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Governance in the Sendai: a way ahead?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to identify how governance and accountability have been addressed in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030.

Design/methodology/approach – The research is mainly based on the analysis of the SFDRR; scientific literature, particularly recent publications covering the SFDRR. The paper also takes into account grey literature.

Findings – The SFDRR does address issues of governance and accountability in disasters. However, more needs to be done to translate it into practice – particularly with regard to accountability.

Originality/value – The paper covers a topic that has not attracted considerable academic attention, despite the fact that the need to address accountability in disaster risk management, notably in DRR, has been generally acknowledged. By addressing governance and accountability in the most recent international DRR framework the paper adds value to the literature.

Keywords Governance, Accountability, Disaster risk reduction, Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) 2015-2030

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Against the background of increasing impacts of disasters, 2015 was a pivotal year for the adoption of various international frameworks (Kelman *et al.*, 2015). They are the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (hereinafter, “SFDRR” or “Sendai”) 2015-2030; the sustainable development goals (SDGs), and the Paris Agreement on Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC).

This paper focusses on the SFDRR that was negotiated in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015. The SFDRR aims to target and address disaster risk with four priority areas. It also reflects a renewed commitment post the Hyogo Framework for Action (hereinafter, “HFA” or “Hyogo”) 2005-2015, an international non-legally binding framework on disaster risk reduction. The large question of implementation that has been raised ever since the Yokohama Strategy of 1994 remains a challenge. In “Sendai”, implementation has been debated continuously, raising more questions for governance including accountability. However, governments are still to find a common voice on many of the topics addressed:

[The] SFDRR process and final negotiations also revealed a lack of comprehensive political commitment and ambition from governments in advancing the disaster risk as part of the global development agenda (Pearson and Pelling, 2015, p. 2).

“Sendai” was aimed at learning from “Hyogo” and moving forward. The HFA has been criticised in regard to the role of partnerships and for a heavy, top down approach (De la Poterie and Baudoin, 2015). “Sendai” places greater emphasis on “disaster risk governance” (DRG) than before. Furthermore, the SFDRR has given importance to science

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and technology in DRR. “Sendai” has also set targets for the coming years, and progress made shall be assessed through measurable targets (a feature also found in the SDGs). It is surely worth looking in greater detail into what has changed with the SFDRR, in particular on DRG, and whether this is the way forward to reducing disasters, or, as suggested by one expert during the 2017 Global Platform for DRR:

I think we are actually spending more money on constructing risk than reducing risk[1].

In this context of addressing vast expansion of disaster risk, this paper aims to explore how the SFDRR addresses governance, in particular accountability as one of its key features. The paper is organised as follows: after this introduction, the second part focusses on “governance”; the third part focusses on “accountability”; the fourth part identifies remaining “challenges” and possible ways to tackle them, followed by a conclusion.

2. Shifts in paradigm – the governance road

2.1 DRG

While governance has many contested definitions, it is not the same as government (Jordan, 2008; Lemos and Agarwal, 2006) as it encompasses all stakeholders and should “cover the whole range of institutions and relationships” (Pierre and Peters, 2000, p. 1).

The concept of governance includes three main components: “authority; decision-making and accountability”[2]. That is to say “Governance determines who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voice heard and how account is rendered” (see footnote 2).

Governance also takes into account factors such as power, interdependence, autonomous functioning, and a complex set of actors (Stoker, 1998). It has been suggested that “policy-making processes, practices and outcomes depend on a number of contextual factors” including the relationships between stakeholders and their previous disaster experience (Barenstein, 2010, p. 173). According to Tierney, governance is more inclusive of all stakeholders (Tierney, 2012). However, most disaster research focusses on specific legal arrangements or governments and ignores governance.

In relation to “disaster governance”, it has been suggested that:

[It] consists of the interrelated sets of norms, organizational and institutional actors, and practices (spanning predisaster, transdisaster, and postdisaster periods) that are designed to reduce the impacts and losses associated with disasters arising from natural and technological agents and from intentional acts of terrorism (Tierney, 2012, p. 344).

A related concept of risk governance may inform disaster governance, in terms of arrangements that are made to tackle risk and address disasters (Renn, 2008). The literature suggests there is a growing need to address issues of disaster governance (Djalante, 2012; Renn, 2008; Fung, 2006; Ikeda *et al.*, 2008; Tierney, 2012).

