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Role of local governments in disaster risk reduction

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All papers submitted to COBRA were subjected to a double-blind (peer review) refereeing process. Referees were drawn from an expert panel, representing respected academics from the construction and building research community. The conference organisers wish to extend their appreciation to the following members of the panel for their work, which is invaluable to the success of COBRA.

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Role of the local governments in disaster risk reduction

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Abstract

The occurrence of the natural disasters has increased significantly in recent past and this has resulted in a high number of mortalities and economic and social losses worldwide. This necessitates the implementation of disaster risk reduction measures in order to achieve a disaster resilient environment. The risk reduction through improved resilience requires a multi-sectoral approach with the participation of various stake holders. As such, the local governments being the first responder and the one responsible for community development, has a key role to play in achieving society's resilience to disasters.

Therefore the purpose of this paper is to explore the nature and the potential role of the local government in implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives in development of the society's resilience to natural disasters.

The literature review method has been used to address this potential role of the local governments in disaster risk reduction and the data and information has been gathered from research papers on electronic databases along with conference proceedings and reports published by various institutions.

The review of literature reveals that the local government has a significant role to play in implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives. However several incidents have been reported on inadequate contribution of local governments in disaster risk reduction activities. This could mainly be attributed to inadequate financial, manpower and other resources available with local governments and their failure to make timely decisions due to lack of authority. This highlights the need for empowering local governments with improved governance structure.

Keywords: Disasters, Disaster risk reduction, local governments

1. Introduction

Disasters cause a significant amount of damage and losses around the world every year (Ofori, 2001). There has been a distinct increase in the number and scale of natural disasters over the past few years, and the impact in terms of human, structural and economic losses has increased considerably. According to official statistics issued by the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) in 2010, natural disasters have caused the death of more than 780,000 people over the past ten years and destroyed a minimum of US \$ 960 billion worth of property and infrastructure.

In recognition of the devastating and long term impacts of disasters the importance of disaster risk reduction has been widely recognized by the researchers and the policy makers all over the world. Enormous challenges are associated with implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives and therefore inter disciplinary strategies, tools and approaches are required to ensure proper management and resourcing of risk reduction efforts (Haigh & Amaratunga, 2010). Disaster mitigation and response is a multi agency and multi sectoral activity and most countries have established national disaster response agencies, which may be decentralised to regional, district and village levels (Osei, 2007). It has been identified that the local government is the first responder and the one responsible for community development and sustainable disaster risk reduction (ISDR, 2010). It has further recognized the need of empowering the local government as a key priority to encourage democratic decision-making involving the citizens and all key stakeholders at the local level in order to ensure effective implementation of disaster risk reduction measures (ISDR, 2010).

Even though there is a growing concern among researchers and practitioners on the role of local government in leading disaster risk reduction initiatives, several incidents have been reported on the inadequate contribution of local governments in taking the lead of disaster risk reduction initiatives. Pearce (2003) have identified that some of the local governments does not include or work with people and this has made it difficult to make decisions and reasonable solutions for disaster related problems. According to Manyena (2006) development of disaster resilience by local authorities are largely dependent on the capacity of local authorities of planning and managing the development activities and this emphasise the need of capacity development of local governments in order to implement proper disaster risk reduction initiatives. Therefore it is important to identify the challenges faced by local governments in implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives and to research on how the local governments can be empowered and governance can be reformed to ensure successful implementation of disaster risk reduction initiatives at the local governmental level.

Therefore the main aim of this paper is to highlight the role of the local government in contributing to disaster risk reduction and to discuss the challenges faced by local governments in implementing disaster risk reduction. Firstly a brief explanation has been presented regarding the nature and impact of disasters and the importance of disaster risk reduction initiatives in the current context. Then a brief comparative study is done on the nature and structure of local governments in different countries. Finally a review of existing research study has been used to identify the role and the challenges faced by the local governments in implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives. Literature review method has been used to review the role of the local governments in disaster risk reduction and the data and information has been gathered from research papers on various electronic databases along with conference proceedings and reports published by various institutions.

