

PIU' FORTI INSIEME CONTRO I RISCHI DI DISASTRI NATURALI



Il Programma delle Nazioni Unite per lo Sviluppo (UNDP) in Bosnia Erzegovina sta realizzando il progetto Interlinking Disaster Risk Management (IDRM) finanziato dall'Agencia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo e seguito dalla sede regionale di Tirana.

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di Salvatore Ficara

Dal febbraio 2018, il Programma delle Nazioni Unite per lo Sviluppo (UNDP) in Bosnia Erzegovina sta realizzando il progetto Interlinking Disaster Risk Management (IDRM) finanziato dall'Agazia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo e seguito dalla sede regionale di Tirana. Obiettivi del progetto sono migliorare le politiche per la riduzione del rischio di catastrofi (DRR), uniformare le normative e attuare misure di gestione del rischio di catastrofi climatiche in tutti i livelli della complessa, triplice struttura istituzionale in Bosnia Erzegovina. In quest'ambito l'esperto italiano in riduzione del rischio catastrofi, Antonio Barbera, ha rilasciato un'intervista in inglese che sintetizzo e condivido.

Since February 2018, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in BiH is implementing the Interlinking Disaster Risk Management (IDRM) Project funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation in Tirana.

The Project goal is to increase of disaster risk reduction (DRR) policy and legal frameworks, and implement disaster and climate risk management measures at all government levels to protect citizens.

Overall, in Bosnia and Herzegovina capacities to deal with disasters appear to be shaped around basic needs and closely related only with really major risk scenarios said Antonio Barbera, disaster risk reduction expert engaged on UNDP's Interlinking Disaster Risk Management (IDRM) Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina financed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation during an interview for FENA.

He said that implies that margins to increase existing capabilities are still significant at all levels and will need to be progressively tackled starting from the near future before the civil protection system may be considered comprehensively equipped. This will require to dedicate quite some resources and investments to both materials and the necessary specialized training.

Barber states that similarly to other countries in the Western Balkans and Europe Bosnia and Herzegovina is exposed to rather destructive natural hazards. In this context it appears that the civil protection system in the country is facing a number of challenges. Among others these include a quite articulated administrative structure, a subsequent complex institutional set up along with the impacts of such complex structure on governance and coordination arrangements among the different administrative levels.

"Moreover the capacities and the means that can be actually mobilized within the entire disaster management cycle seem overall basic and not always sufficient to cope with all needs. And last but not least financial constraints are also affecting the concrete possibility to have comprehensive capacities timely available" underlines Barbera.

He said that a number of international projects and initiatives managed also to make available specialized response equipment and supported through also EU expertise the creation of some specialized response units. These efforts included also the necessary operational training and exercises.

Barbera said that these efforts will require now to put in place the appropriate measures for sustainability and continuation. The Ministry of Security and the Entities' civil protection administrations are well aware of such a responsibility and therefore create enough confidence that this process will reasonably continue in the required manner.

"Ministry of Security and the Entities' civil protection administrations demonstrate to have a clear understanding of existing gaps and respective mandates. They also have a clear view on how their mandates should be further enforced by also reviewing and upgrading the existing legislative framework in a way to also make it even more compliant with the relevant EU framework. Additionally there seems to be as well enough awareness about contemporary approaches to the reduction of risks" said Barbera.

He added that such clear views should be certainly regarded at as a significant starting point, if not an actual point of strength, and must be considered as a key factor to ensure substantial progress in developing a more capable and effective civil protection system.

When asked about which are the most important segments of the existing system that Bosnia and Herzegovina should strengthen in the first place, Barbera answered that according to what he have seen Bosnia and Herzegovina should make any efforts to further align its system to the global trend.

He thinks that is necessary to continue investing as much as possible in broadening and reinforcing preventative approaches to disasters. That is also pretty in line with the most recent developments that are ongoing under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, where reinforced response capacities are being integrated even more with better measures for prevention, including enhanced exchange of risk information.

"We're all aware of how crucial can be having the adequate prevention systems in place when it comes to reducing the social and the economic losses from disasters" stated Barbera.

Of course we have to take into due consideration that prevention is a concept and an approach that involves a range of parties, including civil protection authorities, relevant national agencies and institutions, the scientific community and the academia, practitioners, civil society organizations and the private sector. Which means that a greater emphasis should be also put on facilitating the right extent of inter-institutional communication and coordination so as to allow all the parties concerned to contribute as expected to the development and implementation of policies.

Barbera said that no doubt that the Italian experience in developing a solid and well organized civil protection system is extremely relevant and can be definitely taken as a reference in the framework of the efforts that Bosnia and Herzegovina is making currently and those that will follow in the near future.

"Italy has them all!" we use to say here when referring to risks. The Italian territory and its morphology are various and diverse in all ways. The peninsula has a broad range of features, almost 7,500 km of coasts in all possible shapes, mountains of all heights, rivers, lakes of all sizes, even volcanos and is widely exposed to all kinds of natural hazards. This has created an obligation to develop adequate prevention systems including also adopting corrective measures to mistakes done in the past and to adjust or protect the built environment where necessary underlined Barbera.

In light of the experience made, and mostly having in mind the gaps faced and the main challenges encountered at the occasion of major disasters, over the last decades Italy has undertaken a gradual and comprehensive process to reorganize, harmonize and better structure its entire civil protection system.

Among other aspects, this process has entailed also reviewing and upgrading the relevant legislation, placing the necessary emphasis not only on innovative solutions to reinforce response preparedness but also on strengthening preventative and mitigation approach to disasters, clarifying and defining the roles and the responsibilities of the fundamental components of the system, developing the volunteer system and clarifying the important mandate and the role of volunteer organizations as part of the entire civil protection system, and strengthening the coordination and cooperation arrangements within the system itself, especially at the occasion of major national emergencies.

Barbera said that the Union Civil Protection Mechanism was first established in 2001 to pool together EU capacities and enable effective and coordinated disaster assistance. Since then the Mechanism is there with the primary purpose to protect European citizens but also to extend solidarity outside the European borders and help people who are affected by disasters and need assistance, in particular whenever the scale of an emergency overwhelms the response capacities of a country.

He stated that any country in the world, as well as the United Nations system and its agencies and other international organizations can request disaster assistance through the Union Civil Protection Mechanism itself.

“But not only that. The Union Civil Protection Mechanism was also created to the broader purpose of fostering cooperation and facilitate exchange of knowledge and expertise among national civil protection authorities and increase public risk awareness and preparedness for disasters. This broad scope has implied the gradual development by the participating states of an entire system made up of a range of tools and the appropriate operational and financial arrangements to ensure the most effective coordination and collaboration among the participating state” elaborated Barbera.

It goes without saying that the prospected membership of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Mechanism would create a great opportunity for the country to take active part and contribute to such important joint effort towards a more effective and collective approach to disaster management.

Regarding to the most recent developments of the Mechanism itself, it is foreseen that the EU will provide additional and higher financial incentives to member states to pool their national capacities. This reinforcement of capacities will allow the EU to better respond to disasters, especially when several emergencies occur at the same time.

“The IDRMP Project can be certainly considered making a contribution to the path of BiH towards UCPM membership. Indeed, the participation in the UCPM implies for civil protection systems in all member states to keep up with a range of criteria to ensure that their operational capacities also are as adequate as possible to the scope of the Mechanism itself. In this respect, the work that is being conducted by the IDRMP Project on existing response capacities, jointly with the review of the existing legislation and the support to the improvement of local risk assessment is quite in line with such objective” concluded Barbera.

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