2.2 Governance in the HFA

Governance had already appeared in the HFA, prior to the adoption of the SFDRR, and was linked to the development of institutional and legislative frameworks, the allocation of resources and the mobilisation of communities. The HFA indicated the need for strong coordination across sectors, the inclusion of DRR into development initiatives, and the delegation of responsibility to the local level (UNISDR, 2015d).

The HFA pointed out to the need to enhance international and regional cooperation and assistance to support governance for DRR (HFA, III, A, 13, “h”). It also identified among its five priorities for action that DRR should be given priority both nationally and locally, and that it should be implemented through a strong institutional basis (HFA, III, B, 1).

Since the HFA, no doubt progress has been made across the globe in adopting legislation, and in preparing better for disasters.

A shift is well underway in terms of moving from emergency management to disaster risk management (DRM). This shift amounts to a “social turn” in the understanding of disasters – from hazards alone to vulnerability exposed by natural hazards (O’Keefe *et al.*, 1976; Hewitt, 1983; Wisner *et al.*, 2004; Lauta, 2014a; Raju, 2016). Although greater efforts and resources have been invested, the design and the effective application of regulatory frameworks still pose a challenge in managing and reducing disaster risks. Another related challenge is the inclusion and capacity building of local authorities in DRM (UNISDR, 2015b; Hagelsteen and Burke, 2016).

2.3 *What is in store for governance in “Sendai”?*

In “Sendai” there is a renewed and intensified attention to similar issues as in “Hyogo”. The SFDRR refers to the importance of “good governance”, for:

[...] it is necessary to continue strengthening good governance in disaster risk reduction strategies at the national, regional and global levels and improving preparedness and national coordination for disaster response, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The language adopted in the SFDRR on governance, and on accountability, is important. It indicates what needs to be done for advancing DRR, and it provides a solid advocacy basis for different stakeholders working on these issues. Quantitatively, “governance” appears eight times in the main text of the SFDRR, whereas “accountability” appears only twice. Qualitatively, the SFDRR engages governance as one among the four selected priorities for action under this framework, namely “Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk”.

The emphasis is however on positive reinforcement, rather than to apply sanctions to what is going wrong. Compliance is therefore encouraged through “mechanisms and incentives”. Examples include measures to be adopted at the national and local levels to strengthen DRG:

(d) To encourage the establishment of necessary mechanisms and “incentives” to ensure high levels of compliance with the existing safety-enhancing provisions of sectoral laws and regulations [...] (SFDRR, paragraph 27, d – emphasis added; similarly, in paragraph 27, a, ii-iii; and paragraph 27, j).

Moreover, when listing measures to be adopted globally, the SFDRR similarly suggests:

(f) To promote the strengthening of, as appropriate, international “voluntary mechanisms for monitoring and assessment” of disaster risks [...] (SFDRR, paragraph 28, f, emphasis added).

Again here, the focus is on voluntary, rather than compulsory mechanisms coupled with sanctions. One reason for this “light” approach is that the SFDRR is a “soft law” standard, not a legally binding document. Therefore, with regard to governance and DRR, more is to be achieved through consensus and broad incentives.

The existence of strong legal instruments is generally considered a crucial tool in advancing governance including accountability. However, the SFDRR embraces a far-reaching paradigm, in which DRM is not confined to a sector, but it has to permeate all different sectors and structures. Thus, disaster risks ought to be managed through the processes that create them. Therefore, the SFDRR does not regulate each sector where disaster risks have to be managed (UNISDR, 2015b). Rather, “Sendai” is to be taken into account when different stakeholders fill the gaps of laws and procedures. In this way, the SFDRR might influence how laws, regulations and policies are designed and applied.

3. **Accountability and the SFDRR**

Accountability being one key feature of governance, in this section notions of accountability, how it has been understood in disasters, and how it appears in the

SFDRR and elsewhere are discussed, notably in supranational human rights monitoring mechanisms and national legal frameworks.

Accountability refers to the notion of one being called to account for one's actions. Prerequisites for accountability include:

[...] the definition of roles and responsibilities, the granting of adequate powers to discharge such responsibilities, the existence of adequate means and resources and, finally, relevant mechanisms which can bring people and institutions to account (UNISDR, 2015b, p. 21).

