Depicting Capacity Needs

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) calls for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) to be made a national priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation. The challenges posed by this call are immense, particularly for economically less developed countries (LDC) which suffer disproportionally not only from the consequences of disaster, but also from limited financial and institutional means. Our community tends to think that geoinformation data and tools must form the backbone of any successful DRR strategy and teaching these concepts and methods will create the capacity needed o implement it. But things are not so simple. In September 2009 the International Institute for Geoinformation Science and Earth Observation (ITC) in the Netherlands held an international seminar bringing together 32 experts from donors, international organisations, data providers, NGOs and universities to assess the state of geoinformatics capacity for DRR in LDCs and disclose major gaps. The seminar also addressed how the various needs are met by available capacity-building products, and how useful and lasting are these efforts (see website 1).

Discussions hit immediate obstacles. There was surprisingly little agreement on who actually are the 'users' of data and services provided by the geoinformatics actors. Even the existence of such a thing as 'our' community came into question. The range of international DRR efforts initiated over recent years (HFA, GMES etc) has shifted the focus from disaster response to risk reduction, but also broadened the range of professionals requiring training. Professional mobility has simultaneously increased, while new means of capacity building means have been developed: short courses, e-learning and joint degree courses added to traditional university programmes to form a pick-and-mix menu of options.

Successful capacity building for DRR requires a keen understanding of the needs of diverse users. Flexible training should be offered that blends traditional coursework with e-learning and focused short courses. Regional university networks should be engaged in region-specific training adaptation, the building up of a capable indigenous university infrastructure, and coupling education with original research. But we are also seeing professionals who receive training ending up without much chance to use it. The seminar recommended creation of a graphical overview depicting identified capacity needs, but also who received what training; this would allow such individuals to be better called upon and engaged in DRR projects in their country or region.

https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/depicting-capacity-needs