

Chapter 1

Integrating the Sendai Framework into UN Strategies for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience: Addressing Vulnerability and Promoting Interlinkages

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Abstract

This chapter explores the integration of the Sendai Framework into the strategies of the United Nations (UN) for disaster risk reduction and resilience. Focusing on the critical issue of vulnerability, the chapter discusses the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework and its implications for the UN's disaster risk initiatives. It examines the outcomes of COP 27, emphasizing the establishment of a loss and damage fund, the institutional arrangement of the Santiago network, and the action plan for early warnings. The chapter further highlights the importance of defining vulnerability and presents the concept as a pathway for interlinkages within the UN system. It explores the development of a vulnerability index to characterize risk levels and promote equitable distribution of climate finance. Finally, the chapter emphasizes the need for increased collaboration across UN conferences to foster momentum and prevent a sectoral approach to addressing climate-related challenges.

Keywords: Sendai Framework, disaster risk reduction, vulnerability, UN strategies, interlinkages, loss and damage fund, Santiago network, early warnings, climate finance, vulnerability index, climate justice, UN cohesion.

The Sendai Framework and the Midterm Review

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 is a global agreement adopted by UN member states in 2015. It outlines a comprehensive approach to disaster risk reduction, aiming to reduce the impact of disasters on individuals, communities, and nations. The framework recognizes that disasters are not solely natural events but also the result of socio-economic and environmental factors. It emphasizes the need for risk reduction strategies that integrate scientific, technical, and traditional knowledge to enhance resilience.

The Sendai Midterm Review holds significant importance as it marks the halfway point of the Sendai Framework's implementation. This review provides an opportunity to assess progress, identify gaps and challenges, and redefine priorities for the remaining period until 2030. It offers a chance to reflect on the achievements thus far and set the stage for accelerated action in disaster risk reduction.

Contextualizing disaster risk reduction within the global climate context is essential due to the interconnection between climate change and disasters. Climate change exacerbates the frequency

and intensity of various hazards, such as hurricanes, floods, droughts, and heatwaves, leading to increased vulnerabilities and risks. The impacts of climate change, coupled with socio-economic factors, disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including those in low-income countries, small island developing states, and marginalized communities.

Recognizing this interrelationship, the Sendai Framework emphasizes the importance of integrating disaster risk reduction efforts with climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. It underscores the need to address both the causes and consequences of disasters, fostering resilience and sustainable development in the face of a changing climate. By considering disaster risk reduction within the global climate context, stakeholders can enhance their preparedness, early warning systems, and attention to vulnerable populations, thereby reducing the impacts of climate-related disasters.

Outcomes of COP27 and their Implications for DRR

The intertwining of disaster resilience with climate change is undeniable, as climate change engenders disasters necessitating preparedness, early warning systems, and dedicated attention to vulnerable populations.

This aspect assumes particular significance following COP27 and in anticipation of COP 28, the SDG Summit, Our Common Agenda, and other UN conferences. To discern how DRR has transcended its official status within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), let us delve into some of the outcomes of COP 27.

While expectations for more ambitious language, especially pertaining to emission reductions, were widespread, there are several positive takeaways concerning disaster risk reduction from COP27 that warrant discussion. The first and foremost significant outcome was the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund in Sharm El-Sheikh. Loss and damage is directly related to vulnerability, with vulnerable populations, who usually contribute the least to its causal factors, being the ones currently grappling with the most acute loss and damage. Vulnerability finds expression in various UN processes. Defining vulnerability proves challenging, yet it offers an ideal avenue for establishing interconnections through a common UN index, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

The second related outcome pertains to the institutional and operational arrangement of the Santiago network. This arrangement facilitates the provision of technical assistance to vulnerable countries in order to prevent, minimize, and address losses and damages. The prevention aspect directly aligns with risk reduction, thus highlighting the synergies prevalent within the UN climate domain.

The final outcome to emphasize is the formulation of a plan to actualize the "Early Warnings for All" initiative at COP 27. This initiative endeavors to ensure that every individual is safeguarded by early warning systems by the year 2027. Naturally, countries must honor this commitment before the impacts become palpable. Nevertheless, this represents another remarkable outcome,

signifying collaboration between the UN General Assembly, UNFCCC stakeholders, and UNDR.

Contextualizing Vulnerability and its Relevance to DRR and Climate Change

Returning to the hard-won outcome of loss and damage discussed earlier, I wish to underscore vulnerability once again as an essential aspect of the fund as we approach COP 28 and gaze into the future. Vulnerability may appear as an elusive concept, which is where the rejuvenated project conducted by the ReEngergize Disaster Risk Reduction and Resiliency (DR3) project assumes significance, offering an opportunity for enhanced collaboration across the UN.

UNDR has defined vulnerability as the condition determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes that augment the susceptibility of individuals, communities, assets, or systems to the impacts of hazards. While this definition may appear prolix, grappling with the intricacies of vulnerability proves to be a worthwhile endeavor. The DR3 team are currently working on developing a vulnerability index for various UN stakeholders, encompassing a set of indicators to ascertain their level of risk. Such an index could facilitate the equitable distribution of climate finance, both from the loss and damage mechanism and throughout the broader UN System, to those in need.