As suggested by the literature, “accountability mechanisms need not be purely legal in nature, but can be judicial, quasi-judicial, administrative, political and/or social” (Cubie and Hesselman, 2015, p. 22). This is particularly helpful in disasters, where much can be done through community participation and the creative use of available mechanisms according to different contexts.

3.1 *Accountability in DRR before the SFDRR*

Throughout the drafting of “Sendai”, accountability was a topic of great interest (UNISDR, 2015b). Before the adoption of the SFDRR EU ministers publicly called for the post-HFA document to ensure “improved accountability, transparency and governance” for DRM (UNISDR, 2015a, p. 1). Furthermore, EU ministers, “while fully respecting the non-binding nature” of the future document, recommended the post-“Hyogo” document to establish “voluntary peer review mechanisms” to improve policy making, share experience and increase accountability (European Union, 2014). The same stakeholders suggested that governance should be enhanced for DRM at all levels and sectors, building effective coordination mechanisms and sustainable partnerships (European Union, 2014).

OXFAM expressed similar concerns, advocating for accountability to be at the heart of the post-“Hyogo” document. It also demanded the inclusion of clear “outcome”-based targets and indicators, instead of those exclusively based on “process”, so as to better monitor states’ implementation. One example of the former is a measurable reduction in vulnerability, based in data collection; whereas one example of the latter is to merely verify the setting up of a DRR National Platform. Arguably clear targets and consistent use of data improves citizen’s ability to hold their governments accountable (OXFAM, 2013).

3.2 *DRR and accountability in the SFDRR*

The SFDRR acknowledged the need for enhanced accountability, mentioning that “accountability for disaster risk creation [is] needed at all levels”.

ISDR’s concept note for its future implementation guide on accountability suggests that “accountability in disaster risk reduction is intended to enable scrutiny and understanding of actions taken at different levels, and of those responsible for such actions” (UNISDR, 2015a, p. 1). Mentioning Article 19(e) SFDRR, it suggests that “accountability becomes a key element for disaster risk reduction governance and clearly contributes to reducing existing risks and preventing the emergence of new ones” (UNISDR, 2015a, p. 1).

Having indicators regarding which performance can be assessed in meeting the “Sendai” targets shall strengthen accountability. “Sendai” indicated that this should be addressed by an open-ended intergovernmental working group, together with key stakeholders, and in conjunction with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators. The collaboration between the two groups avoids duplication and differences in methodology that could make more difficult to assess progress. The SFDRR working group was set up by the UN General Assembly in June 2015 (UNISDR, 2015b), and it recently published the criteria for assessing progress in implementation (United Nations, 2016). The challenge now is to quantify the specific measurable targets, given that “empirical data are either missing or severely skewed” (Cutter and Gall, 2015).

There is definitely a growing need to develop tools and methods to analyse accountability. There has not been much of focus on bringing more science and evidence to making accountability central in DRR. Olson *et al.* (2011) highlight the “inducing political will” paradigm that calls for a five step process ranging from creating investigations to making information available publicly; and creating ways so that nobody hides behind the frame of “we didn’t know” by making risk and vulnerability assessment catalogues for the government. Further, successful implementation of the Sendai requires non-traditional modes of governance (Munene *et al.*, 2018) with one of them being stringent actions to ensure accountability. This must stem from a broader analytical framework that calls for more research. This paper is an initial attempt to highlight areas that may be considered in addressing accountability issues. While there has been very minimal work on measuring accountability post-disasters (Podger, 2015); analytical tools need to be extended to DRR.

Despite these new measurement tools applicable to SFDRR targets, the SFDRR is not in itself an instrument designed or intended to “ensure” accountability (UNISDR, 2015b). “Sendai” refers to accountability, but it is not for the SFDRR to directly hold actors accountable. Hence, it might be helpful to look at developments on accountability in disasters, notably in DRR.

3.3 Accountability in DRR elsewhere

Few supranational legal developments touch upon accountability in DRR. The European Court of Human Rights decided few disaster-related cases in which lives were lost. One case relates to a methane explosion in a dump site in Istanbul, above which people were living in extremely precarious conditions. The explosion claimed 39 human lives (ECtHR, 2004). Another case refers to mudslides, known to recurrently take place in a small Russian village, and which in a particular year claimed eight lives (ECtHR, 2008). In both cases the court indicated that states should have undertaken preventive measures. This represents initial steps by judicial institutions in identifying the link between lack of governmental action in DRM (including DRR), and the potential violation of rights (especially the right to life). This may provide a positive ripple effect towards enhancing accountability and effective implementation of DRR frameworks. Both cases were, however, based on alleged violations of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), a legally binding treaty.