2. Concept of Disaster Risk Reduction

2.1 *Disasters and vulnerability to natural disasters*

There have been many attempts to define the term “disaster”. ISDR (2002) has defined disaster as a “serious disruption, of the functioning of a society, causing widespread human, material, or environmental losses, which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources”. Disasters can be categorized by their origin, natural or man-made. Most of the disasters investigated in the literature are natural disasters. The origin and the causes of disasters can be varied but the consequences to human society are frequently similar which includes, extensive loss of lives, particularly among vulnerable members of the community; economic losses, hindering development goals; destruction of the built and natural environment, increasing vulnerability; and widespread disruption to local institutions and livelihood and disempowering the local community (Haigh and Amaratunga, 2010)

Disasters are considered to be a major threat to the entire world and disaster scholars who have investigated the relationship between development and vulnerabilities have identified that the impact of disasters are likely to increase in the future (Aini & Fakhru-Razi, 2010). Disaster risk arises when hazards interact with physical, social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities (UNISDR, 2005). Vulnerability means characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impact of a natural hazard (Blaikie, 1994). It is identified that vulnerabilities related to changing demographic, technological and socio-economic conditions, unplanned urbanization, development within high-risk zones, under-development, environmental degradation, climate variability, climate change, geological hazards, competition for scarce resources, and the impact of epidemics such as HIV/AIDS are ever increasing and could result in a higher degree of disaster occurrence which could increasingly threaten the world’s economy, and its population and the sustainable development of developing countries (UNISDR, 2005). Vulnerability is also increasing

due to rising poverty, a growing global population, armed conflict and other underlying development issues (Hayles, 2010). Therefore it is important to manage these vulnerabilities in order to reduce the impact of disasters. As a result of this growing vulnerability, the disaster risk reduction has become one of the solutions to mitigate the impact of disasters in advance and for speedy recovery after a disaster (Palliyaguru and Amaratunga, 2008).

2.2 *Disaster Risk Reduction*

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) includes the systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices to avoid (prevention) or limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse effects of hazards (ISDR, 2010). The impact of disasters can be reduced or prevented with the proper adoption of the disaster risk reduction strategies.

It has been identified that all individuals and communities are vulnerable to hazards in varying degrees and all have intrinsic capacities to reduce the vulnerability (Ginige et al, 2009). It has been identified that the consequences of a disaster is very less if it happen in a place where people are well protected and the consequences are very high if it happen in a poorly protected environment. As can be seen the disaster risk can be minimised by the elimination of the unsafe conditions, in terms of people, property and infrastructure (Pathirage et al, 2008). Furthermore, population expansion, urbanisation, inappropriate developments and global climate change has made the world increasingly unsafe and therefore it is essential to expand risk reduction measures to prevent or reduce the impact of future disasters.

Therefore disaster risk reduction should entail measures to curb disaster losses by addressing hazards and people's vulnerability to them, throughout the disaster management cycle (Palliyaguru and Amaratunga, 2008). Also, it is important to note that disaster risk reduction should be incorporated in all development strategies, policies, programmes and investments at national and local government levels (Secretary-General, 2006).

The disaster risk reduction measures can be categorised in several ways and they are policy and planning measures, physical preventative measures, physical coping and/or adaptive measures and community capacity building measures (DFID, 2005). Policy and planning measures are implemented at the national or regional level and help to integrate DRR into the policy framework. Physical preventive measures are designed to reduce the vulnerability and exposure of infrastructure to natural hazards. Physical coping and adaptive measures includes coping and adaptive infrastructure which are capable to withstand in case of a disaster. Community capacity building measures are designed and

implemented at the community level, particularly the strengthening of communities to better respond and cope to a disaster event through training and capacity building.

McEntire et al (2010) have identified four schools of thoughts for vulnerability reduction which in turn can be used for disaster risk reduction. The physical science school is about living in safe areas and focuses on exposure to hazards and risk reduction. The engineering school concentrates on the built environment and ways to increase resistance through construction practices and methods of fabrication. The structural school concentrates on traditional notions of vulnerability more than the other three, and it stresses susceptibility based on socioeconomic factors and demographic characteristics including race, ethnicity, gender, age, and other factors. The organizational school stresses resilience or the effectiveness of response and recovery operations concentrating on the importance of preparedness, leadership, management, and the ability to adapt, improvise, and be creative.

