

UCLG POLICY BRIEF

2017 GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Local Governments' Commitment to Resilience

The fifth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is taking place on 22-26 May 2017 in Cancun, Mexico. UCLG will actively participate in this event, recognized by the United Nations General Assembly as the main global forum for strategic advice, coordination, partnership development and the review of progress in the implementation of international instruments for disaster risk reduction. This Policy Brief summarizes the issues at stake, introduces to the key dimensions and opportunities of this agenda, and sums up the key actions to undertake at local level.

1. ISSUES AT STAKE

Over the years, UCLG has organized awareness raising and lobbying activities among its members to highlight the key role played by local governments in managing disaster risk. This was made possible thanks to the support and collaboration of the United Nations Officer for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

In 2015 the international community renewed its commitment through the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 during the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction. This 15-year voluntary, non-binding agreement includes 7 global targets to promote the outcome of the Framework: *"The substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries"*¹.

Of the 7 global targets, Target 'E' requests immediate action by the local and regional government constituency: *"Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020"*².

In recognition of the primary responsibility of local governments in disaster risk reduction and the commitment of local government networks in this agenda, the Sendai Framework puts great responsibility on our organization. It calls, in order to support the implementation of the Framework: *"[U]nited Cities and Local Governments organization and other relevant bodies of local governments to continue supporting cooperation and mutual learning among local governments for disaster risk reduction and the implementation of the present framework"*³.

It is envisaged that, by focusing on Target 'E' and ensuring robust strategies by 2020, local and regional governments would be able to address the other Framework targets that would be supported by international cooperation.

It is proposed that, leading up to 2020, UCLG, its members and partners, support cities in developing new or updating existing risk reduction strategies that

build coherence across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Climate Agreement and the New Urban Agenda. The key actions to develop for the implementation at local level are detailed in the fourth section of the current brief.

As key expected outcome, the Global Platform Chair's Summary will capture the substance of deliberations held within the gathering and propose concrete measures to drive implementation for the following 2 years. The Summary will be presented to the President of the Economic and Social Council as a contribution to the 2017 High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF), to be held in New York in July.

As in previous editions, UCLG has mobilized members to share their experiences and find the necessary partnerships to implement the Sendai Framework, which stipulates that risk reduction and strengthening resilience take place first and foremost at the local level. UCLG and its partners are working to make the voice of local and regional governments heard.

UCLG, along with ICLEI, UNISDR, UN-Habitat and other stakeholders, will organize a full-day Summit of Local and Regional Governments on 23 May. Organized under the aegis of the UNISDR "Making Cities Resilient" Campaign, the event will aim at:

- Providing an opportunity to exchange on tools to implement the Sendai Framework at local level.
- Advocating for coherence within the local implementation of the Sendai Framework, the 2030 Agenda (SDG 11b) and the Paris Climate Agreement.
- Review the work developed in informal settlements and with vulnerable communities.
- Calling for connecting local and national disaster risk reduction planning and responses through vertical integration

Throughout the discussion, UCLG and its partners will convey two key requests at the Global Platform:

- Calling national governments to provide local governments with all the necessary financial, institutional and legislative support;
- Requesting the international community and the UN specialized agencies to give their support and

¹ (UNISDR 2015b)

² (UNISDR 2015b)

³ (UNISDR 2015b)

technical and financial assistance to local governments in order to achieve the imminent

goals set by the Sendai Framework and the other international agendas

2. PROBLEM REVIEW

Urbanization and climate change are increasing the urgency to address disaster risk and embrace resilience. At the same time, disasters, poverty and development have proved to be closely interrelated.

Disasters may be conceptualized as the outcome of an existing and on-going risk process. A risk may expand over time and materialize and generate greater losses only when a specific hazard hits a community⁴.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) refers to *"the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposures to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events"*⁵.

Conceptually different, resilience refers to *"the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner"*⁶. It incorporates the ability to maintain or quickly return to basic functioning in the aftermath of a disruptive event⁷. Expanding the scope of traditional disaster risk management, which focuses its risk assessments in relationship with specific hazards, resilience embraces the need to incorporate a wider set of disruptive events that may take place but are not necessarily predictable⁸.

