

# UNDP INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE BUILDING SERVICES



The world is full of risks and threats. Climate change, conflict, natural hazard events and disease outbreaks such as the current COVID-19 pandemic present a multifaceted set of challenges that is unprecedented in modern history. The UN, governments and partners must recognize these risks and collectively face them head on, as a global community. Just as every person is resilient to risks and threats, everyone should also be able to benefit from sustainable development.

UNDP's Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery for Building Resilience Team (DRT) strives to be a leader in the global effort to build resilience to present and future risks, through the application of enhanced risk governance processes and integrated and systemic risk management tools, in order to deliver on development that is first and foremost risk-informed. The DRT is not about managing disasters differently. Rather, DRT's work is at the core of sustainable development agenda. It is about engaging development practitioners and approaching big problems differently.

An environmental scan shows us that COVID-19 has exposed weaknesses in current governance arrangements. Limitations in traditional approaches have stifled sustainable development. Focusing on single hazards limits the effective management of a complex and multi-dimensional risk environment. The DRT calls for a new risk governance regime that can better deal with interconnected risks and uncertainties, drawing upon bottom-up processes and innovation for rapidly identifying and managing emerging risks and opportunities, ensuring no one is left behind.

Through tools such as Risk-Informed Development, Early Warning and Preparedness, Urban Resilience, we must engage a broader network of stakeholders, representing a range of perspectives at all levels: public and societal, formal and informal. We can then entertain transparent dialogues on the trade-offs between decisions on risk-informed versus risk blind policies and investment, fostering resilience to a range of interconnected shocks and threats.



*Youth4Climate activists, holding placards for the 17 SDGs. Photo: UNDP/Peru*

## ***Risk-Informed Development (RID) and Systemic Risk***

Risk has become increasingly systemic and multi-dimensional, therefore, integrating risk reduction into development will need to consider multiple and intersecting threats. Risks associated with natural hazards are often overlaid by epidemics, conflict, or economic shocks which can interact and manifest as crises with cascading effects across sectors.

At the same time, conflict increases people's core vulnerability, removing existing coping mechanisms and leaving them less able to handle disasters. While hazards and threats can undermine development achievements, decisions on development trajectories and investments can generate risks. This is the case when risks accumulate in urban areas due to rapid and unplanned developments, for example, or when excessive strain is placed on natural resources. Risk-informed development looks at this two-way relationship and requires transforming the development agenda from within, and therefore cannot be achieved by treating risk merely as an add-on in a silo.

For more information: [undp.org/expertise](https://undp.org/expertise)

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## UNDP's RID Approach and Comparative Advantage

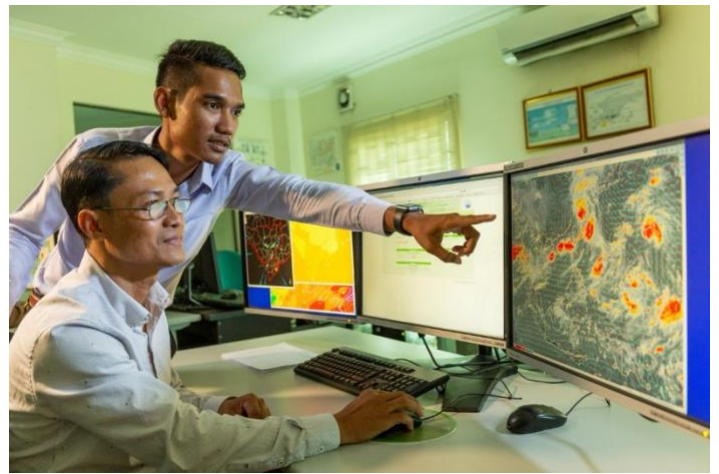
Building the resilience of societies, systems and development assets through a risk-informed development approach that embraces multiple types of risks is a logical and important course of action for a development organization such as UNDP. UNDP has been at the forefront of risk-informed development since over two decades. It's an approach that originated in the field of disaster risk reduction, then expanded in recent years to embrace climate change related risks, and now will also comprise biological hazards, conflict, fragility, economic shocks and other shocks and stressors.

This approach contributes to the overall objective of sustainable development, and is fundamental for accelerating the three directions of systemic change which UNDP intends to support under its new Strategic Plan: building resilience, leaving no one behind, and transforming structures. The approach is also aligned with related UNDP offers emerging within its Global Policy Network and Regional Bureaux, such as the Framework for Development Solutions for Crisis and Fragile Contexts, the Offer on Development Pathways to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding, the Reimagining Governance Offer, Resilient Recovery and Urban Resilience Offers, amongst others.

UNDP's approach to risk-informed development is an organization-wide effort that is deeply rooted in risk governance, systems thinking, area-based approaches, agile and dynamic processes, risk management and context-specific solutions. It results in reduced levels of vulnerability and hazard exposure, and thus contributes to prevention and resilience-building.