Although existing vulnerability index models are available, including one for small island developing states, they could be bolstered and expanded to incorporate additional indicators, such as resilience. Currently, there is only one index for a specific group, namely the UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Index.

Other vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, and people with disabilities, do not always fit within these indices. The DR3 team is employing quantitative data, such as flood exposure and heatwave risk, to incorporate within this index. However, researchers have also discovered that qualitative data assumes a critical role, perhaps even surpassing numerical data points, in identifying those most at risk and working towards achieving climate justice. As part of our ongoing research, we aim to develop a multidimensional index that amalgamates various vulnerable groups across countries and regions, subsequently culminating in a globally accepted index within the UN—a prime exemplification of interlinkages.

One way to promote unity within the UN System is through the development of a Common Vulnerability Index. This index would provide a standardized framework for assessing vulnerability across various groups, regions, and sectors. By incorporating indicators that capture both quantitative and qualitative data, such an index can offer a comprehensive understanding of vulnerability and guide targeted interventions and resource allocation.

A Common Vulnerability Index would facilitate collaboration among UN stakeholders by creating a shared language and framework for addressing vulnerability. It would enable the equitable distribution of climate finance and resources, ensuring that those most in need receive the support required to enhance their resilience and reduce their vulnerability to climate-related hazards.

Disaster risk reduction within the context of the Sendai Framework presents a significant opportunity for enhanced collaboration. As we look ahead to COP28 and beyond, the establishment of a common vulnerability index can foster unity within the UN System, providing a more robust framework for determining the allocation of financial resources.

How the Midterm Review Can Inform the Global Stocktake

Another opportunity for enhanced collaboration is through comparing the two framework review processes within UNDR and the UNFCCC through the Sendai Midterm Review and the Global Stocktake. The two are crucial processes within the international framework of addressing climate change and disaster risk reduction. The Sendai Midterm Review assesses the progress made in implementing the Sendai Framework, a comprehensive global strategy for disaster risk reduction, while the Global Stocktake evaluates the collective efforts of countries in meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

The MTR and GST processes offer a unique opportunity to forge connections and synergies between disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Both the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement recognize the interlinkages between climate change and disaster risk, highlighting the need for coordinated action and shared responsibilities.

By aligning the outcomes and findings of the Sendai Midterm Review with the Global Stocktake, policymakers and stakeholders can gain a comprehensive understanding of the progress made in addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change and disaster risk. This alignment enables a more integrated and coherent approach to resilience-building and risk reduction, as well as identifying gaps and areas for improvement.

Moreover, the Sendai Midterm Review can provide valuable insights and data on the impacts of climate-related disasters, their social and economic consequences, and the effectiveness of measures implemented to reduce risk. These insights can inform the Global Stocktake process, contributing to a more accurate assessment of climate change impacts, adaptation efforts, and the overall ambition of countries in meeting their climate commitments.

Furthermore, connecting the Sendai Midterm Review with the Global Stocktake can foster cross-cutting collaboration among different stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, and the scientific community. This collaboration can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices in addressing climate-related disasters and building resilience at local, national, and global levels.

In conclusion, linking the Sendai Midterm Review with the Global Stocktake strengthens the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. This alignment allows for a comprehensive assessment of progress, a more effective response to the interconnected challenges of climate change and disaster risk, and enhanced collaboration among

diverse stakeholders. By harnessing the synergies between these processes, we can work towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

Interlinkages and Collaboration within the UN System

Looking ahead to COP28 and beyond, finding interlinkages and fostering collaboration within the UN System, particularly in the domains of disaster risk reduction and climate change, is of utmost importance for addressing the complex and interconnected challenges we face. These challenges, such as climate-related disasters, loss and damage, and vulnerability, cut across multiple sectors and require holistic and coordinated approaches.

By recognizing and capitalizing on the interlinkages between disaster risk reduction and climate change, the UN System can achieve greater synergy and efficiency in its efforts. The two fields are intrinsically linked, as climate change intensifies the frequency and severity of disasters, while disaster risk reduction measures contribute to climate change adaptation and resilience-building.

In addition to the aforementioned Common Vulnerability Index, diverse panel events play a vital role in inspiring interlinkages and moving beyond a sectoral approach. These events bring together stakeholders from different backgrounds, including youth, civil society, academics, and government officials, fostering dialogue and knowledge exchange. By incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise, these events can uncover innovative solutions, promote cross-sectoral collaboration, and encourage holistic approaches to addressing climate change and disaster risk.

Knowledge sharing helps break down silos and challenge the notion that climate change and disaster risk reduction are isolated issues. This book serves as an example of the value of diverse perspectives in the space. They highlight the interconnected nature of these challenges and underscore the need for collaborative and integrated approaches. By showcasing successful initiatives and best practices from different sectors, these events can inspire and motivate stakeholders to work together towards shared goals.

In conclusion, finding interlinkages and promoting collaboration within the UN System, particularly in the realms of disaster risk reduction and climate change, is crucial for effective and sustainable responses to global challenges. A Common Vulnerability Index can foster unity by providing a standardized framework for assessing vulnerability and guiding interventions. Meanwhile, diverse panel events can inspire interlinkages and move beyond a sectoral approach, bringing together diverse stakeholders to share knowledge and promote holistic solutions. By embracing these approaches, the UN System can enhance its collective efforts and pave the way for a more resilient and sustainable future.