Such court rulings are a positive development. Yet, one should be cautiously optimistic, bearing in mind many caveats in seeking judicial accountability. In both cases, the court was in a position to decide “after” disasters took place and lives were lost. We could not yet identify a supranational judgement based solely on the lack of effective DRR measures timely undertaken by authorities.

Moreover, the judicial route (here, to a regional human rights court) is lengthy and expensive, and only few people potentially affected by disasters may have access to it. These were regional court cases, and applicants in both cases claimed lack of measures taken by states parties to the ECHR. Far less options are open to individuals mostly at risk of disasters, especially people based in the global south, who have access to weaker monitoring mechanisms. Be this as it may, the selected court rulings may influence further (non-)judicial mechanisms addressing similar issues.

Terminology is another aspect that contributes to the defective accountability in disasters, for the terminology often adopted refers to “natural disasters”. This has been extensively criticised by the literature (Briceño, 2015), and has also been a point that the HFA was meant to tackle. If we consider disasters as natural there is little to be done by human beings, and accountability becomes weaker. Earlier times have seen disasters linked to acts of god, as punishment of human beings and the world. One recent film attempts to bring this debate to the wider public. “Deviate” was produced by Jason Von Meding, and partially shot in Cancun, Mexico, during the 2017 Global Platform for DRR[3]. At this event,

many speeches and presentations referred to “natural” disasters. It is absolutely essential to recognise that disasters are not natural.

The “natural disaster” approach is slowly being challenged in legal circles. Currently national legal proceedings tend to apply national criminal law to human (in)action linked to disasters. In relation to the 2009 L’Aquila earthquake in Italy, the subsequent criminal responsibility of scientists was found because they erroneously downplayed to the population the risks relating to the seismic developments in town days before the big earthquake took place, whereas they knew or should have known that this was not the case (Lauta, 2014b).

The recent OEWG report already mentioned, also includes an update of the “2009 UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction” (United Nations, 2016), aiming to contribute towards greater terminological clarity and legal accountability in disasters.

3.3.1 The role of treaty bodies. Referring to the support from international organisations (Paragraph 48, e), the SFDRR also refers to “treaty bodies”, which shall “support developing countries, at their request, in the implementation of the present Framework, in coordination with other relevant frameworks”. Treaty bodies are mechanisms set up to monitor the implementation by states of their treaty obligations. One example is the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The role of UN human rights treaty bodies, is, however, wider than suggested in the SFDRR. They monitor and support treaty implementation by all countries that voluntarily join a particular treaty, not only developing countries. UN human rights treaty bodies also regularly consider states parties’ periodic reports, on how are they meeting their treaty obligations. In recent years, treaty bodies have increasingly touched upon disaster issues, taking into account how human rights have been affected in disasters (Cubie and Hesselman, 2015). Although emphasis is still on the protection of human rights “after” disasters, treaty bodies are increasingly taking into account human rights in DRR (Da Costa and Pospieszna, 2015). To a certain extent these mechanisms support monitoring and accountability of DRR frameworks. However, the challenge of materializing such approaches, still remains.

“Sendai” is part of a wider context, and therefore accountability is to be monitored taking into account other existing standards and mechanisms. This has been suggested in the High Level Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Dialogues during the Sendai Conference. In the discussion on mobilising women’s leadership for DRR it was suggested that accountability needs to be strengthened through linkages to international frameworks, agreements and commitments related to gender equality and DRR, such as reports submitted in the framework of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UNISDR, 2015c). We will not discuss here other international monitoring mechanisms eventually covering disasters, but see further literature (i.e. Cubie and Hesselman, 2015; Vandenberghe, 2016).

3.3.2 The role of national regulatory frameworks. Regarding “norms and regulations”, it has been suggested that high-income countries have largely succeeded in setting up effective DRM mechanisms. This is due especially to their strong institutional frameworks, accountability and redress mechanisms, availability of information and general culture of compliance (IFRC and UNDP, 2014). In relation to low and middle-income countries, regulatory frameworks often lack quality or tend to be over-restrictive, but this is improving. However, accountability in low and middle-income countries remains generally weak, thus undermining the implementation of regulatory frameworks (UNISDR, 2015d).

