EFDRR Roadmap Action-Oriented Dialogue - Reducing Risk Together: Community Engagement in Disaster Risk Reduction

Interactive Session 2: Youth & Risk Communication

Background
This session brought together perspectives of youth, media, UN, and government stakeholders on solutions supporting effective risk communication that builds capacities and empowers young people to be agents of change and to build resilience individually and in their communities. It builds on the Action-Oriented Dialogue on risk communication, hosted by Romania in February 2023, which underlined the importance of strengthening evidence-based and accessible risk information for all, and the need to invest in youth education, preparedness, and media literacy, so that we can ensure the societal resilience of the future.

Moderator:
• Fanny Langella, Head of Content and Channels, UNDRR

Panellists:
• Ana Sabancevaite, Teacher and DRR Youth Advocate
• Julia Alajärvi, Senior Adviser, National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) of Finland
• Kirsi Teräväinen, Head of the Youth News Section, YLE (Finnish Broadcasting Company)
• Krzysztof Zyma, Executive Secretary, EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, Council of Europe
• Leonardo Palumbo, Community Engagement Officer, World Health Organization

Summary Notes
Following initial interventions by the panellists, an interactive discussion with audience engagement ensued, focusing on the role of risk communication in fostering a culture of preparedness across all of society, with emphasis on how to meaningfully engage diverse youth groups. Key discussion points and outcomes are highlighted below:

Establishing national risk communication plans
Participants discussed the importance of establishing national risk communication strategies, emphasising the need to work with the media not only to report on disaster responses but also to foster a culture of preparedness. Participants emphasised the importance of genuine youth engagement, as opposed to tokenistic approaches. Youth stakeholders should be engaged in risk communication planning and activities from an early stage, with a focus on long-term strategies. Participants also noted the importance of understanding local and cultural contexts and the relevance of language.

Promoting media literacy and engaging teachers
Participants discussed the importance of teaching media literacy as a part of education curriculums. Since 2019, Finland has had a national policy for media education, collaborating with various sectors, including the private sector, media companies, municipalities, and NGOs. Teachers are considered essential in enhancing societal and disaster resilience through media education.

Tailoring risk communication for diverse youth groups
Participants discussed the importance of tailoring risk communication to resonate with teens and young people. They should not be viewed as one group, but rather, as a diverse collective of sub-groups, requiring tailored engagement strategies. Importantly, risk communication should be based on a two-way dialogue, acknowledging the readiness of youth to take responsibility, and by showcasing examples of successful projects where
youth are advocates. Immersive and provocative communication plans may be used for different target audiences.

**Youth as community influencers**

Participants stressed the importance of considering youth as community influencers, providing examples of successful engagement strategies. The effectiveness of peer-to-peer communication among youth, especially through diverse sub-groups, such as those interested in art, sports, or music, was emphasised. Examples were shared on the role of youth as influences and active contributors to emergency responses, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Adapting narratives to different groups in a changing media landscape**

Challenges within the evolving media landscape, including the impact of platforms like TikTok or X (formerly known as Twitter), were acknowledged, prompting discussions on the importance of long-term strategies to navigate them. There is a risk in assuming that crisis news is interesting to everyone, or that its recipients have the same level of background knowledge or capacities to fully comprehend it. Participants discussed the challenges in amplifying key risk messages in a complex media landscape in a format that is understandable and accessible to all. Participants emphasised the importance of making narratives relevant and accessible to diverse audiences, emphasising the importance of storytelling and community empowerment as key elements in effective risk communication to diverse populations.

**Countering mis- and disinformation**

Participants emphasised the importance of countering mis- and disinformation and building societal resilience, especially after lessons learnt from COVID-19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Across the discussions, panellists emphasised the role of social media in communication, and highlighted the importance of addressing fake news and mis- and disinformation by building trust through two-way communication channels, monitoring offline and online conversations, and identifying information voids.