### Early Warning and Preparedness (EWP)

Early warning and preparedness are central to UNDP's vision of building resilience to shocks and crises. To date, the organization has provided improved access to early warnings for over [13 million people](#), thus protecting lives, securing livelihoods and safeguarding development gains. Enhancing evidence-based decision making has been a key component of this. Reducing the impact of climate change and disaster risk, addressing the underlying—often overlapping and compounding—drivers of conflict and risk, and building resilience continues to be a priority within UNDP. The importance of preparedness and UNDP's role in strengthening operational activities and capacity building development is a long-standing priority. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to strengthen international cooperation, coordination and solidarity to improve preparedness efforts.



Tracking high-tech Early Warning Systems in Cambodia. Photo: UNDP/Cambodia

## UNDP's EWP Approach and Comparative Advantage

UNDP prioritizes early warning and preparedness as part of the organization's commitment to Priority 4 of the [Sendai Framework of Action](#), aligning with UNDP's [2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#).

UNDP achieves this through its unique ability to support countries and communities to reduce risk, prepare for disasters and shocks when they occur, recover in the aftermath, integrate risk reduction into development planning and investment decisions. UNDP strives for gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as for leaving no one behind in all of its work. With an operational presence in [170 countries](#), UNDP offers more than two decades of experience supporting the mainstreaming of climate and disaster risk into development planning and budgeting.

UNDP is well-positioned to advise national and local authorities on the disaster preparedness requirements for institutional and governance structures, as well as policies, strategies and legislation. Technical advice on operational aspects of preparedness for response and recovery can typically include setting up national or local emergency operations or crisis management center, designing emergency early warning and risk information management systems. Digital disaster management systems bring together expertise on preparedness for response with innovation, technology and digitalization, and privileged private sector access. Through the Connecting Business Initiative ([CBI](#)), which is jointly supported by OCHA, UNDP engages the private sector strategically before, during and after emergencies, increasing the scale and effectiveness of the response and recovery in a coordinated manner.

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## Urban Resilience

Reducing urban risks and fostering resilience has assumed a central role in the global pursuit of sustainable development. Confluences of people, socio-economic development assets, and infrastructure along with the convergence of risks presents a context marked by complexity and increasing uncertainty. With over half the humanity already urbanized and likely to be two-thirds by 2050, all strands of the aspirational 2030 Agenda reinforce the need for holistic approach to address risks in urban areas and build resilience in all its dimensions, be they socio-economic, physical and environmental.

Many high-risk cities, especially small and medium-sized ones, are located in challenging development contexts and often face considerable governance deficits, as well as capacity and resource constraints. More than half of the world's newest cities have developed in Low-Income (LICs) and Low-Middle Income Countries (LMICs), with high population growth and density, yet less than half of these cities have an explicit urban development strategy. An evident shift is making the “urbanization of risks” increasingly systemic, with cascading impacts on weaker segments of society, leaving them further behind while undermining developmental sustainability.

### The risk-development nexus

Good urban resilience practice uses a systems approach to bring together a collaborative focus on managing risks with development policy, planning and practice. A concentration of people, economic activities, development assets, infrastructure and a multitude of risks in urban areas coupled with structural inequities, governance deficits and accentuating socio-economic vulnerabilities has put achievement of SDGs at risk.

Given that nearly two-thirds of infrastructure standing in 2050 is yet to be built calls for reducing existing and emerging multi-dimensional urban risks and investing in resilience. Urban areas are witnessing an increasing incidence of systemic risks, where one hazard – originating within or outside the city – can trigger a chain of negative impacts to the system.

Risk creation in cities happens not only within the city limits but outside, while cities also depend on peri-urban and hinterland areas for their resource requirements. This calls for looking at urban resilience by going beyond their jurisdictional remit as well as traditional linear risk understanding to capture the inter-relationships and consequences of systemic and convergent nature of risks or disasters in urban contexts.



*A community disaster response team trains in Mauritius (Photo: UNDP/Mauritius)*

### Unmet demands and emerging priorities

Nearly a decade of strategic and programmatic investments in urban resilience has highlighted unmet demands and emerging resilience building needs. UNDP's urban risk management and resilience practice responds to key gaps and identified priorities and builds on its cross-thematic experience on urban resilience.

This includes disconnections between national policy and city implementation; advancing all dimensions of resilience in tandem; negotiating the political economy of urban development; accessing risk analysis and actionable risk data/information; re-thinking urban governance to imbue systems thinking and scenario-based strategic long-term urban planning; accountability and resilience benchmarking; and insufficient attention to socio-economic issues, amongst others.

### Catalyzing partnerships

UNDP is internalizing the UN Secretary General's dictum that the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost in the cities by catalyzing partnerships. The need to join hands in this Decade of Action to bring the capabilities of all actors and stakeholders to build resilience and achieve SDGs at local level is well recognized.

UNDP is fostering partnerships with UNDRR, UN-Habitat, academia, the private sector and leading global/regional initiatives for joined-up policy and programmatic action to adopt an “all hands-on deck” approach to meet current needs, unlock development constraints and address governance deficits while laying the foundation for meeting emerging priorities. More information can be found in the recently published [Urban Risk Management and Resilience Strategy](#), and [Analytical Review](#).

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