Developed countries are not immune to disaster risk mismanagement either. The Xynthia storm is one such example. On 28 February 2010 Xynthia heavily impacted the French Atlantic coast and the existing flood defences failed to protect the area from the Gironde near Bordeaux to the Loire Estuary. As a consequence, about 50,000 hectares

were flooded, and 47 human lives were lost. La Faute-sur-Mer was a town particularly hit, with 29 casualties. Criminal proceedings against the local authorities concluded that the high losses were linked to the “excessive urbanization” of the town. Local authorities had authorised the recent construction of over 200 dwellings in flood-prone areas. The mayor was sentenced to four years in jail, whereas other officials were put on trial facing up to five years’ imprisonment and fines of around EUR 75,000 (UNISDR, 2015d).

We argue that national regulatory frameworks can play an important role in advancing accountability in DRR, and much can be learned from lessons learned across jurisdictions.

4. Challenges and possible ways ahead

4.1 *Getting the focus right: institutions, vulnerability and accountability*

In the last 25 years the understanding of DRR has considerably expanded. Today risk is understood in a broader way, combining hazards and vulnerability (O’Keefe *et al.*, 1976; Hewitt, 1997; Wisner *et al.*, 2004). However, such knowledge still needs to be put into practice, together with enhancing accountability in disasters. This can be done especially by setting up institutional and technical mechanisms to tackle risk. Regrettably, DRG still very much focusses on preparing to respond to hazards and planning for recovery. Legislation may be developed but not implemented, sometimes due to governments’ lack of technical capacity (Lavell and Maskrey, 2014).

Although progress has been made in building capacity in DRG and reducing vulnerability, it did not match the speed of exposure of economic assets to natural hazards (UNISDR, 2014a). “Sendai” acknowledged this challenge, when referring to the legacy of “Hyogo”:

Evidence indicates that exposure of persons and assets in all countries has increased faster than vulnerability has decreased, thus generating new risks and a steady rise in disaster-related losses, with a significant economic, social, health, cultural and environmental impact in the short, medium and long term, especially at the local and community levels (UNISDR, 2015b, p. 10).

Moreover, developments in many industries and sectors tend to reinforce old or create new vulnerabilities (Briceño, 2015). Private actors need to be involved in making decisions that avoid the construction of risk. Naomi Klein clearly demonstrated the construction of risk and the emergence of disaster capitalism (Klein, 2007). Urbanisation is a steady move today, taking place at a quick pace in many parts of the world. Additionally, disaster-risk areas such as coastal areas, riverside and floodplains concentrate most people and economic activities (UNISDR, 2014a). In this context, defective urban governance drives urban risks. This is evidenced through the increase of informal settlements in disaster-prone locations, and in industrial and commercial areas subject to man-made hazards (UNISDR, 2014a). One proposal here is the inclusion of risk impact assessments in new development projects, similar to environmental impact assessments, that took off in the 1960s. Such risk impact assessments should take into account hazard and vulnerability. This should be undertaken not exclusively by a particular specialized agency, but mainstreamed so that all sectors could conduct such assessment (Briceño, 2015).

The Chair’s Summary of the 2017 Global Platform for DRR indicated that accountability in DRM needs to be strengthened, and that “independently audited risk disclosure, particularly when made mandatory, is important and should become common practice” (UNISDR, 2017). Two years after “Sendai”, it is time for progress in setting and implementing targets and measures, together with strengthening accountability.

4.2 *Advocating for multi-sectoral approaches*

The implementation of the HFA suggests that considerable progress has been made in creating DRR policies and programs by many countries. However, this mostly happened within one agency or structure in charge of emergencies. The DRR agenda still needs to be

owned by different governmental sectors, so as to achieve more progress, through sustainable and long-term solutions to fundamental problems. Although the SFDRR has not got the same attention as the climate change negotiations in Paris, it is absolutely crucial to take all stakeholders together to ensure DRR is everyone's business.

