COVID-19: The Missing Insights

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2. Set resilience as a city priority and broaden collaboration with different stakeholders

COVID-19 clearly highlights the interconnectedness of different sectors of a society from health sector to transportation, trades, tourism, education, and many more. Cities must understand the system approach to disaster risk reduction and break the silos for all-sector collaboration. The Scorecard can help cities open a dialogue with various groups of stakeholders on the issues around resilience.

"… We completed the Disaster Resilience Scorecard which led us to improve our governance mechanisms, broadened the range of stakeholders engaged in resilience and so further enhanced the recognition of DRR as a city priority. We have therefore been able to use the Making Cities Resilient Campaign as a springboard to enable systems to join together in thinking and planning around disaster resilience. When COVID struck, this meant that we were able to quickly bring together the whole city system to develop a cross-sector response to this disaster," **Kathryn Oldham**, Chief Resilience Officer, **Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)**, United Kingdom, said at the Launch of the Making Cities Resilient 2030 on 28 October 2020.

3. Learn from others

"[The Pandemic] shows us that it is impossible to act by ourselves. In the age of collaboration, it is essential to work with others. Participating in global networks is of the utmost importance to learn about how others have faced similar problems, with which tools and results. This inspires us to improve," stated **Emilio Jatón, Mayor of Santa Fe, Argentina,** at the Launch of the MCR2030.

Cities learn best from other cities facing similar challenges. The MCR Campaign is ending in 2020 and will be succeeded by the new initiative Making Cities Resilient 2030. Join other cities and partners and continue the journey of resilience together. Visit www.mcr2030.undrr.org ■

RISK GOVERNANCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Policy Challenges Associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic Governance

*By **Professor Dilanthi Amaratunga**, Head of Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, Global Disaster Resilience Centre, University of Huddersfield, UK*

In a society faced with increasing risks and uncertainty, risk governance stands fundamental. The COVID-19 pandemic, that has largely impaired the world system, raises pressing policy challenges, posing important implications for governance of pandemics and other risks.

One of the main policy challenges of governing pandemics spring from the fact that a pandemic like COVID-19 constitutes a systemic risk, in the sense that, it not only poses adverse effects on certain parts, components or aspects of a system but disrupts the functioning of the entire system. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented cascading effects that transcend sectors and nations and levels [1]. The primary adverse effects on health accompanied by the lock down measures imposed to curtail the spread of the virus, have cascaded into considerable economic losses and deterioration of social wellbeing. This widened inequalities in access to education and fuelled

social unrest as some population groups, specifically those residing in rural areas, did not have access to the facilities and infrastructure necessary for online learning [2].

Pandemics such as COVID-19 lead to a set of unexpected, interwoven risks that are characterised by complex, non-linear cause and effect relationships. Current policies that are designed to address conventional risks are unable to capture and deal with the complexity and interconnectedness of systemic risks. Hence, a policy mechanism that facilitates 'systemic risk governance' is much called for. Systemic risk governance requires that a network approach or systems approach is emulated to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the system and its interconnections so

that measures to stop, or at least minimize the cascade of effects can be arrived at. This hints at a broader and a more comprehensive approach to risk management and impact identification. Similarly, systematic risk governance demands the use of "appropriate monitoring measures to detect failures immediately" [E.g.: developing Early Warning indicators] and harps on building social and economic resilience in order to tackle the unprecedented nature of systemic risks [3]. Most importantly, given the capacity of systemic risks to transcend sectorial and national boundaries, an inclusive approach that supports collaboration among diverse stakeholders including the state, private sector, academic institutions, the civil society and even international organizations has been recommended to be followed in addressing systemic risks.

Further, although pandemics like COVID-19 are global risks and guidelines for pandemic governance are available at a global level [E.g.: The International Health Regulations of the World Health Organization], actions taken against such infections should be localized to address the issues and needs which are endemic to national and subnational contexts. To be faced with the need of localizing prevention, preparedness, response and recovery mechanisms could be challenging on the policy front.

Pandemic threat calls for changes in preparedness and response mechanisms for other hazards that occur concurrently with a pandemic. This represents a significant policy challenge that needs to be addressed in governing pandemics.

Another challenging aspect to be taken into consideration in governing pandemics is the fact that the effects of a pandemic like COVID-19 are disproportionately experienced by different social groups. That is, some groups like the elderly and the poor are subject to a greater degree of vulnerability than others in the face of a pandemic [6]. The need to address these specific vulnerabilities in responding to pandemics and to reduce these vulnerabilities in the long run provides important policy implications for pandemic governance. ■

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