

GNDR's Policy Analysis & Call-to-Action for the Sendai Mid-Term Review High-Level Meeting, May 2023

Convened by the President of the General Assembly, the High-Level Meeting (HLM) of the General Assembly on the Midterm Review of the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (HLM) will take place from 18-19 May 2023 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The HLM provides a platform for Member States, the United Nations system partners, and other stakeholders to reflect on the findings and recommendations of the Midterm Review, examine context shifts and emerging issues since 2015, and identify course corrections and new initiatives to more effectively address the systemic nature of risk, and realise the outcomes and goals of the Sendai Framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and other agreements, frameworks, and conventions.

Policy Analysis

GNDR's policy messages for the Sendai Framework Mid-Term Review have been developed from our member's reflections on the progress of the Sendai Framework which were collected in 2022 and developed into this report: [Civil Society Consultation of the Mid-Term Review of the Sendai Framework Implementation](#)

The key findings in this report developed the [call to action](#) that GNDR took to the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and fed directly into the Mid-Term Review Process. Our policy messages at the Sendai Mid Term Review HLM remain the same, with the [8 key demands](#) first set out at the Global Platform for DRR in 2022.

Can we see our member's voices in these topline findings?

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Yes. When analysing our member's reflections on the progress of the Sendai framework against the findings presented by UNDRR, we can identify where our civil society report and call to action have contributed to and influenced these findings.

However, there are some of our call-to-action messages that we feel are not coming through strong enough. We acknowledge that it is very encouraging to see messages that have come from our global policy and influencing work reflected in the Sendai Mid-Term Review report.

We thank UN DRR and the Mid Term Review team for meaningfully engaging with us and civil society throughout the process. We acknowledge that the next step will be to support member states to commit to addressing the findings.

We call on member states to work with civil society and take a whole-of-society approach to meaningfully reduce disaster risk and reach the Sendai targets by 2030.

Civil Society's Perspective Vs. Official Sendai Mid-Term Review Findings

Interestingly, our member's civil society perspective appears to be more positive than the findings set out in the official UNDRR Mid-Term Review Report. When asked to reflect on the specific progress of the priorities and targets set out by the Sendai Framework, members from across the three regions feel that:

- Priority 1 (understanding risk) has made significant progress.
- Both Priority 2 (risk governance) and Priority 3 (investing in disaster risk reduction) are felt to not be progressing well enough.
- Reflections on priority 4 (preparedness and efforts to build back better) felt that some progress was being made, but not enough.

Whereas, the findings in the UN DRR MTR report show that:

- For Priority 1 (understanding risk): risk is better understood but not to an adequate level.
- Priority two(risk governance) has made significant progress at the national level, however very limited progress at the local level.
- For Priority 3 (investing in disaster risk reduction) inadequate progress has been made on risk financing.
- On priority 4, (preparedness and efforts to build back better) progress has been made but significant opportunities have been missed in building back better.

Civil Society Recommendations

Our members also highlighted a several key recommendations required to reach the Sendai Framework targets by 2030. We are pleased to see that a number of these have been included in the MTR report.

However, we also note that there is also a need to strengthen messaging and commitment on a some key recommendations. Here, GNDR commits to taking these messages to the High-Level Meeting and advocating for stronger commitment to be made.

1. The need for greater transparency in reporting

- A key challenge highlighted by our members was the need for greater transparency in reporting and monitoring member states' implementation of the Sendai Framework.
- Therefore, these MTR findings are a positive step towards acknowledging and tackling this.
- Here, we do see our message coming through that to support and hold member states to account for progress on the Sendai Framework, civil society needs to have access to transparent reporting on the progress being made.

2. The need for local action, local voice, and local investment

- The MTR top-line findings do include a significant lack of progress being made at the local level and a key recommendation going forward calls on all stakeholders to promote adaptive risk governance at the local level including the participation of local voice and traditional knowledge.
- Here, we see the inclusion of our call to listen to local voices. However, investing in risk reduction and the local level has not been specifically included.

3. DRR in conflict-affected states.

- We can also clearly see the acknowledgement of needing greater focus on bringing DRR into humanitarian and peace-building efforts.
- However, here, we would have liked to see specific reference to fragile and conflict affected states and we will keep advocating for this.

4. Person's most at risk

- The MTR topline findings also acknowledge that not enough is being done to specifically address the vulnerabilities of persons most at-risk.
- Whilst we would have liked to have seen stronger language on issues such as gender equality and inclusion, we see this as a key entry point for our advocacy around the need to meaningfully include inclusion across all areas of the Sendai Framework.

