

Sendai Review Highlights: Wednesday, 17 May 2023

A Risk Reduction Hub coordinated by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) convened during the day on Wednesday prior to the High-Level Meeting for the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which follows the Hub on 18-19 May 2023. The Hub served as a space for non-state actors and government representatives to discuss key themes for advancing risk reduction across sectors, regions, and contexts. The Hub addressed 12 topics:

- scaling-up risk sensitive urban development;
- disaster risk analytics;
- human mobility in the context of disasters;
- accelerating action for gender responsive DRR;
- children as changemakers for resilience;
- Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action (Samoa Pathway) and the Sendai Framework;
- infrastructure and engineering for DRR;
- intersectionality in DRR;
- synergizing climate action and DRR;
- risk-proofing sustainable development;
- private investment in DRR for resilience;
- whole of society approach and the role of non-state actors.

This report elaborates on several events, focusing on elements contained in the draft political declaration anticipated for adoption during the High-Level Meeting.

Scaling-up Risk Sensitive Urban Development:

Collaboration among all levels of government and multi-stakeholder engagement are essential for resilient urban development. This was a key message from an event moderated by Alessandro Attolico, Making Cities Resilient 2030 Global Partnership. Observing that 60 percent of the global population will live in cities by 2030, he said we must address DRR in an urban context.

In a video message, Kazuko Kohri, Mayor of Sendai, Japan, highlighted her city's rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts since a devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011. She outlined the Sendai BOSAI_TECH Innovation Platform and a "build back better" approach.

Cristian Torres, Director, National Service for Risk and Emergency Management, Ecuador, highlighted coordination between central and local governments, incorporating DRR

in land-use planning, and investing in urban risk research and citizen-science.

Michele Emanuele Giordano, Deputy President, Italian Province of Potenza, recommended restructuring governance to connect all levels of government, inclusive and democratic participation in decision-making, and investing in knowledge development, sharing, and innovation.

Niels Holm-Nielsen, Practice Manager, World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, stressed governance and complexity of finding solutions in urban DRR. He highlighted the need for detailed technical work and long-term stakeholder engagement, using efforts to tackle flooding in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, as an example.

Ibrahim Ozer, Director-General for Disaster Management and Climate Change, Turkish Red Crescent, urged scaling up collective action to build resilience for urban communities, emphasizing the need for a coherent, urban-centric approach, prioritizing relevant investments and empowering local communities.

Patricia Miranda Menezes, Mayor's Office Advisor for Global Agendas, Barcarena, Para, Brazil, focused on efforts to build resilience in Barcarena. She highlighted challenges related to land ownership and underscored local efforts starting from access to health, education, food, and sanitation, and expanding to climate change and urban resilience and infrastructure, leading to the Roadmap on making Barcarena a resilient city.

In the ensuing discussion, a representative of the Potenza Provincial Student Council, Italy, urged empowering youth in relevant decision making and planning. Participants addressed the Sendai Framework's Target E (disaster risk reduction strategies), characteristics of urban versus rural areas, data sharing and use of open data, and addressing existing risk arising from unplanned urban development.

Accelerating Action for Gender-Responsive Disaster

Risk Reduction: A gender action plan (GAP) is needed for the remainder of the Sendai Framework, according to speakers at an event on gender-responsive DRR. Disaggregated data and more women in leadership roles were also common themes at the event, which was moderated by Vasiti Soko, Director, National Disaster Management Office, Fiji.

Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director, UN Women, said "women are the true face of resilience" and urged greater inclusion in DRR planning and decision-making.

Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of UNDRR, noted support to include a GAP in this meeting's political declaration.

Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga, Secretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Philippines, said her country had developed a "Magna Carta of Women" guaranteeing their rights.

Mwanahamisi Singano, Women and Gender Stakeholder Group, urged greater involvement of non-state actors and local communities in DRR planning and implementation.

Ib Petersen, Deputy Executive Director, UN Population Fund, highlighted the need for action on gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and youth in the context of DRR.

Bernice Van Bronkhorst, Global Director for Urban, Resilience and Land Global Practice, World Bank, said "natural disasters are gender neutral but the impacts are not."

Shawn Tupper, Deputy Minister of Public Safety Canada, outlined Canada's efforts to support equality and establish proactive planning, highlighting intersectionality as a key issue.

Sarah Hendricks, Director of the Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division at UN Women, supported an evidence-based approach, country- and locally-owned solutions, and development of a policy tracker to make data more accessible.

Paola Albrito, Director, UNDRR, urged capacity building and highlighted the Women's International Network on DRR.

