



This review of the Sendai Framework is part of an analysis commissioned to IIED by Cities Alliance that aims to help a range of urban development actors understand how six global agreements can support the advancement of sustainable urban development.



The Sendai Framework

A non-binding global agreement for reducing disaster risks in all countries and at all levels, [the Sendai Framework](#) was adopted at the Third UN Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Sendai, Japan in March 2015 and succeeds the [Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015](#).

It promotes a shift from disaster response to disaster risk reduction and management and outlines four priorities: (1) Understanding disaster risk; (2) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; (3) Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience and enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response; and (4) To “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The Sendai Framework links systematically with other global agreements, for instance by using common indicators with some of the SDGs. It emphasises how DRR effectiveness depends on good links with what the other agendas seek to address, as well as the key role of DRR in achieving the goals of other agendas, such as climate change adaptation.

Strengths

While the text of the framework is relevant to all government levels, it mentions many issues relevant to cities (local capacity for planning and land-use management, legislation, regulations, finance and local governance), and there are numerous references to local and regional governments. The preamble identifies poorly planned and rapid urbanisation as a key underlying risk factor that was not sufficiently addressed in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework.

The Sendai and Hyogo Frameworks got many national, local and regional governments – including those with specific responsibilities for urban areas – to take DRR seriously and report on progress.

It explicitly supports the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) ‘[Making Cities Resilient](#): My city is getting ready’ campaign to enhance public awareness in understanding disaster risk. This campaign recognises ‘Role Model Cities’ and ‘champions’ as influential examples of a commitment to resilience building and provides toolkits that local governments can use to inform and plan their activities.

The Sendai Framework mentions the need to mainstream disaster risk assessments into urban planning and development, including informal and non-permanent housing, and to develop and implement inclusive policies such as access to housing.

Challenges

The Sendai Framework lacks a coherent narrative on building resilience into the urbanisation process and the specific roles of local authorities and other urban actors in disaster risk reduction. While it is strong on local government roles and responsibilities, it provides little elaboration on how cities and urban governance shape what is needed and what is possible. For instance, it makes no mention of the need to address the threats that insecure tenure and eviction pose to people living in informal settlements, or how upgrading informal settlements can reduce disaster risk as an extension of existing development practices.

There is also too little attention to building the capacities of local and regional governments and to integrating DRR into local regulatory, legal and policy frameworks and land use management. It is weak on the contributions of civil society and on measures that are essential for effective DRR and development for low income urban dwellers, such as upgrading and risk reduction in informal settlements.

Achieving the goals of the Sendai Framework will require more than just better technical assistance and knowledge and skills transfer. It also needs reforms to risk governance in urban areas that strengthen collaboration and partnerships between risk managers and local and regional governments, especially between development actors involved in land-use planning, environmental management, informal settlement upgrading, and service provision.