



**Strategic Approach to Capacity
Development for Implementation of
the Sendai Framework for
Disaster Risk Reduction**

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Section 1: Understanding Capacity Development Obstacles & Challenges


SENDAI FRAMEWORK
FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 2015-2030

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Section 1: Understanding Capacity Development Obstacles & Challenges

Progress made towards DRR objectives set by the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA, 2005-2015) and its predecessors has saved countless lives and billions of dollars in property, protected livelihoods and economies, and otherwise reduced suffering across the globe.¹⁴ Despite these gains, significant disaster risk remains in all regions and all countries, most acutely those in the low- and middle-income categories.¹⁵ Coupled with the exacerbating effects of climate change, an increasing shift towards urban living, persistent social and economic inequality, and continued investment in hazard-prone areas, many countries are finding their progress towards controlling or reducing hazard risk has stagnated and even reversed despite ongoing and concerted efforts to address it.

International mechanisms for strategic advice, coordination and partnership development for DRR, such as the Global and Regional DRR Platforms, and relevant international and regional and national forums for cooperation have been instrumental in the development of policies and strategies and the advancement of knowledge and mutual learning. Overall, the HFA has been instrumental in raising public and institutional awareness, generating political commitment and focusing and catalysing actions by a wide range of stakeholders at all levels.¹⁶ The private sector and an increasing number of civil society organizations, as well as government ministries and offices not traditionally involved in disaster risk management (DRM), have recognized and acted to address global and national risk. The Sendai Framework gives each of these partners in the effort a clear understanding of where we need to go to achieve meaningful, lasting disaster resilience. The question that remains is: Do we have the capacity – the knowledge, skills, and resources - to make that happen?

¹⁴ UNISDR, 2015b. Paragraph 3.

¹⁵ "Twenty-five years after UN Member States adopted the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and ten years after the adoption of the HFA, global disaster risk has not been reduced significantly. While improvements in disaster management have led to dramatic reductions in mortality in some countries, economic losses are now reaching an average of US\$250 billion to US\$300 billion each year." UNISDR, 2015. P. 44.

¹⁶ UNISDR, 2015b. Paragraph 2.

Impact of Capacity Shortfalls on Disaster Risk Reduction Progress

We know that DRR capacity is short of what is required, and without adequate capacity in place and ongoing mechanisms to ensure its development, it will be impossible to achieve targets set by international agreements like the Sendai Framework and those that preceded it.¹⁷ The HFA Words into Action prominently highlights the importance of CD by stating in its third paragraph that:

“Capacity-development is a central strategy for reducing disaster risk. Capacity development is needed to build and maintain the ability of people, organizations and societies to manage their risks successfully themselves. This requires not only training and specialized technical assistance, but also the strengthening of the capacities of communities and individuals to recognize and reduce risks in their localities. It includes sustainable technology transfer, information exchange, network development, management skills, professional linkages and other resources. Capacity development needs to be sustained through institutions that support capacity-building and capacity maintenance as permanent ongoing objectives.”¹⁸

The Sendai Framework challenges all stakeholders to focus on establishing and increasing capacity to manage their country's disaster risk. Not one of the stated priorities or targets can be achieved unless CD issues and measures are made an integral part of the action agenda.¹⁹ Disaster risk management is a challenge faced by all stakeholders, not just nation and local disaster management and civil protection offices. While this point has been made clear in both policy and literature and is to a growing degree being accepted by individuals and organizations across all sectors, the associated challenge of developing adequate capacity remains. As such, there can be no expectation of meaningful progress towards the Sendai Framework goal, or those of any DRR effort, until nations and societies understand the capacities needed to perform the actions required, the gaps that remain, and what is needed to close them.

A Strategic Approach is Required

While there has been notable progress in the development of capacities to manage DRR in recent years, the gains have lagged in relation to other international development endeavours.²⁰ Explanations for deficiencies range from a lack of understanding of what capacity is needed (to address the required tasks) to deficient knowledge of and access to the resources required for implementation once requirements are known. Confounding these problems is the fact that the division of roles, responsibilities, and ownership of CD programmes are typically vague and

17 UNDP, 2010. P.1.

18 UNISDR, 2007. P. 4.

19 CADRI, 2011. P.6.

20 Morgan, 2006. P.4.

may even be differently understood by different stakeholders, and when programmes do exist they are seldom coordinated with ongoing CD within the DRR context and with other interrelated pursuits (e.g., SDGs and CCA).²¹ So pervasive is this problem, in fact, that CD for DRR efforts are oftentimes not even classified as or considered as such even by those most directly engaged in them.²²

Nations and societies require a means to improve the quantity, quality, and overall impact of CD for DRR programmes, whether to achieve the Sendai Framework targets or otherwise. There is a need for direction on a range of topics – from standardizing terminologies, principles, and concepts, to identifying approaches and best practices, and finally to enabling coordination, collaboration, and the sharing of information and lessons learned. Research discovered that efforts are “more likely to be effective when [CD is] identified as a goal in the planning state and based on reviews of existing capacity and capacity needs and a consideration of the institutional and external contexts.”²³ This applies whether the project is focused on CD or some other pursuit. CD activities need to be included in project design and budget, such as identifying which components should be marked as CD activities including any informal CD that is expected such as continual learning through implementation.