In the ensuing discussion, speakers responded to a question about persons with disabilities by highlighting the "all of society" and "leave no one behind" concepts, as well as more "invisible" disabilities such as hearing difficulties.

Beth Delaney, First Assistant Secretary, Humanitarian Division at Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, stressed Australia's strong support for a gender responsive DRR agenda and highlighted data, analysis, and investment as key.

Infrastructure and Engineering for DRR: This event, organized by the International Coalition for Sustainable Infrastructure (ICSI) and supported by the Institution of Civil Engineers, the World Federation of Engineering Organisations (WFEO), and Resilience Rising, brought together stakeholders from the infrastructure sector to discuss how the recommendations of the Sendai Framework Midterm Review report can be translated into concrete solutions.

Savina Carluccio, Executive Director, ICSI, moderated the event, stressing the importance of bringing different stakeholders to the table, including engineers.

Abhilash Panda, Head, Financing Prevention, De-risking Investment & Infrastructure Resilience, UNDRR, stressed the need to understand risk from a practical perspective and include relevant considerations in infrastructure-related policy designs, highlighting good governance as key for a successful framework.

A "fireside chat" moderated by Seth Shultz, CEO, Resilience Rising, reflected on the key findings and recommendations from the Sendai Framework Midterm Review. Kamal Kishore, Member of India's Disaster Management Authority and Co-Chair of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure Executive Committee, discussed challenges related to advancing ecosystem-

based approaches, stressing it was important to take a long-term view and promote a multi-disciplinary approach.

Victoria Salinas, Senior Official Performing the duties of Deputy Administrator, Resilience, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), US, stressed that the national investment programme for infrastructure offers a historical opportunity, adding that infrastructure investments "are not only about dollars and must be also founded on equity."

Focusing on the UNDRR Handbook for Implementing the Principles for Resilient Infrastructure, Mathieu Verougstraete, Head, Infrastructure and Finance for Resilience, UNDRR, stressed that the handbook is a valuable tool for nations to strengthen the resilience of their infrastructure systems. He explained that the handbook expands on the principles for resilient infrastructure with actionable interventions for each stakeholder, practical examples, and indicators to assess progress. The handbook also includes a self-assessment country scorecard, which assists in determining key priority actions.

Tom Dolan, Senior Research Fellow, University College London, and Nicole Boothman-Shepard, Vice President, Disaster Resilience Solutions Group, AECOM, offered their insights on the handbook as potential users.

In a roundtable discussion on multi-stakeholder perspectives and case studies on DRR implementation and resilience in infrastructure, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, Chairman, National Disaster Management Authority, Pakistan, focused on shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach. He discussed the role of early warning systems and academia in disaster risk management, emphasizing the challenge to develop non-standard templates for different areas.

Three thematic sessions followed.

Governance for resilience: This session was moderated by Tom Lewis, LE4 Advisors. Tom Abdallah, Vice President Design Services, NY Metropolitan Transportation Authority, highlighted the need for close cooperation across different agencies, sharing information transparently, and prioritizing areas for interventions.

Eric MacFarlane, First Deputy Commissioner, NYC Department of Design and Construction, focused on introducing a resilience component in architecture and construction designs, offering an example of storm surges at high tide simulating future sea-level rise due to global warming.

Jennifer Cass, Senior Vice President, Capital Program, NY Economic Development Cooperation, addressed the interdependence between sustainability and resilience. Discussing a project studying the flood potential of the New York City coastline in comparison to sea-level rise by 2050, she underscored the need for agency coordination and community engagement.

Scalable solutions for resilience: Fiona Cousins, Principal, Americas Regional Chair, Arup, discussed a road infrastructure project in Colombia that included a multi-factor analysis with relevant risk considerations for public-private investments.

Auroop Ganguly, College of Engineering, Northeastern University, stressed that traditional disciplinary boundaries in academia are no longer sufficient to solve critical problems, emphasizing the need to understand the convergence of

complexities and cascading vulnerabilities in interconnected systems.

Puja Das, Northeastern University, addressed challenges in urban and coastal regions in Bangladesh and Indonesia, focusing on flood-related challenges and on building preparedness.

Suranjana Gupta, Senior Advisor, Huairou Commission, India, offered insights into her organization's work on grassroots womens' leadership in advancing community resilience. She stressed that women have to be seen as managers and monitors of infrastructure, ensuring efforts are responsive to their needs and priorities, and supporting their engagement in response recovery and reconstruction.

Paul Gally, Columbia University, discussed a New York resilient coastal communities project being implemented in alliance with other stakeholders. He highlighted dialogue and accountability.