With 54% of world's total population living in cities in 2014⁹, the concentration of population, its built assets and economic activities in cities is raising the incidence and costs of urban disasters. This dimension is expected to expand as 66% of world's total population will be urban in 2050¹⁰. Globally, 2016 saw 327 disaster events, of which 191 were natural and 136 were man-made, resulting in economic losses of USD 175 billion¹¹.

In addition, climate change and disaster risk are intimately linked in urban contexts. Cities account for 37-49% of total global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions¹² and, at the same time, are experiencing increased climate change-related risks¹³.

Vulnerability to disruptive events in urban contexts is determined by exposure and vulnerability, but also by

socio-economic and environmental factors¹⁴. By the same token, hazards often exacerbate existing socio-economic and environmental weaknesses in cities¹⁵. Rapid urbanization in low- and middle-income countries has experienced a rapid growth of highly vulnerable communities in informal settlements, lacking either basic infrastructure and services or provision for climate change adaptation¹⁶. The only land affordable and available for the marginalized communities often includes the risk-prone areas¹⁷. Furthermore, disasters increase inequality as, on average, they disproportionately affect women, children, the aged and disabled¹⁸.

Disasters are a clear obstacle in the way towards sustainable development. Slow progress made over years can be reversed by a single disruptive event¹⁹. At the same time, in addition to direct losses (mortality, physical damage, etc.), disasters entail secondary impacts (interrupted education, epidemics outbreak, etc.) that might generate new poor and exacerbate existing poverty²⁰.

Figures

- Urbanized land areas are expected globally to triple between 2000 and 2030²¹.
- Nearly 1.5 billion urban dwellers will live in slums by 2020²², often in highly exposed areas and with low-quality infrastructure.
- It is estimated a nine-fold increase in risk of floods in major coastal cities between 2013 and 2050²³.
- The number of people at risk of cyclone and earthquake will more than double from 2013 to 2050 in developing countries' cities²⁴.
- In 2008, 13 years after the 1995 Kobe earthquake, the city's per capita GDP was lower by 12%²⁵.

⁴ (IRDR 2014)

⁵ (UNISDR 2009)

⁶ (UNISDR 2009)

⁷ (World Bank 2013)

⁸ (The Rockefeller Foundation and ARUP 2014)

⁹ (UCLG 2016)

¹⁰ (UN 2014)

¹¹(http://institute.swissre.com/research/library/NatCat_and_manmade_disasters_2016.html)

¹² (University of Cambridge and ICLEI 2014)

¹³ (Revi et al. 2014)

¹⁴ (UN 2015b)

¹⁵ (UN 2015a)

¹⁶ (Revi et al. 2014)

¹⁷ (UCLG 2016)

¹⁸ (IRDR 2014)

¹⁹ (UN 2015b)

²⁰ (IRDR 2014)

²¹ (UN 2015b)

²² (UN-Habitat 2006)

²³ (Hallegatte et al. 2013)

²⁴ (Brecht, Deichmann, and Wang 2013)

²⁵ (duPont and Noy 2015)

3. LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES

Resilience is a dimension of sustainable development. Climate change and disaster measures need to leverage the interconnected and system-wide functioning of cities.

While only 4.2% of official humanitarian aid in 2006-2010 was devoted to disaster risk reduction, timely actions and multi-year investments in disasters management and building resilience have proved to be less costly than traditional late humanitarian interventions²⁶.

The concept of resilience emerged in the 1970s in the field of ecology to refer to the analysis of the effects of disturbances in ecosystems²⁷.

Resilience provides the opportunity to address cities as complex systems. By conceptualizing urban systems across functional, organizational, physical and spatial scales, resilience is continuously monitored through a system-based approach that assesses the interdependencies of the different parts of the system²⁸.

Mindful of the interconnected nature of cities, local governments can take risk-informed decisions that underpin sustainable development policies and focus on the opportunities for transformation²⁹. Similarly, a sound management of today's risks lays the foundation to properly address tomorrow's changed risks, thus significantly contributing to climate change adaptation³⁰.

The integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation and disaster risk reduction into urban planning and policymaking is key for the system-wide resilience and sustainable development of our cities³¹. Governance needs to boost the broad participation of all stakeholders, particularly of those communities most at risk and often without enough voice and influence in the planning and implementation processes³². Private sector is also fundamental as, being chiefly responsible for investments in new buildings, industry and small and medium-sized enterprises, its short-term gains can significantly contribute to disaster risk generation³³.

Data is a key component of risk-informed decisions³⁴. Data on inequalities need to contribute to reverse existing exposure and vulnerability to multiple hazards. In this context, information and communication technologies (ICTs) can help cities in developing early warning systems, support urban

planning and exchange information among stakeholders.

Local solutions #1: Surat (India)^{35 36}

The fastest growing city in India, Surat, has experienced floods, plague epidemic and social unrest. This sequence of episodes has led the local government to make a special effort to enhance resilience.

Clean water, sewerage and solid waste infrastructures have been enhanced, along with measures to improve the public health care system, enforce evacuation and warning systems, and monitor water levels.

*Local solutions #2: Cali (Colombia)*³⁷

Aguablanca is a flood-prone area of Cali that hosts a disadvantaged community. The local government and grassroots groups have minimized the vulnerabilities and built resilience through multiple approaches.

Following the establishment of levees to protect the area, local residents have placed pipes for water supply through the levees and extracted construction materials. By engaging the local community, the local government has shared information on the risks associated, shown the value of the flood defense and increased the passive surveillance of public spaces. This, jointly with community-led approaches by grassroots organizations such as a microcredit program, has helped to build a more cohesive community.

²⁶ (Cabot Venton et al. 2012)

²⁷ (Allan and Bryant 2011)

²⁸ (UN 2015a)

²⁹ (UN 2015b)

³⁰ (IRDR 2014)

³¹ (UN 2015a)

³² (Revi et al. 2014)

³³ (IRDR 2014)

³⁴ (UN 2015a)

³⁵ (The Rockefeller Foundation and ARUP 2014)

³⁶ (UCLG 2016)

³⁷ (The Rockefeller Foundation and ARUP 2014)

4. KEY ACTIONS AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

Risk reduction strategies developed by local and regional governments can be organized according to the 4 priorities of action outlined by the Sendai Framework.

1. Understanding disaster risk

Knowledge of the different risks and hazards can help local leaders in taking risk-informed decisions.

- Enhance periodical assessments of hazards and their multi-dimensional cascading effects, integration of disaster risk assessment into urban and territorial planning and geographical risk mapping.
- UCLG Sections and national association of local governments should establish national platforms to support members and disseminate risk-relevant information and data, and promote dialogue.
- Support exchanges with citizens to raise awareness about the exposure to threats, including the local mobilization for the International Day for Disaster Reduction (held annually on the second Wednesday of October).

2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

In countries with advanced decentralization, local governments use urban planning to systematically take disaster risk reduction into account, protect environment and promote decentralization. In countries where this task is retained by central governments, local governments need to closely collaborate with national platforms.

- Local governments need to adopt disaster risk reduction strategies to promote resilience, by revising building codes and risk-prone building regulation, training staff and establishing a local coalition with public and private partners to exchange information.
- Financial incentives need to be put in place to ensure poorest communities do not move to risk-prone and vulnerable areas.

- Support the “Ten point Checklist” of the “Making Cities Resilient” Campaign.

3. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

Investments need to be secured to protect communities, property and infrastructure.

- Support a dedicated disaster risk budget and department within the local administration.
- Ensure the resilience of key new infrastructure and integrate environmental and natural resources management that incorporate disaster risk reduction.
- Organize staff training on disaster risk reduction and impact of climate change.
- Mobilize financial resources at national and international level.
- Set up tax incentives to encourage the private sector to invest in risk reduction.
- Promote decentralization cooperation projects with peer-to-peer learning on disaster risk reduction.
- Invest in ITCs to develop scientific tools to monitor risks.

4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

As no policy can prevent a disaster from unfolding, preparedness and reconstruction are key components of resilience.

- Disaster risk reduction needs to be institutionally incorporated as dimension of local development.
- Protect schools, hospitals and public administrations with specific building codes.
- Organize raising awareness among children and simulations and first-aid training with citizens.
- Draft evacuation plans with all partners and develop early warning systems in risk-prone areas.
- Establish buffer land reserves in areas outside danger zones.

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