3. Introduction to Local Government

Local governments has been identified as one of the key stakeholder in disaster risk reduction process as they are in charge of critical development functions to reduce disaster risks, such as land use planning, urban development planning, public works, construction safety and licensing, social services and responding to the need of the poor and the under privileged and implementation and strengthening of the decentralization process (UNISDR, 2010). Due to this significant role of the local government in disaster risk reduction, the UNISDR has specifically addressed the 2010-2011 campaign to local governments under the theme of “Building resilient cities”. Before examining this potential role of the local governments in disaster risk reduction, it is important to understand the structure and the composition of local government.

The term local government encompasses urban and rural communities of different size and levels which includes regional, provincial, metropolitan, city, municipality, township and village councils (The Incheon Declaration, 2009). Usually countries distribute functional responsibilities between the central government and sub national governments along various dimensions including fiscal, administrative and political (Col, 2007). It is noted that the duties, structure, composition and the terminology of local governments may vary across the world. In India, there are two types of local governments in operation: Panchayats in rural areas and Municipalities in urban areas (Johnson, 2003) while in United Kingdom, the local government is organised, depending on the location, which includes country and district councils, unitary authorities including borough council, city council, county council or district council and town and parish councils (Wilson, 1996). In the United States, states are sovereign jurisdictions with specific and reserved responsibilities established in the United States constitution and the functions of sub state levels of government depends entirely on each state's

constitution with responsibilities differing among states (Col, 2007). In contrast China has five levels of governments below the national governmental level namely; provinces, prefectures, counties, townships and villages and the county can be identified as the real local level of government (Col, 2007).

Local Government is a huge service provider to the local community. Some local governments provide services to the general public directly or may arrange to do so by third parties. Local governments are responsible for providing a vast range of services in accordance with both the wishes of the community it serves and the requirements of central government either on a statutory or discretionary basis (Yorke, 2007). Usually the powers of the local government are derived from legislation and by Acts of Parliament (SPICe Briefing, 2002). Some powers are 'mandatory' while others are 'voluntary' allowing authority to provide services if it desires.

4. Local Government's Role in Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster management require a multidisciplinary approach which involves partnerships of various organizations and community groups (Haigh & Amaratunga, 2010). Government agencies need to play a critical role during the time of a disaster. In many developing countries, national disaster management authority or the ministry handles disaster management affairs. The activities and functional responsibilities of such institutions are not often decentralized, or authority of such institutions not adequately delegated to lower levels of the government machinery (APDC, 2007). In most countries, the central government retains authority over disaster management programs with centralized decision making and resources, which often focus on developing response capabilities rather than proactive mitigation, and the local government action for disaster management is often given a lower priority (Bendimerad, 2003). Therefore after a major disaster, decision making tends to be a centralized process, possibly due to media pressure or the inevitable high political profile of such events (Blaikie, 1994). This has to be viewed as a hindrance for achieving the disaster resilience at community and local levels (APDC, 2007). As a result there is a strong need for decentralization of disaster management with adequate powers to local governments in order to facilitate building safer communities and to support sustainable development.

4.1 Concept of Decentralization of Disaster Management

The term 'decentralization' is mainly associated with the local government and disaster risk reduction literature which is an important factor in developing comprehensive plans for disaster risk management (UNVolunteers, 2005). Modern disaster management practice recognizes the importance of a strong and well-structured local disaster management capacity, and the need for decentralized authority to achieve effective response and mitigation (Bendimerad, 2003). According to the World

Bank (2010) decentralization includes the transfer of authority and responsibility of public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations and/or the private sector which is a complex multifaceted concept. In other words it can be defined as transfer of decision making authority from central to local government. It should be noted that there are different types of decentralization which distinguished based on characteristics, policy implications, and conditions for success (World Bank, 2010).

Decentralization, devolution and transparency enhance disaster mitigation because they facilitate access (APDC, 2004) and the local government units can be identified as the most responsive units of implementing disaster risk reduction within a decentralized system of administration. It should be noted that even though the central government should hold the ultimate responsibility of disaster risk reduction within the country, the importance of delegating the responsibility of risk reduction to local governments cannot be overlooked as they are rooted at the local level where disasters occur and are more close to the local community which will enable them to involve local community in the risk reduction initiatives. Ahrens & Rudolph (2006) have identified the requirement of a decentralized and efficient politico-administrative structure which supports local participation in order to be responsive to the local population including marginalized groups. UNISDR (2004) too has identified the importance of institutionalizing risk reduction at the local level which emphasizes decentralized and coordinated partnerships between disaster management agencies and the people, based on the principle of self-consent.