- Furthermore, we acknowledge that a commitment to developing a specific gender action plan for the Sendai Framework has been included in the [draft zero political declaration](#).

5. Strengthen coordination and coherence for risk-informed development

- The MTR findings have identified that cross-country cooperation is not being adequately reported. This is essential to be able to assess levels of coordination between member states and how it is impacting disaster risk governance. .
- However, when reflecting on the UN system's progress it is clear we see the importance of integrating risk reduction across the UN system and the importance of including the whole-of-society approach and non-member state stakeholders coming through.
- This again is a clear entry point for our GNDR advocacy messaging.

6. Learning for COVID-19

- Learning from COVID-19 and the risk governance failings that came through in the global pandemic was deemed essential by our members.
- Whilst the Sendai MTR report (1) does acknowledge COVID-19 as a significant challenge impacting progress under the Sendai and (2) states that there have been significant missed opportunities in building back better, it does not specifically call for member states to review the risk governance failings and learnings that contributed to the high loss of life in the pandemic.

7. Young People

- Meaningfully including young people in disaster risk reduction has been outlined as essential by civil society.
- Whilst including young people is implied through the whole-of-society approach and inclusion of all has been included, specific language on the need to commit to meaningfully include young people in risk governance and how to do this has not come through as strongly as hoped.

Summary

We can see clear elements of our call to action and civil society recommendations coming through in the Mid-Term Review summary paper and briefing session.

Specifically on:

- Listening to the community & empowering community-level leadership
- The importance of the all-of-society approach
- The importance of addressing disaster displacement

- The need for strengthened early warning systems for all
- The recognition of climate change as a risk driver
- The recognition of needing to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic, strengthen health systems, and understand the risk governance failures.
- The need to improve coordination and collaboration
- The importance of meaningful inclusion at all levels of risk governance

However, we would like to see stronger language on:

- Investing at the local level
- Empowering women leaders
- Empowering young people

We also acknowledge two key elements that appear to be missing from the findings and draft zero political declaration. Both of which we call on the UN system, member states and the support of all stakeholders to address. These include:

- Specific mention of civil society's role, although it is hinted at in the recognition of all non-state actor's roles and the importance of the whole-of-society approach
- Conflict as a disaster risk driver and the need to support conflict-affected states to develop disaster risk governance.

Reflections on the draft zero member state political declaration

Whilst it is positive to see civil society recommendations coming through the Sendai Framework MTR, the real policy influence will only be seen if member states commit to addressing and acting on these recommendations. Ultimately, working with the UNDRR team, the SEM, and actively engaging in the MTR process, we are aiming to influence member state commitment, financing and policy change.

UN member states have developed a zero-draft political declaration leading up to the High-Level Meeting in New York. This is what we are trying to influence, with one final push in these high-level discussions. GNDR, through the stakeholder engagement mechanism (SEM) has been provided with the opportunity to review and feedback on this zero draft statement. A quick analysis of this zero-draft statement shows that member states are positively recommitting to achieving the Sendai Framework targets.

Here, the draft zero declaration acknowledges the importance of increasing investment in disaster risk reduction. We can see our civil society and SEM call-to-action messages coming through in the following areas: (1) taking a whole-of-society approach (2) the importance of local knowledge and expertise (3) inclusion and active participation and leadership of

communities, women, young people, people with disabilities and older people, including a specific gender action plan (4) the need to increase support to the local level, both local authorities and local communities, (5) the need for nature-based solutions and (6) the importance of early warning for all.

However, we would like to see more commitment made on how member states will invest at the local level, how local expertise and leadership will be fostered, and the whole-of-society approach meaningfully operationalised.

We also note again, that the political statement fails to include the importance of supporting conflict-affected and fragile states with disaster risk reduction governance. Whilst bridging the humanitarian-development divide is noted, the commitment to support fragile and conflict affected states is essential, yet missing from this declaration.

CalltoAction

We still have work to do to champion our 8 call-to-action messages in the lead-up to the Sendai Mid-Term Review High-Level Meeting in May 2023 and the UNGA in September 2023. We cannot take for granted that member states will include these key recommendations in their final political declaration and commitments going forward.

Therefore we must continue to champion the following 8 key call-to-action messages that our members have identified. We call on our members and allies to come together to do the same in the lead-up to and at the Sendai High-Level Meeting in May.

