

Briefing

May de 2014

Local and regional governments, at the heart of disaster risk reduction strategies

Disaster risk reduction indicates the **possibility of disaster**, in terms of lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and services, which may occur at the heart of a community or society in the future.

Local governments have an important role to play in disaster risk reduction (DRR), as well as in raising awareness and consciousness among their citizens in order to reduce risks, by ensuring the **provision of essential services** and their proximity to citizens. The **decentralization** of political and technical powers is therefore a prerequisite that is vital in giving local authorities the means to act.

In many countries, local governments have a **legal arsenal** at their disposal that allows them to reduce disaster risks, such as town and land use planning. They have the possibility to use the principles of precaution and vigilance to anticipate and reduce disaster risks. It is for this reason that DRR must be at the centre of local concerns.

In an increasingly urbanising world, **the concentration of populations living in cities considerably increases the impact of disasters** on citizens, as well as on material assets and the economy in general. This was demonstrated by the disasters in Istanbul, Kobe, Manila, Mexico and New Orleans.

Natural disasters are often extremely costly. Moreover, cities that are not prepared take much longer to recover, both on an economic and a humanitarian level. Thus, investing in risk reduction allows both local and national authorities to spend less in the aftermath. It is estimated that each dollar invested in prevention is equivalent to at least four dollars spent after a crisis.

UCLG members committed to risk reduction

Following the World Council in Istanbul in 2008, UCLG has taken note and has adopted a position on disaster risk reduction. This document reaffirms the commitment of local authorities throughout the world to **anticipate and reduce disasters and to act, if necessary, when faced with humanitarian crises.**

The Hyogo Framework for Action, 2005-2015

In 2005, 168 countries present in Kobe, Japan, approved **the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015**, which aimed to achieve “a substantial reduction in losses to lives and to social, economic and environmental assets when hazards strike” through five priority actions:

- Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation;
- Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and **enhance early warning**;
- **Use knowledge**, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels;
- Reduce the underlying **risk factors**;
- Strengthen **disaster preparedness** for effective response at all levels.

The challenges of the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

On the basis of the Hyogo Framework for Action, the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will take place in **Sendai, Japan, in March 2015**, during which a new Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA2) for the next ten years will be drawn up.

The World Conference will aim to review the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, to showcase risk reduction strategies implemented at regional and national levels, and to adopt a **post-2015 framework for action**.

Preparatory Committee sessions of the 3rd World Conference

The first session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom 1) will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, on 14th to 15th July 2014.

For more information, please visit:
<http://www.wcdrr.org/preparatory/prepcom1>

If you wish to register, please contact the World Secretariat, and visit
<http://www.wcdrr.org/majorgroups>
(Deadline: 30th June)

Local authorities will form **one of the nine Major Groups of the preparatory process** of the Conference. UCLG and ICLEI have been invited to carry out the mission of **Organizing Partners** by UNISDR, which consists of preparing and co-ordinating the participation of local and regional governments, both during the Conference and in the two Preparatory Committee meetings, which will take place in Geneva in July and November 2014.

Local authorities engaging in the preparatory process of the Conference aim to reinforce their role as key actors in risk reduction strategies. Local governments hope that the issue of risk will be incorporated into the issue of **urban planning, as well as into national urban strategies and risk reduction strategies**.

The six Regional Platforms for risk reduction

In May and June 2014 six regional platforms will take place.

- 19th to 21st March 2014, Platform for Arab States, in Aqaba, Jordan
- 13th to 16th May 2014, African Platform, in Abuja, Nigeria
- 27th to 29th May 2014, American Platform, in Guayaquil, Ecuador
- 2nd to 4th June 2014, Pacific Platform, in Suva, Fiji
- 23rd to 26th June 2014, Asian Platform, in Bangkok, Thailand
- European Platform (dates and location to be confirmed)

Strong local mechanisms are essential to risk reduction and to ensuring local and national development. Beyond risk reduction, local authorities need access to **resources and capacities to implement a coherent strategy**. National commitments should therefore be based on local needs, and thus include local authorities in National Platforms for risk reduction. The 2015 framework for action must therefore be aimed at being **propagated at a local level, and to include local indicators**.

¹Definition of UNISDR,
http://www.unisdr.org/files/7817_UNISDRTerminologySpanish.pdf, 2009