In Colombia, the decentralization of decision-making power represents a turning-point in the country, providing more autonomy to local authorities to make progress on disaster risk reduction (Pulido, 2008). It is important to note that the reduction of vulnerability and the capacity to respond to disasters is directly related to the degree of decentralized access to information, communication and decision making and the control of resources (Bollin, 2003) and therefore it is important to encourage governments to accelerate the decentralization of disaster risk reduction mechanisms, particularly at the local-level risk management interventions (UNISDR, 2004).

Even though there is a wide spread agreement among literature on the necessity of decentralization of disaster risk reduction, it is important to have a clear distinguish between what actions to be decentralized and what need to be managed centrally. According to APDC (2004), the national governments are organized along sectoral lines and can provide broad guidelines and solution to critical issues. The local governments are necessary cross sectorally.

The necessity (Who should undertake this task?) and performance capability (Who is best suited to undertake this task?) are two basic aspects which need to be considered when designing a

decentralized system of administration and also it is important to consider the following when designing a decentralized system of administration (Bollin, 2003);

- Decentralized system must ensure that the measures of the various actors complement each other and should facilitate mutual consultation.
- In addition to the powers it is important to provide personnel, sectoral and financial resources to local actors.
- When allocating new powers and resources it is also important to set up suitable mechanisms for their control and use.

Therefore it is the responsibility of the central government to facilitate support in terms of technical, and more importantly the financial incentives for investing in risk reduction (Pulido, 2008).

4.2 Why Local Government?

There is a wide spread agreement within the literature that local governments have a vital role in disaster risk reduction initiatives. Manyena (2006) has identified local authorities as the vehicles through which the disaster risk agenda could be championed as they are rooted in the local communities where disasters happen. It has also asserted the requirement of incorporating public participation at the local decision making level in order to implement successful mitigation strategies (Pearce, 2003). Furthermore, the disaster risk reduction and urban sustainability are more likely to be addressed by local rather than central governments since local governments typically have more authority over urban planning and construction supervision (Bendimerad, 2003).

The role of the local or municipal level in disaster risk reduction is being increasingly recognized and stressed in international discussions. The role of local government in dealing with disaster risk reduction has been recognized as a key factor to build resilient communities and therefore the UNISDR has specifically addressed the 2010-2011 world disaster risk reduction campaign to local governments under the theme of “Building resilient cities”. Therefore it is well understood that local governments have a significant role to play in contributing to the building of disaster resilient cities to avoid or limit the adverse impacts of disasters. According to (Bollin, 2003) there are several reasons behind the need of local governments to play a major role in disaster risk reduction. They are;

- Disasters are often local events and therefore the local knowledge and measures are required which are tailored to local hazards and vulnerabilities.
- National disaster management authorities in most developing countries are centrally organized and unable to provide effective help in an emergency, particularly to rural populations and therefore the endangered areas must rely on their own capabilities to protect their populations.

- Also quite often it is the society which increases the disaster risk by way of soil degradation through deforestation, unsafe settlements on dangerous slopes etc. and therefore it should be made more aware of the dangers and made accountable for disaster risk management.

4.3 *How the Local Government can contribute in Disaster Risk Reduction*

Though all levels of governments are generally involved in disaster management, the role and actions of local government in disaster risk reduction are predominantly critical (Col, 2007). Local governments can play a key role in implementing disaster risk reduction as they are rooted at the local level where disasters happen and can contribute to disaster risk reduction in numerous ways. According to UNISDR (2010) there are three major roles of local governments in implementing disaster risk reduction which includes,

- To play a central role in coordinating and sustaining a multi level, multi stake holder platform to promote DRR in the region or for a specific hazard

Local governments are in a better position to engage and coordinate the stake holders who are involved in disaster risk reduction efforts. Therefore the local governments are expected to lead the stake holders and to facilitate them with required support and assistance in order to successfully engage in implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives.

- To effectively engage local communities and citizens to disaster risk reduction activities and link their concerns with government priorities

Local government can be identified as one of the closest political authority to the local community and therefore they are in a better position to effectively engage local community to disaster risk reduction activities and address their concerns efficiently and effectively. According to the ten step checklist developed by UNISDR (2010) local governments could organize education programmes on disaster risk reduction in schools and local communities in order to educate and involve local communities to risk reduction activities.