On what needs to be achieved with "Sendai", it is very important to make sure that not only natural hazards receive attention but also that attention is paid to identifying and tackling vulnerabilities of communities to natural hazards. These topics should permeate everyone's daily life, for they literally concern everyone. There is more opportunity today to bring together the global frameworks (the SFDRR, the SDGs and the FCCC). While the global frameworks have overlaps, these efforts would be futile if they only remain on paper at global conferences. The consultation process leading to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 also emphasised the need to address disaster risk as a development issue and to pay attention to places where disasters meet conflicts (WHS Secretariat, 2015).

States need to ensure and take responsibility to deliver at the local level. This will certainly contribute towards enhancing accountability in disasters, by making easier for people to hold governments into account. A great challenge remains though – how to get local communities and governments involved? During one of the authors' fieldwork in Madagascar in 2013, local communities were not even aware of the existence of national legislation and frameworks on DRR. Similar experiences were seen by the other co-author in India in 2012, and in Sri Lanka in 2017 while conducting DRR fieldwork. By making DRR everyone's business, governance shall be made more inclusive, and accountability more effective.

4.3 Rhetorics of disasters and politics

It is important to distinguish between political will and the politics of power and authority. Despite their inclusion in the HFA, both the promotion and integration of DRR into development programs did not really take place, due especially to countries' lack of political determination to do so (UNISDR, 2015d). Further, "ambiguity and incompleteness of data on disaster occurrence and impact provide further scope for media and political manipulation or misinterpretation of disaster risk" (Schipper and Pelling, 2006, p. 29). DRR is negatively impacted by the often short-lived political and economic incentives. DRR tends to receive attention and funding in the occurrence of large disasters, which take place in a less constant fashion (UNISDR, 2015c). A serious pervasive issue affecting both governance and accountability is that although many countries after "Hyogo" adopted relevant laws and policies, their implementation has been very weak or non-existent. Similar stories should not emerge after "Sendai".

Both power politics and authority are genuine problems for marginalised communities. The phrase "leave no one behind" may not hold good if power politics are ignored. As has been argued regarding international documents:

"What such documents do not express, therefore, is that governments, societies, and communities, whether rural or urban, include the bad and the ugly as well as the good, the corrupt as well as the ethical, and the inert and the weak as well as the powerfully active" (Lewis and Kelman, 2012, p. 3).

Disasters are not individual events, but outcomes of failed development processes. Hence, to ensure accountability, power struggles that leave behind groups of people must be taken seriously.

4.4 Tackling corruption

One key missing spot in the HFA is that it failed to mention accountability or transparency as necessary for effective DRG. It also did not mention corruption as one key challenge in this context. These are all issues of relevance for effective DRM, that should not be ignored.

Corruption in disaster-prone areas is a matter of real concern. Following the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in China it was identified that newly built school buildings in the affected area had not met the official regulatory standards, due to the depletion of funds assigned for this purpose. In comparison, older buildings were not as severely hit by the earthquake as schools (UNISDR, 2015d).

Unfortunately, “Sendai” equally fails to mention corruption in its text. This is a regrettable omission, especially taking into account that its Priority 4 refers to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The construction industry, however, is one of the sectors most susceptible to corruption (Lewis and Kelman, 2012; Lewis, 2008, 2011; Alexander, 2016). Increasingly scholars have drawn attention to the fact that corruption is a key feature in failed policy implementation. Unless this issue is addressed more seriously in policy circles, the ground reality may not change with regard to broader dimensions of vulnerability, also negatively impacting accountability.

4.5 *Making DRR everyone’s business*

It is important not to lose sight of the broader picture when we consider DRM. Governance in general, and local collaboration and participation in particular are of utmost importance to ensure accountability. Words do matter here. In all development, disaster and humanitarian parlance, “good governance” is a commonly used terminology. Yet, is it not imperative for all governance to be good?

Overall, it seems from the literature that governance is almost equated as building institutions and DRR platforms. However, one needs to recognise it as a “process” driven towards bringing all stakeholders together. This is clear from the fact that a lot of reports claim new governance structures. However, different mechanisms still need to make people’s voice heard and thereby create effective governance processes, what has been argued for decades by the literature on community participation (Chambers, 1983, 2008; Wisner *et al.*, 2004; GNDR, 2013; Gaillard and Mercer, 2012). While the SFDRR places importance on different levels of government and civil society, it does not place sufficient emphasis on local communities as actors in decision-making. This should be addressed as part of governance and accountability.

