

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION INITIAL COVID-19 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

OVERVIEW

The ongoing COVID-19 outbreak is an unprecedented event in modern human history, requiring the United Nations system to work as One UN to support countries.

The UN Secretary-General has asked the international community to focus on three critical areas of action: 1) Tackling the health emergency; 2) Social impact and the economic response and recovery; and 3) Recover better.

The **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)** highlights biological hazards, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as major risks for the 21st century. While the World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 a pandemic, its underlying factors, vulnerabilities and impacts go well beyond the health sector. It is, in fact, an example of systemic risk: when a hazard leads not only to negative effects in parts of the system but also threatens the failure of the entire system. With its cascading and devastating impacts, COVID-19 demonstrates the inter-connected nature of risk today, highlighting the urgent need for a concerted global effort to accelerate risk reduction activities.

The global response to COVID-19 will yield critical lessons and unprecedented experiences that will help shape future risk reduction policies and action worldwide. **UNDRR, as the UN focal point on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), is committed to help countries, the UN system and partners learn from global, regional and country level efforts to prevent, respond and recover from COVID-19.**

This UNDRR strategy emphasizes **analysis, knowledge-exchange, partnership and advocacy** as a contribution to the UN's efforts to respond to the global pandemic. It focuses on the need to protect the most vulnerable groups, while also calling for a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure all levels of society are reached with the appropriate prevention, risk reduction, risk management measures.

This UNDRR strategy is fully aligned with the UN Secretary-General's critical areas of action to address the current pandemic.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. **Evidence and learning on COVID-19 prevention, risk reduction and risk management** are generated and disseminated for improved policy and practice. (UNDRR Strategic Objective 1)
2. **Biological hazards (pandemics) are integrated in disaster risk reduction** and development planning and programming, including in the development of national and local DRR strategies (target E of the Sendai Framework¹). (UNDRR Strategic Objective 2)

¹ Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020

3. **UNDRR partnerships are leveraged and key stakeholders are supported** to address the impacts of COVID-19 and to support countries to recover better with a focus on the socio-economic impact on vulnerable groups. (UNDRR Strategic Objective 3)
4. **Information and advice are disseminated** to key audiences to prompt action that will prevent the spread of COVID-19, mitigate its socio-economic impacts and support countries to recover better. (UNDRR Enabler E1)

ACTIVITIES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: Evidence and learning on COVID-19 prevention, risk reduction and risk management are generated and disseminated for improved policy and practice.

1. Case studies, lessons learned and policy guidelines on the risk management of the COVID-19 pandemic are developed and shared globally, regionally and at the country level through webinars and other mediums in particular with the Sendai Focal Points.
2. A detailed case study on COVID-19 is developed and featured in the next Global Assessment Report (GAR2022). It will examine how governments (individually and collectively) could have addressed such a systemic risk differently, so that the outbreak and its impacts could have been mitigated.
3. Regional Assessment Reports on the status of disaster risk (RARs) under development and planned to be issued during 2020-2021 by Regional Offices incorporate learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Guidance and tools are developed to support reporting on COVID-19 through the Sendai Framework Monitor.
5. Impacts of COVID-19 are collected and analyzed through the data submitted to the Sendai Framework Monitor and will support the evidence-based DRR policy making in partnership with academia and the science and technology community.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: Biological hazards (pandemics) are integrated in disaster risk reduction and development planning and programming, including in the development of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies (target E of the Sendai Framework).

1. Guidance and tools are developed and disseminated to better reflect biological hazards and risk into regional, national and local DRR strategies and strengthen systemic risk management, including in the achievement of Target (e).
2. Guidance and support provided to regional intergovernmental organisations and regional economic commissions for the management of risk related to COVID-19.
3. With UN partners, guidance and tools are developed and disseminated to strengthen incorporation of biological hazards in Common Country Analysis (CCAs) and prevention, preparedness and risk management measures into UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and joint work plans.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: UNDRR Partnerships are leveraged and key partners are supported to address the impacts of COVID-19 and to support countries to recover better with a focus on the socio-economic impact on vulnerable groups.

1. Guidance and technical support provided on the understanding and overcoming of socio-economic impact on vulnerable groups including but not limited to displaced communities engaging in UN system-wide global and regional efforts to prevent and respond to COVID-19.
2. Guidance and tools are provided to the private sector (SMEs) to develop business continuity plans and strengthen resilience-building measures.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Information is disseminated to key audiences to prompt action that will prevent the spread of COVID-19, mitigate its socio-economic impacts and support countries to recover better. (Enabler 1)

1. Global communication campaign (“Prevention Saves Lives”) promotes focused attention on most-at-risk groups throughout all stages of COVID-19 crisis.²

² More details can be found in the UNDRR COVID19 Communications Strategy