how these would meet the objectives. The literature has been dominated by descriptive prescriptions of techniques and procedures based on untested assumptions. Consequently, it has been difficulty to

understand what works, where and why. As a result, we have been observing that though the idea of community participation is considered as a commonplace element in disaster risk management, yet in practice it remains elusive. Hence, the need for a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of public participation in order to guide them in their quest to meaningfully involve local the community in disaster risk management.

There exist rare, perhaps no literature in the disaster risk management studies, which systematically study and explicitly define how a participatory tool, based on which procedural mechanism and structural

attributes, would enable the meaningful involvement of the community in the decision making process. There is urgent need to systematically define the objectives of the community based disaster risk management and carefully evaluate how and what extent a participatory tool can ascertain those objectives.

This study will evaluate the success of community based disaster management from local community's perspective. We will share our experience from two different sites , one is from climate change affected community from Africa and the other one is from flood affected slum community in Mumbai, India.