- To strengthen their own institutional capacities and implement practical DRR actions by themselves

The local governments are required to strengthen their institutional capacity in order to effectively engage in practical disaster risk reduction actions in order to avoid or limit the adverse impacts of disasters to the local community. Local government can be identified as the unit where land use practices can be regulated and safer construction methodologies can be promoted and enforced (APDC, 2004). According to the ten step checklist developed by UNISDR (2010) the local government need to play a major role in making the disaster risk a priority by way of putting in place a organization to deal with disaster risk within the local government in coordination with all sectors, based on participation of citizen groups and civil society, assigning a budget for disaster risk reduction with incentives for preventive actions to

reduce risks in housing and environment and identifying safe land for low income citizens in urban development plans. In addition the local government can contribute in maintaining updated data on hazards and vulnerabilities, prepare risk assessment and use these as basis for urban development plans and decisions, and make them easily available for the public, investing in and maintain risk reducing infrastructure such as flood drainage, applying risk compliant building regulations and land use planning norms appropriate to the needs and within reach of low income citizens, assessing the safety of all schools and health facilities and upgrade as necessary, project ecosystems and natural buffers to mitigate floods, storm surges and other hazards, adapting to climate change building on risk reduction practices and installing early warning systems and emergency management capacities with regular public drills.

- To devise and implement innovative tools and techniques for disaster risk reduction, which can be replicated elsewhere or scaled up nationwide

The local governments are in a better position to organize, develop and experiment new tools and technologies for disaster risk reduction such as early warning systems etc. and making them policy priorities.

In addition, APDC (2003) has highlighted the contribution of local government in disaster management and emphasized importance of local government in following activities.

- Local institutions could build up experiences from previous disasters and refine locally sustainable disaster management systems.
- Local institutions could make creative use of cost effective local resources.
- Local institutions could create and sustain an inclusive participatory institutional system for effective disaster management including establishment of specialized task forces to carry out warning, communication, transport, rescue, evacuation, supply, relief, medical, fire damage assistance, security and over all damage control at the local level under the overall coordination of local government.
- The local institutions could mediate with national agencies to bring in locally relevant scientific advancements for effective disaster management
- The local institutions could establish a system to respond highly localized but locally devastating disasters which national level institutions ignore.
- The informal social networks could provide mechanisms to take care of most vulnerable households
- Local institutions could promote establishing a mechanism for contingency funding for speedy reconstruction and recovery activities with participation of communities.

- Local institutions could mediate between local communities and National governments for policy changes to take care of locally relevant development measures.

It is therefore clear that local government can contribute to disaster risk reduction in numerous ways. The disaster risk reduction has to be mainly achieved through proactive measures of implementing mitigatory measures with the participation of the community groups and other stake holders.

4.4 Challenges faced by Local Government in Disaster Risk Reduction

Even though the role of the local governments in disaster risk reduction has been widely recognized in the literature several authors and researchers have identified that number of gaps do exist in the actual contribution made by the local governments in disaster risk reduction endeavours. According to Manyena (2006), in Zimbabwe, rural district councils are experiencing number of challenges such as, inadequate financial and human resources, unstable political system and problems related to decentralization. At a time of a disaster, local governments are immediately confronted with the responsibility of providing relief to victims but often do not have the resources and adequate legislative authority (Bendimerad, 2003). In the context of Hurricane Katrina of 2005 in the gulf coast of USA, defining what was in the best interest of the affected people became very difficult due to multi layered governance and similarly in Asian Tsunami of 2004, repercussions have been observed in Indonesia and Sri Lanka due to prior internal conflicts and inherent administrative weaknesses (Osei, 2007). According to Sabri & Jaber (2007) major concerns faced by Palestinian local government are, controlling methods, relationship issues with the central government, organization issues, electronic services and transparency and community contributions. Pearce (2003) too have argued that some of the local governments does not include or work with people and this has made it difficult to make decisions regarding the provision of reasonable solutions for disaster related problems. Local government are experiencing competing priorities along with limited resources, and therefore local governments not often allocate financial resources to disaster management programs and this will affect the proactive decision-making process related to mitigation and preparedness activities (Bendimerad, 2003).