Parallel institutions have been built over time at various levels to address disaster risk (Becker *et al.*, 2013). These institutions are more or less replicated at all levels starting from the global institutional frameworks. One example regards climate initiatives from global to local, or analogous DRR initiatives. What is needed is more integration of these institutions. How do we transfer power to local communities in order to address vulnerability and resilience? Evidence shows that top-down approaches have been failing to deliver on vulnerability and risk reduction despite decades of investment.

The SFDRR has an important section on “Role of Stakeholders” highlighting the need for synergies between different actors. Community participation discussions have been highlighted often enough in disaster literature. More methods need to be developed to move away from top-down approaches, to ensure allocation of more funds at the local level and to foster decentralisation. Positive trends in this context comprise better integration of local knowledge into science and greater use of more bottom-up approaches (see Gaillard and Mercer, 2012).

The role of the private sector is increasing and becoming more evident than ever before. While we see an increasing trend in the presence of the private sector in disaster situations in different forms, there needs to be an equal involvement and investment in DRR activities. For example, Sudmeier-Rieux *et al.* (2015) have shown that both public and private investments in land-use planning have been creating or transferring risk. This can be avoided by stronger legal enforcements. Another example is after the Typhoon Haiyan where SM Prime Holdings Inc., were involved in building disaster resilient housing (UNISDR, 2014b). However, the full potential of public-private partnerships has not

been utilised. “With 70-85% of investment dollars coming from the private sector in the next decades, collaborations and partnerships on disaster risk reduction are essential” (Johnson and Abe, 2015). In this context, the private sector needs to be fully onboard in discussing, assessing and taking action against. Further, this calls for more risk-informed development thereby ensuring that everyone is accountable.

Another challenge is the approach taken by humanitarian organisations on governance and participation. It has been suggested that “disaster schemes and programs still treat people as ‘clients’ in disaster management processes where science and technology do things to them and for them, rather than together with them” (Weichselgartner and Obersteiner, 2002, p. 76). Governments and organisations follow different approaches to working with different communities. These approaches may be categorised as four types: organisational management; rights based; contingency approach and based on ownership (Hilhorst, 2002). “The difference between the approaches thus becomes a difference of language, priority and emphasis” (Hilhorst, 2002, p. 200). We argue that we need a model that combines both a rights-based approach and the ownership approach. In the light of the new global commitments in the context of climate change, disasters and humanitarian settings, it is time to reconsider and redefine governance, while keeping a substantial focus on accountability. This may increase effectiveness of policy and available funding. The SFDRR priorities will remain a mere dream if clear indicators on governance are not defined and implemented.

5. Conclusion

Starting with the idea of “governance”, and focussing on “accountability” as one of its particular features, in this paper we considered how these issues appear in the recently adopted SFDRR. Furthermore, we highlighted these notions in disaster literature, together with their main operational challenges. This paper is an attempt in putting forward possible ways of tackling the accountability conundrum.

We observed that both governance and accountability are notions that are considered relevant by many actors and stakeholders. However, more clarity is needed in terms of spelling them out, and in operationalizing them down to the community level.

Looking back, it becomes evident that much progress has been made at the policy and discourse levels, especially through including governance in international agendas, and gaining support for their further development by key stakeholders. Accountability on the other hand has not gained a prominent place in disaster discourses. The challenge of how to make more progress towards the delivery of these pledges however remains.

Possible ways of meeting this challenge include getting the focus right, in terms of working on some fundamental issues, including the role of institutions in reducing vulnerability. Further, we argued that DRR should permeate across institutional sectors, and hence not be confined to disaster agencies; that care should be taken not to get lost with blurred rhetorics of disaster and politics; that corruption can no longer be ignored but that it should be seriously confronted; and that DRR should be everyone’s business, in especial communities should not be left out.

It is no simple task to transform the words of “Sendai” into action across jurisdictions and institutions. However, the time for action has begun and therefore, it is everyone’s responsibility in doing the best we can to address the many challenges already affecting us all. This paper engaged in such effort, through identifying some possible ways to materialize the important pledges of “Sendai”.

Notes

1. www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdZBO3lFmUc
2. <http://iog.ca/defining-governance/>
3. www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdZBO3lFmUc

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