

Sendai Stakeholders Group Policy Position for the 2021 High Level Political Forum

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the underlying risks and vulnerabilities of our societies, which compromise development progress and reverse critical gains for all people, especially those living in poverty and marginalized. As we slowly enter a state of the global recovery from the pandemic, the question of building holistic resilience has underpinned discussions of how to avert the intersectional risks of future pandemics and other disasters – natural as well as man-made – that threaten to compromise 2030 Agenda ambitions.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) provides valuable guidance on how to ensure that risk-informed development underpins 2030 Agenda implementation. As Sendai Stakeholders, we bring together representatives of the UN major groups, communities, private sector and other civil society stakeholders, to realize an ‘all-of-society’ approach embedded in the SFDRR and to integrate DRR into the recovery and development agendas, to promote inclusiveness and partnership.

Drawing on collective experience in implementing the SFDRR, and considering the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we call on all people, but especially the Member States and the United Nations, to create enabling environment for risk reduction, save lives and build more sustainable and resilient communities:

Strengthen key systems through an all of society approach based on multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral partnerships

In the context of DRR, a siloed sectoral approach limits the effectiveness of long term resilience. Following the Sendai Framework Principles, all phases of disaster risk are subject to participatory governance. It is essential to promote a systemic and cross-sectoral approach to address multi-faceted hazard risks. Successful preparedness and response calls for collaboration of all DRR stakeholders and governments to ensure that, for example, health systems are well capacitated and accessible to all; that science, research and education sectors deliver reliable data to individuals and governments alike to empower them in response; that communications and public information sector is transparent and reliable to counter disinformation and build relations among all stakeholders; all while social infrastructure is functional to deliver social support to those affected. To achieve this, the National Platforms have a central role to ensure that all stakeholders are empowered in DRR governance, where decisions and plans are made collaboratively through building on practice-based knowledge pertaining to risks and vulnerabilities, as well as unique stakeholders’ capacities to effectively contribute.

Promote a multi-hazard approach to risk management

Risk management should be enhanced through policies and interventions focused on systemic resilience, including equitable investments in health and in physical and social infrastructure resilience. The 2020 UNDRR's Status Report on Sendai Target E highlighted the urgency to accelerate efforts to develop multi-hazard national and local DRR strategies that integrate biological hazards and benefit from a multi-stakeholder and inter-sectoral approach to DRR governance arrangements. One vital lesson learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that countries that had put in place multi-hazard disaster risk management strategies including health emergencies, 'found themselves better prepared to respond to COVID-19.'

Reduce inequality for increased resilience

The ongoing pandemic again brings to light how underlying socio-economic inequalities can aggravate negative impacts of hazards and disasters. To ensure the building of structural resilience, it remains crucial to reduce socio-economic inequalities prevalent in our societies. Implementing universal healthcare coverage would be one of the ways to alleviate the impact of structural inequality in the context of DRR, as well as ensuring food and livelihood security, security of tenure, and access to other basic services. In addition, this requires collaborating with those considered most at risk to understand the specific challenges and risks they face.

Empower at-risk groups for DRR towards diversified, contextualized and long-term solutions

Planning with at-risk groups, positioning them as key actors in resilience and using disaggregated data is essential to understand how to best address a wide range of threats with measures that can be effective long-term solutions. It is crucial to include relevant stakeholder groups in order to understand and incorporate the needs and priorities of those most at risk through disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data. Empowerment of those considered at risk (indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, youth, women, older persons and others) and recognizing their unique knowledge pertaining to constituency-specific vulnerabilities and threats, as well as those pertaining to their local contexts, can diversify the knowledge pool and contextualize solution, for example, nature-based approaches, inclusive technologies and other innovative but tested solutions.

Enhance the role of local actors through decentralization of decision-making and resource allocation for effective prevention, response, recovery and preparedness

While pandemics are global, risks have a strong local presence. Pandemics and other hazards unfold in locally specific contexts of poverty, weak infrastructure, and limited access to health and response services. In order to effectively factor in the various local risks, it is important to empower, capacitate and include local actors, especially community based organisations, in the development and implementation of local as well as national DRR strategies. Flexible financing and resourcing mechanisms should be made available to community-based organisations to enable them to direct resources to shifting needs in relation to emerging risks. Meanwhile two-way communications & information sharing remains essential for effective action in DRR.

