

Making the SDGs sustainable and resilient

Disasters and Resilience in the Zero Draft

Key Recommendations

The Zero Draft of the Sustainable Development Goals includes several important targets and indicators for addressing disaster risks and strengthening resilience, reflecting the increasing importance and support states are giving to this. The challenge now is to ensure that the combination and coverage of targets across the goal framework provides the right balance of policy outcomes to build resilience and reduce the impacts of disasters, particularly for the poorest people.

Disasters and resilience targets need to be people-centred

Targets need to ensure a focus on the poorest and most marginalised people as they bear the highest burden of disasters. Targets should also address all hazards, both rural and urban contexts, and cover localised frequent disasters which relentlessly erode the wealth of poor people as well as mega disasters with their systemic impacts on poverty. Therefore a **key priority is for an outcome target under a poverty goal**. We propose a new formulation:

[To replace 1.6] By 2030 reduce losses for and build the resilience of poor and vulnerable people to climate-related and other disasters and shocks

Disasters and resilience targets need to focus on economic development

Economic losses from disasters are doubling every decade. Exposure to disasters must be reduced through disaster-proofing existing development and also preventing the creation of unacceptable levels of new risk. This requires **risk reduction targets for human settlements and infrastructure**. We propose two new target formulations:

[To replace 8.11] By 2030 x% of all key infrastructure - public buildings, healthcare, education, transport, energy, water and communications – is reliable, sustainable and resilient

[To replace 11.6] By 2030 increase by x% the adaptive capacity of human settlements to manage risks and stresses of natural and man-made hazards.

Small amendments are also required elsewhere, to ensure that assets are resilient:

[Amendment of Goal 11] Build inclusive, safe, sustainable and resilient cities and human settlements

[Amendment of 11.1] By 2030 ensure universal access to adequate, resilient and affordable housing and basic services for all, and eliminate slum-like conditions everywhere

[Amendment of 11.2] By 2030 provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, resilient and sustainable transport for all, expand public transport and improve road safety

Other targets that are necessary to support resilience and need to remain in the SDGs include:

- 1.3 on social protection
- 2.8 on agricultural practices that strengthen resilience and adaptation
- 2.10 on addressing humanitarian food emergencies
- 2.11 on food price volatility
- 13.2 on building resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-induced hazards
- 13.3 on climate change adaptation strategies in development plans

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Rationale

Disasters and resilience under a Poverty goal – priority outcome target

‘Getting to zero’ on poverty and, crucially, staying there, [involves](#) a three-pronged approach of: tackling chronic poverty, stopping descents into poverty, and sustaining escapes from poverty. There is wide [agreement](#) that it is shocks, together with low levels of resilience, that play a major role in pushing households below the poverty line and keeping them there. This is clear in [evidence](#) from Haiti, Pakistan, the Philippines and elsewhere.

Major disasters have systemic impacts on poverty as hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people can be affected simultaneously. Recurrent, localized disasters erode wealth and livelihoods of poor people and cumulatively have even greater impact. Some DRR targets therefore must be **people-centred** and ensure a focus on the poorest and most marginalised people, who bear the highest burden of disasters. Efforts must focus on protecting livelihoods and productive assets as well as lives. A DRR target under a poverty goal creates the right incentives to address these needs.

DRR targets must cover *all* hazards (hydro-meteorological and geophysical) in *both* urban and rural areas. Whilst recognising the particular challenges of accelerating urbanisation, 75 per cent of poor people in the developing world currently live in rural areas, and are particularly exposed to recurrent, localised disasters. Similarly, whilst water-related disasters are the most numerous, earthquakes and tsunamis can be catastrophic. It is therefore not appropriate to put DRR targets exclusively under a cities or water goal.

Current target 1.6 has changed from previous drafts. It is now more process-orientated, less tangible and concise, and is likely to require redrafting. We propose a strong outcome-based target.

[Current 1.6] By 2030 strengthen early warning and disaster risk reduction systems and related capacities with the aim of building resilience and protecting the poor and those in vulnerable situations from disaster and shocks, including climate-related extreme events

[Our proposed 1.6] By 2030 reduce disaster losses and build the resilience of poor and vulnerable people to climate-related and other disasters and shocks

Care required when measuring losses: A clear and unambiguous target on disaster losses is required. Note that **mortality** is NOT an appropriate measure. It does not capture the physical, social, economic and psychological impacts that disasters have on survivors, many of which are long term impacts. Importantly, it is not a good proxy measure for disaster risk reduction. It is a good measure for preparedness, evacuation and early warning systems, but *not* for measures to reduce vulnerability and address the root causes of disaster risk. It does not capture any impact around loss of livelihoods and it is likely to continue the focus on major disasters (with high mortality) rather than the small-scale frequent disasters that relentlessly erode wealth and livelihoods.

In terms of **economic** losses, these would need to be measured relative to GDP, including at sub-national level, in order to ensure that risk was reduced across all areas of a country. As disasters are inherently sporadic, loss data would need to be a combination of actual data for recurrent events, and modelled data for rare extreme events (such as earthquakes, tsunamis).