CD for DRR Obstacles and Challenges

1. Insufficient understanding/appreciation of DRR-specific CD needs
2. Over-reliance on training and education
3. A lack of access to or existence of facilities, programmes, or resources to support awareness
4. Failing to provide support for or access to CD for DRR
5. Insufficient availability of resources
6. Little or no local ownership of CD programmes and projects
7. Insufficient focus on sub-national capacity
8. Lack of standardized CD for DRR evaluation indicators
9. Lack of general awareness and knowledge of risk drivers and the stakeholders' DRR roles (including at the local level)
10. A lack of understanding of existing legal instruments
11. A focus on non-conflict areas

The Sendai Framework identifies in Paragraph 9 the need for a more strategic approach to DRR:

“The gaps indicate a need to develop an action-oriented framework that Governments and relevant stakeholders can implement in a supportive and complementary manner, and which helps to identify disaster risks to be managed and guides investment to improve resilience.”

The development of capacity must align seamlessly with those efforts. The World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) noted that this is not typically the case,

21 Hagelsteen and Becker, 2014. P. 94.

22 GFDRR, 2016. P.8.

23 GFDRR, 2016. P.9.

however. A 2016 report describing World Bank risk-related activities found that, “despite the level of investment (on boosting the capacity of developing countries to better understand emerging disaster risks, reduce their vulnerabilities to natural hazards, and adapt to climate change, capacity [development] is often considered secondary to larger activities;” and that, “there is little systemic knowledge about the effectiveness and long-term impact of capacity [development] activities [...] within the broader disaster risk management (DRM) community.”²⁴

Obstacles and Challenges to Effective Capacity Development for Disaster Risk Reduction

While there are many reasons why gaps exist in DRR capacity, there are several that have particularly-strong influence across multiple contexts. Awareness of these common obstacles and challenges is instrumental to the CD planning process in terms of closing the gaps for which such efforts have become necessary. The following list has been developed through a consultative process. (See Box “CD for DRR Obstacles and Challenges”. More detail on each of these can be found in Appendix 4, and in Appendix 9 as usable checklist.)

Linking CD for DRR to Agenda 2030, The Paris Agreement, and Other Initiatives

Just as there are strong and direct linkages between the occurrence of major disasters, the existence of a changing global climate, and the challenges to SD gains,^{25, 26} there are strong and direct linkages between DRR, CCA, and the SDGs. Each of these policy goals aims to minimize human, structural, economic, and environmental harm through reductions in risk and vulnerability, and to establish long-term resilience. At the conceptual and theoretical levels, the associations, influences, and interdependencies that characterize the interrelationships are well-defined and documented.

It is therefore neither possible nor practical to approach CD for DRR in any manner that fails to consider the parallels and influences that exist between these connected pursuits. Considerable progress has been made in achieving more coordinated action, and where possible efforts have been made to initiate integration across government and among related sectors. At the same time, because these disciplines have until recently evolved largely independent of each other, in practice they are not often well-integrated despite the obvious benefits. The resulting redundancies, gaps, inefficiencies, and at the most basic level, confusion, can significantly impact a country or community’s ability to achieve progress on any or all the three pursuits. At the national level, there may be different people, different offices and agencies, and different

24 GFDRR, 2016. P. 1.

25 “Ten years after the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action, disasters continue to undermine efforts to achieve sustainable development.” UNISDR, 2015b. Paragraph 10.

26 “Capacity development for [DRR] is an important process to substantially reduce disaster losses, which threaten sustainable development and the achievement of the [MDGs].” Hagelsteen and Becker, 2014. P. 94.

focal points for each pursuit, with little coordination existing between them. And because individual policies and investments typically support DRR, CCA, or SDGs independently of each other, extensively-siloed structures exist, all of which stands in stark contrast to the breadth of their conceptual and contextual interrelationships and the commonality of their outcomes.

To enhance progress and efficiency in all three areas, there remains an acute need to integrate DRR, CCA, and SDGs programmes and activities where possible and practicable, including in the development of technical and functional capacities. CD for DRR must to the extent possible align, and if possible integrate, with those occurring in pursuit of CCA and SDGs. Stakeholders must understand the links that exist, as well as the influence their actions have on these parallel goals.