1. Listen to the community

- Meaningfully include local leaders in the implementation and monitoring of the Sendai Framework
- Institutionalise including community voice, knowledge, and recommendations in decision making
- Promote the analysis of the systemic nature of risk and risk-informed development from the perspective of the communities most at risk

2. Invest at the local level

- Prioritise making sure risk reduction finance reaches the local level
- Empower and finance locally-led action for risk reduction. Include local leaders in decision-making spaces at local, national and global spaces. Meaningfully include local leaders in deciding how risk reduction budgets are spent at the local level

- Integrate climate-related hazards and their impacts in local DRR planning

3. Strengthen coordination and coherence for risk-informed development. Recognise the role that Civil Society Organisations have to lead collaboration

- Accept and strengthen the role of local CSOs in convening the all-of-society approach to effectively achieve Sendai Framework commitments
- Recognise the systemic nature of risk and adopt a coherent approach across all global frameworks for effective risk-informed development, risk reduction, and resilience building for the communities most at risk
- Link DRR decision-making to climate change negotiations. Specifically to loss and damage and the need for the global north to increase financial support to the global south
- Incorporate the understanding of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 6th report in the strategy of implementing the second part of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR)

4. Recognise and tackle gender inequality as a driver of risk

- Recognise gender inequality as a barrier to achieving the Sendai Framework targets and invest in action to meaningfully tackle gender inequality for strengthened disaster risk reduction
- Empower women leaders to meaningfully engage in disaster risk reduction at all levels

5. Transition from seeing inclusion as a stand-alone topic

- Recognize the intersectional dynamics of marginalisation in relation to risk
- Integrate inclusion across all areas of the Sendai Framework

6. Learn from Covid 19

- Understand and address the weakness in governance that COVID-19 demonstrated
- Learn from the socio, economic and political elements of risk reduction highlighted by the pandemic
- Include biological disasters, such as pandemics in the Sendai Framework going forward
- Work to ensure everyone has access to the Covid-19 vaccine

7. Strengthen DRR governance in conflict-affected states

- Support fragile states to implement disaster risk reduction governance, policy, and plans
- Invest in understanding which fragile states do not meaningfully include DRR governance, understand the barriers, and identify solutions

- Increase support to communities most at risk living in contexts of conflict, fragility, and displacement

8. Involve youth in disaster risk reduction

- Meaningfully include youth leaders in all levels of disaster risk reduction decision making

Civil Society Reflections: One year on from consultation

Reflecting on the fact that our civil society consultation was conducted a year ago, we recently went back to our members to ask if there are any additional messages they feel are essential to take to the HLM.

Here, our members reaffirmed our 8 call-to-action messages and support the continued efforts towards localisation and risk-informed development.

Three additional recommendations were made to complement the existing call-to-action messages:

1. In listening to the local level, our members would like local governments and authorities to be specifically included. Here, it is essential that local governments are coordinating with local communities on the front line of risk
2. In the call to invest in the local level. The specific inclusion of investing in risk communication is essential, particularly in ensuring early warning for all
3. In reporting on the progress of the Sendai Framework, member states are requested to monitor their progress more systematically and regularly, in open consolidation with civil society

In reflection of these call-to-action messages, GNDR commits to supporting the UN system and member states. Specifically, we commit to prioritising the following key actions and we call on fellow civil society organisations to collaborate to do the same.

1. Listen to communities: we will amplify local perceptions of risk and integrate them with scientific analyses of risks at the local level to realise risk-informed development
2. Invest at the local level: we will act as a catalyst for local leadership in anticipating and tackling increasing disaster risks
3. Improve coordination and coherence for risk-informed development: we will coordinate civil society voices and perceptions on DRR at local, national, regional, and global levels

4. Empower women leaders. Recognise and tackle gender inequality as a driver of risk: we will capture and communicate evidence of how such inequality leads to increasing disaster risks and promote the importance of women leadership at all levels we work in
5. Strengthen DRR governance in conflict-affected states: we will unpack the relationship between conflict and increases in vulnerability towards multiple hazards and deteriorating social capital
6. Involve children and youth in disaster risk reduction: we will intentionally invest in youth leadership and their aspiration for a resilient society
7. Learn from Covid 19: we will capture evidence of the cascading nature of risks and promote good practices on strengthening risk governance at the local level
8. Integrate inclusion across all levels. In assisting the transition from seeing inclusion as a standalone topic: we will mainstream inclusion in all DRR programmes as a collective CSO effort, globally

For more information on this policy analysis and call-to-action please contact the GNDR Policy Lead, Becky Murphy at rebecca.murphy@gndr.org