We propose the following indicators:

- Social losses – numbers of people killed, injured, displaced, and directly affected in other ways; working days lost (to represent the impact on livelihoods); and school days lost (to represent the longer-term impact on poverty);

- Direct economic losses from disasters, as percentage of GDP (using actual and modelled data);
- Percentage of people covered by funded participatory resilience, adaptation, preparedness, and response mechanisms – including those to meet women’s needs and rights;
- Number of people pushed into poverty as a result of disasters (using panel and poll data);
- Loss of poor people's household assets from disasters and other shocks, as percentage of household income (using actual and modelled data);
- Percentage of poor people’s housing that is resistant to local hazards.

Disasters and resilience targets under the Economic Growth and Work goal

As well as being people-centred, targets also need to focus on **economic development and assets** in recognition of the serious impact of disasters on economies, as well as the fact that economics and finance are key drivers of both public and private actions. *The Future We Want* was right to highlight the need for ‘more coordinated and comprehensive strategies that integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation considerations into public and private investment.’ (para 188)

Over the last 20 years, economic losses from disasters [amounted](#) to around US\$3 trillion and are [doubling every decade](#). The drive for economic growth, increasing globalisation, and the search for lower costs, higher productivity and quick delivery is exposing companies and countries to more risk, as has been seen in Thailand, India and [elsewhere](#). Impacts can be far-reaching - [research](#) finds that a major uninsured disaster causes a loss in economic growth of two to three percent. Impacts can go way beyond borders - the 2010 floods in Thailand are [estimated](#) to have set back global industrial production by 2.5 per cent. Economic growth, on its own, is not a disaster mitigation policy.

Investment and growth strategies are never risk neutral - they can create, exacerbate or reduce risk. Economic progress and assets can only be sustainable if they are *resilient* to disasters and other shocks. Investments made today in assets and infrastructure will lock in risk for the future. Targets are required that will incentivise both ‘disaster-proofing’ of existing development and also preventing the creation of unacceptable levels of new risk.

Target 8.11 calls for resilient infrastructure, but it does not include public buildings, education and healthcare, nor is it very action-orientated or aspirational. We propose a new target.

[Current 8.11] Support the development of quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure for transport, energy, water and communications, in particular in developing countries with a focus on access for the rural and urban poor

[Our proposed 8.11] By 2030 x% of all key infrastructure - public buildings, healthcare, education, transport, energy, water and communications – is reliable, sustainable and resilient

Disasters and resilience targets under Cities and Human Settlements goal

Cities can be engines of growth; the density, connectivity and infrastructure of cities makes people more productive and more able to afford the measures needed to keep them safe. But unplanned or mismanaged urbanisation strips cities of their natural defences and exposes more people, particularly the poorest, to loss of life and property when a hazard occurs.

There is currently a disconnect between national economic promotion and growth policies and disaster risk management strategies. Public and private investment portfolios and trajectories need to change in order to bring environmental and social impacts in balance with economic benefits.

There is already good [evidence](#) that this works - Orion, which owns and operates one of the largest

electricity distribution networks in New Zealand, invested \$6 million in seismic protection that saved the company \$65 million in the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes.

Target 11.6 as proposed may be difficult to measure. We propose an alternative:

[Current 11.6] By 2020 increase by x% the number of human settlements adopting and implementing policies and plans towards resilience and adaptation to climate change and natural disasters

[Our proposed 11.6] By 2030 increase by x% the adaptive capacity of human settlements to manage risks and stresses of natural and man-made hazards.

This target could be measured using the following indicators:

- Broad participation in risk mapping, horizon scanning and disaster planning;
- Implementation/planning groups are reflective, self-critical, and able to apply learning;
- Implementation/planning groups are encouraged, facilitated and funded to experiment and innovate in risk reduction and response.

Further, this is such a key issue that we propose that the word ‘resilient’ be incorporated into the goal, as well as targets on housing and transport.

Goal 11: Build inclusive, safe, sustainable and resilient cities and human settlements.

11.1: By 2030 ensure universal access to adequate, resilient and affordable housing and basic services for all, and eliminate slum-like conditions everywhere

11.2: By 2030 provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, resilient and sustainable transport for all, expand public transport and improve road safety

Incorporating the impact of shocks in the chapeau

There is increasing evidence of the impact of shocks and stresses and how they can undermine hard-won development gains. Many of these systemic shocks and stresses are on the rise - such as climate change, volatility in food and commodity markets, environmental decline – and others, such as insecurity, are already at high levels.

The impact of these shocks was referenced many times in the *The Future We Want*, in paragraphs on food production and agriculture (111), food security (116), cities (135), oceans (156, 158), biodiversity (197), SIDS (178), desertification (205), and mountains (210). The need for strong actions to address these shocks is threaded throughout the document; key paragraphs include those on disaster risk reduction (186-189), climate change (190-192), and food price volatility (116-8).

The impact of such shocks and stresses needs to be reflected in the chapeau as, if left unchecked, they are a fundamental barrier to the achievement of the SDGs. We propose new language, taken from paragraph 178 of *The Future we Want*, to be inserted in the seventh paragraph:

“We recognize that each country faces specific challenges to achieve sustainable development, and we underscore the special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries and, in particular, African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing the middle-income countries. These challenges may include exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, including to a large range of impacts from climate change and potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters. Countries in situations of conflict also need special attention.”