Taking action: This session was moderated by David Smith, Chair of the Sustainable Resilient Infrastructure Advisory Board at the Institution of Civil Engineers and Senior VP, Stantec, who highlighted both hard and soft skills, as well as the role of community champions.

Bill Kelly, Senior Advisor to the American Society of Civil Engineers and WFEO, drew attention to a recent WFEO publication on SDGs, including resilience.

Pulkit Kanotra, Arcadis and WFEO Committee on Young Engineers, urged governments to fund resilient infrastructure projects and share best practices internationally.

George Karagiannis, Director, Engineering Leadership Group, highlighted the engineering community's role in advancing DRR solutions.

In the ensuing discussion, speakers highlighted emerging blueprints for climate resilience, relevant work under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the role of grassroots and community groups.

Synergizing Climate Action and Disaster Risk Reduction: Moderator Loretta Hieber Girardet, Chief, Risk Knowledge, Monitoring, and Capacity Development Branch, UNDRR, noted the need to synergize approaches to planning, coordination, and implementation mechanisms across disaster response, humanitarian action, and addressing loss and damage. She emphasized that climate change adaptation would not be successful without incorporating efforts to reduce risks and the need for adaptation.

Mutale W.K. Nalumango, Vice President, Zambia, said there is a unique opportunity to align the recommendations of the Midterm Review and the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement. She noted the urgent need to harmonize and enhance collaborative efforts, and integrate approaches to climate and disaster risks, and the strong linkages to avert, minimize, and address losses and damages. She highlighted the need for sectoral responsibility, to strengthen multistakeholder and national coordination, including government, UN country teams, development partners, the private sector, and civil society. She announced Zambia's intent to make its National Adaptation Plan (NAP) "viewed under the national disaster risk framework and disaster management policy." She

stressed the need for international cooperation, and comprehensive climate and disaster risk management for long-term resilience, prioritizing reducing carbon footprint, and strengthening mitigation efforts with a just energy transition.

Mohamed Abushahab, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the UN, said COP 28 will provide an opportunity for ambitious climate action to "keep the 1.5°C target alive." He highlighted the global stocktake, which presents an opportunity to align work with the Sendai Framework.

Mariya Ahmed Didi, Minister of Defense, Maldives, highlighted efforts to build resilience in small islands, including investing in shoreline protection, local management plans, traditional knowledge, data, and new technologies.

Elizabeth Riley, Executive Director, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), noted growing complexities in managing climate risk. She highlighted unusual weather systems, storm intensification and other changes that are "not in our playbook." She drew attention to regional cooperation, understanding systemic risk, risk response capability, governance, accountability, and financing.

The group then divided into three groups to dive deeper on how to synergize climate action and DRR at the local, national, regional and global levels. At the local level, the group discussed climate data and risk mapping, localized early warning systems, and Indigenous knowledge. At the national level, topics included private sector engagement, common goals, and other stakeholders. At the regional and global level discussants highlighted risk projections, capacity building, financing, and cross-regional engagement.

Risk-Proofing Sustainable Development: This session, facilitated by Andrew Revkin, Director, Initiative on Communication Innovation and Impact, Columbia Climate School, focused on how countries measure if development action is risk proof and how such risk proofing may help accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ronald Jackson, Head of the Disaster Risk Reduction, Recovery and Resilience Building Team, UN Development Programme (UNDP), called for introducing a risk-informed lens at the UN framework, paying more attention to prospective risk management. The strong, fit-for-purpose risk governance to deal with both conventional and systemic risks.

Rein Paulsen, Director, Office of Emergencies and Resilience, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), focused on agriculture, stressing that FAO promotes a multi-risk, comprehensive risk approach, strengthening risk information and risk governance, and promoting anticipatory action. Underscoring the need to unleash agriculture's potential to offer resilient solutions, he emphasized that partnerships are key to understanding interdependencies and addressing challenges.

Arthur Jenkins, Director of Education and Adolescent Development Group, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), focused on education systems. He highlighted best practices including greening the curriculum, informing youth on climate change-related risks, and using schools as platform to springboard youth engagement.

Christos Stylianides, Minister for Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, Greece, stressed that climate change is one of the most pressing, multi-dimensional, and complex challenges of our time and the cost of inaction is higher than ever. Underscoring prevention, preparedness, and resilience, he presented national efforts, addressing the interlinkages between the climate crisis and natural disasters through a holistic approach.

