

Whole of Society; Whole of Government

A Statement of the Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism for GPDRR 2022

As the Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism (SEM), we continue to leverage the convening, advocacy, and implementing power of stakeholders in support of the realization of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, particularly during this decade of action. Our 2019 Stakeholder Declaration, “The Means Necessary”, highlighted the importance of a whole of society approach - and examples of this, often community led, continue to emerge. From the creation of humanitarian relief networks to distribute medical supplies in India to the creative use of radio and media in Jordan, and from the convening of online dialogues in France to offering educational assistance in the Central African Republic, the innovation of stakeholders continues to flourish. However, many stakeholders, especially those facing structural marginalization, continue to be confronted with siloed DRR policies which have negative impacts in times of crisis.

Since 2019, climate change, COVID-19, and conflict have continued to illustrate the dynamic and increasingly interconnected risk landscape which has resulted in profound implications for how individuals, societies, and governments engage with risk. This Declaration, therefore, seeks to build on the notion of *whole-of-society* approaches to call for a *whole-of-government* posture, with policy coherence at its core. Just as societies are holistic, diverse and integrated, so too must be the institutions which govern them. This means alignment and mutual reinforcement of global policies; it means domestic ministries working across silos; it means local authorities serving the whole individual at the community level. Moreover, these governance systems must be mutually reinforcing at all levels.

This challenge is no simple task. The systemic nature of risk - whether environmental, biological, or man-made - demands a unified approach, able to respond to the disparate impacts on diverse populations. The Sendai Framework itself lays out a foundation for this, calling for national and local platforms for disaster risk reduction. Unfortunately, our current models of progress value material gain (GDP) as primary indicators, while the most appropriate starting point for human flourishing is that of resilience - a concept which lies beyond traditional measurement. The reality of risk calls for more inclusive, accessible, and equitable disaster risk reduction strategies, including capacity building, to ensure that every sector of society and government can contribute to and is prepared for the inevitable hazards which will continue to confront humanity.

Focusing on resilience is not a new concept - grassroots communities and stakeholders have been taking this approach for generations, building synergies between practice based knowledge and development policies to implement and scale solutions that strengthen resilience. Grassroots, indigenous, and traditional knowledge has a vital role in addressing risk and building resilience - a reality increasingly recognized which has the important potential to bring diverse knowledge systems together.

This global platform falls one year prior to the Mid-Term Review (MTR) session, and three years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is vital for the success of the MTR that lessons learned from the pandemic are properly reflected and policies and practices modified as a result. We see that hazards take many forms - and the rise in situations of conflict only reinforce that reality - and that our choices prior and in response to them can have profound consequences. For example, vaccine deployment infrastructure (or lack thereof) impacted employment and economic growth, social distancing measures impacted evacuation plans, and the disproportionate consequences for women, older persons, indigenous communities, and persons with disabilities continue to hamstring the progress of societies the world over.

It is with this in mind that the SEM offers the following recommendations which will, ultimately, lead to sustainable, inclusive, and risk-informed development that provides all stakeholders with meaningful opportunities to work with their governments and others to address the diverse challenges being confronted:

1. **Whole of government:** Work across ministries and silos to strengthen governance for the implementation of DRR policies and strategies. Ensure that policies are mutually reinforcing. Implement National Platforms which include all stakeholders. Strengthen coordination and coherence by linking DRR to development (e.g. through a risk-informed development lens), climate change (e.g. with an emphasis on adaptation and loss and damage), and all other areas of endeavor in a similar manner. Special attention should be paid to providing DRR implementation support to conflict affected and fragile states and the communities on the front line of risk in these contexts.
2. **Promote localization:** Devolve decision making to the lowest appropriate level. Ensure the inclusion of all societal actors at all levels in DRR decision-making, implementation, and monitoring. Include community leaders in decision making in local, national, and global spaces. Recognize and support grassroots, indigenous knowledge and community data to better inform hazard adaptation strategies, plans, and investments. Recognize their strengths as sources of knowledge and resilience; integrate this wisdom with the scientific and research communities.
3. **Ensure appropriate financing:** Establish specific participation funds that ensure access is not limited by financial constraints, and ensure logistical and reasonable accommodation support is provided. Provide decentralized risk reduction finance - flexible and long term - with an emphasis on the community level by empowering and financing grassroots led action for risk reduction with a special emphasis on women's and youth efforts.
4. **Leave no one behind:** Employ leading methodologies for the collection of disaggregated data with a focus on intersectionality and risk to identify specific barriers, maximize inclusion, and ultimately better inform DRR policies. Recognize gender inequality as a risk driver and a barrier to achieving the Sendai Framework targets. Establish a formal platform to institutionalize a gender-lens in all DRR policy decision making spaces. Adopt an inclusive, intergenerational approach to DRR by building on the diverse lived experience of older persons and the energy and innovation of younger generations. Ensure that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations have access to means, processes and resources required to meaningfully participate in Disaster Risk Reduction and climate action risk assessment, policy-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
5. **Learn:** Modify the current risk management playing field in light of the lessons learned from COVID-19. Research and documentation is important to the degree that it leads to meaningful policy change. Ensure DRR policy is aligned with scientific knowledge, especially in the fields of climate change and health. Deepen the connection between civil society, government, and the media to ensure proper and effective dissemination of accurate information for DRR. Adopt a learning-in-action approach (rather than a 'solutions' approach) as circumstances and hazards change, so must our systems.