UN/ISDR (2010) have identified five challenges and opportunities faced by local governments in implementing successful disaster risk reduction strategies which includes, lack of interest and capacities especially the funding mechanisms for risk reduction projects; understanding local risk and vulnerabilities where local government sometimes lack knowledge about disaster risks and vulnerabilities; maintaining and upgrading critical infrastructure; managing long term process as disaster risk reduction initiatives often suffer from staff changes and uneven interest among staff and long term political commitment and learning from disasters where focused on short term recovery

works after the onset of a disaster. In summary, the main challenges faced by local government can be categorised under two headings namely, the internal factors and external factors. Internal factors include, lack of knowledge on disaster risk reduction initiatives, lack of interest on the subject, human resource issues, lack of financial capabilities, internal organizational and administrative weaknesses and competing priorities. The external factors include, lack of authority, multi layered governance arrangements, unstable political systems and the relationship issues with the central government. Therefore it is important to address the challenges faced by local governments in implementing disaster risk reduction initiatives in a holistic manner to ensure effective disaster risk reduction. However it should be noted that contribution and challenges of local government vary from one country to another based on culture, administrative procedures and governance.

The capacity development and improving governance of the local governments has been given a very high priority in the current context in order to empower the local governments to take a leading role in disaster risk reduction and as a way of addressing the aforesaid challenges. UNISDR (2004) have identified the need of improved political commitment and improved governance of disaster risk reduction institutions as two key strategies to be implemented in Africa. Several other authors too have supported the argument of the importance of good governance in disaster risk reduction. Political will and effective governance (e.g. legislation, policies, planning, legal frameworks, etc) are key element of successful disaster risk reduction initiative (APDC, 2004; WMO, 2010). Therefore it is important to understand what is meant by good governance. According to WMO (2010) good governance includes “adoption and promotion of robust and sound policies, legislation, coordination mechanisms and regulatory frameworks, and the creation of an enabling environment that is characterized by appropriate decision making processes to allow effective participation of stakeholders, complemented by the appropriate allocation of resources” while Ahrens & Rudolph (2006) identified accountability, participation, predictability and transparency as the key features of a governance structure that encourage development and supports risk reduction.

Collins and Kapucu (2008) have identified that effective system requires early warning and risk reduction be mainstreamed in to a policy process and that governmental agencies should have the capacity to be able to design and implement effective policy. Manyena (2006) further identified that development of disaster resilience by local authorities are largely dependent on the capacity of local authorities of planning and managing the development activities. Institutional capacities at national to local levels, supplemented by effective information and knowledge sharing mechanisms among different stakeholders are key to effective disaster risk reduction (WMO, 2010). Therefore the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 considers that both communities and local authorities should be empowered to manage and reduce disaster risk by having access to the necessary information, resources and authority to implement actions (UNISDR, 2010). The authority can be identified as the

most important factor in empowering local governments, as lack of authority in disaster management at local government level would further aggravate vulnerability, as the risk reduction efforts are closely linked to land use planning, urban settlement and construction control (Bendimerad, 2003). Therefore it is of utmost important to build capacity and empowering local governments to help them acquire knowledge and resources and to provide them with appropriate decision making authority in order to ensure effective contribution in disaster resilience.

5. Conclusions

The amount and the severity of natural disasters have increased in recent decades with serious implications to the entire world. This has increased the degree of uncertainty faced by governments and policy makers with the existing system and recognized the need of proactive strategies for disaster risk reduction in order to increase the community's resilience. Disaster risk reduction needs to be achieved through a combined effort of various stake holders and community groups with a proper coordination and leadership. A review of the literature reveals that the local governments have a key role to play in disaster risk reduction initiatives as they are rooted at the ground level where disasters occur and are more close to the local community.

Even though there is a growing concern among researchers and practitioners on the role of local government in leading disaster risk reduction initiatives, several incidents have been reported on the inadequate contribution of local governments in taking the lead of disaster risk reduction initiatives. The local governments are facing number of challenges in implementing disaster risk reduction at local level. The successfulness of the local government strategies in disaster risk reduction is directly linked to the capacity of the local governments in implementing the disaster risk reduction strategies. Therefore in order to implement successful disaster risk reduction it is important to address the challenges faced by local governments and to empower the local government with necessary financial and other required resources with proper level of authority in making decisions which require reformation of the existing governance structure.

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