Cintia Bartz, Coordinator of the Urban Planning Sector, Municipality of Teresina, Brazil, focused on efforts regarding building resilience and sustainability in Teresina. She stressed that, in a city with low resources, partnerships are key, and that limited understanding of urban risk and its roots can be overcome by a clear definition of stakeholder roles and monitoring indicators.

Nesibu Yasin Seid, Deputy Commissioner, Disaster Risk Management Commission, Ethiopia, highlighted several national and regional efforts, including the Great Green Wall Initiative, the Green Legacy Initiative, and the Climate Resilience Green Strategy. He stressed the need for attracting sufficient resources, strengthening partnerships, and focusing on actions not sufficiently decentralized.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed micro-level versus large-scale transformations, the education component of the SDGs; ways that the UN system can help city authorities in their efforts towards building resilience; and data generation.

Private Investment in DRR for Resilience: Panelists briefly discussed resilience in the context of their business and industry sectors. Sean Kidney, CEO, Climate Bond Initiatives, said resilience is of paramount importance and pointed to the need for guidance, investment, and understanding across corporate and government actors. Matina Papatthasiou, Founding Partner, QIC Global Infrastructure, which has a global portfolio worth USD 30 billion, said decarbonization is a theme and net zero a key objective, and that resilience needs to be considered. Fiona Bayat-Renoux, Chief, Green Climate Finance Unit, UN Capital Development Fund, discussed their new multistakeholder platform and leveraging green bonds within Africa and least developed countries. Kimio Takeya, Technical Advisor on DRR, Japan International Cooperation Agency, emphasized the importance of investment and net zero. Chris Hullatt, Octopus Group, said resilience is important to investors and a powerful trend. He also echoed the building appetite for renewables, supported increasing awareness, standards, and accreditation going forward, and noted the need to track improvements in resilience.

Moderator Per Ståhl, CIO Jäederberg & Cie, then posed questions to each panelist. On a question on private capital investment, Kidney noted the clear investor appetite, such as seen in the success of sovereign green bonds in India. He pointed to the lack of supply of bonds, saying it was an opportunity and an entry point for addressing both adaptation and resilience. He underlined the need for more detailed guidance on the meaning of resilience and said proactive risk management can improve credit ratings.

On a question on how resilience is embedded in practice, Papatthasiou discussed looking at long-term revenue streams and a business model that anticipated 100 years ahead. She noted that climate resilience and other climate factors are always

considered, such as planning a sea wall above minimum regulation at Brisbane airport to minimize potential costs from storm surge. It is much more expensive, she said, to address this kind of problem down the line, and investors need to have this understanding. She discussed the need for a common standard to apply to infrastructure globally, and the need for climate adaptation plans as a standard component to all infrastructure businesses going forward. On forecasting models, she said it was an area that needed improvement.

On a question about a pathway to deploying capital investment in least developed countries and small island states, Bayat-Renoux highlighted barriers to investment such as a perception of higher risk and lower rate of return. She recommended long-term transparent policies, a green and bankable pipeline, blended finance to de-risk investment, and stronger domestic and regional development banks.

On a question about climate-related financial disclosures, Hullatt said current reporting is “almost designed to be weighed rather than read” and felt a more simple, standardized way of communicating key risks would have a positive impact. However, Stahl said his sector was complex and did not lend itself so well to standardization.

Regarding insurance, Kidney said insurance companies have a vested interest in communicating with governments to make progress.

On the subject of project pipelines, Bayat-Renoux said we need adequate project preparation support in developing countries, while Hullatt said international capital will flow to countries that remove barriers. Papatthasiou highlighted the US Inflation Reduction Act’s role in attracting capital to the US.

One participant highlighted the convening power of the UNDRR, but said governments and the private sector need to “play nicely” and keep breaking down siloes and barriers.

Summarizing discussions, Stahl noted a drive to solve the issue of pipelines, questions over insurance, the need for innovation based on modeling and data, and the private sector’s interest in finding long-term solutions.

In the Corridors

With the formal start of the Sendai Framework’s Midterm Review not kicking off until Thursday, the meetings held on Wednesday were all part of a so-called “hub”; something other processes might label “side events” or “special events.” Many participants appeared enthusiastic, and even an 8:15 am start was not enough to deter an almost-full house for a discussion on risk sensitive urban development. In fact, whether the topic was intersectionality or infrastructure, the private sector or small island states, conversations were generally lively and deep. Themes that permeated across the various venues included the benefits of good governance and multi-stakeholder involvement, as well as the need to better understand risk. In spite of the buoyant mood, however, many participants were clearly concerned that the Sendai Framework was not yet secure. “We have a lot to do before 2030,” warned one. “Climate change is making all of this much harder,” said another.