

The Sendai Engagement Mechanism Statement

General debate – HLPF 2020

COVID-19 shows that development gains can be lost in a matter of months, with millions of people worldwide falling back under the poverty line after decades of effort to improve their conditions. It has also revealed the precariousness of the systems upon which trade, food, energy, transportation, and social safety nets depend. Finally, the global pandemic has proven that **no individual, no community, and no nation is immune to disasters.**

It is time to acknowledge the impact disasters can have on development and the corresponding vulnerability of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) when they are not implemented through a prevention lens.

We can strengthen resilience for individuals, communities, and nations from the perspective of those most at risk by applying a preventive, gender and multicultural based, risk-informed approach to all development, decision-making, and accountability frameworks as we pursue a holistic, cross-sector, and integrated approach to the SDGs. Approaches that governments choose can radically transform the sectors that they seek to save and introduce a shift towards risk-aware behaviors and decisions by all of us.

Therefore, the members of the Stakeholder Engagement Mechanism call on the United Nations and Member States to:

- 1. Strengthen multilateralism based on future thinking and long-term vision, democratic values, human rights, health equity, social equality, accessibility, social justice, and respect for nature.**

This moment requires a strengthened sense of global solidarity driven by sustainable development. Global systems driven by a financial profit motivated first only, rather than well-being and improved livelihoods, are among the main causes of fragile, unsustainable development.

- 2. Adopt risk-informed sustainable development at local, national, regional, and global levels.**

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) provides valuable guidance on how to implement risk-informed development. Following this guidance would ensure the prioritization of access to goods and services for all in need; require fail-safe systems in trade and supply lines; require that financial and other resources be allocated on short notice. Moreover, it will encourage members of a community to both be prepared and know where to turn for accurate guidance.

Reducing risk will entail addressing underlying factors that increase vulnerabilities. Disasters do not occur in silos, and communities face multiple threats simultaneously with connected underlying conditions. Risk can be caused by seemingly unexpected underlying factors (e.g., corruption as a factor for flooding); hence a comprehensive assessment of risk is essential.

This has to be done with a gender and multicultural perspective.

3. Implement a green, preventive approach as we build back better.

As countries recover from COVID-19, they are likely to revise existing policies, adopt new ones, update contingency plans, and reassess short and long-term risks. This approach should result in a reliable and effective cross-sectoral system, informed by local realities, owned by local actors, and adequately consulted upon and financed. Governments should strengthen their understanding of all aspects of risk and develop a comprehensive multi-hazard policy.

For this to work, the process has to be inclusive and participative and representatives of all of the population need to be involved: women, people with special needs, indigenous people, the elderly, etc.

4. Localize decision making and resource allocation for effective prevention, response, recovery, and preparedness.

More often than not, local actors, especially grassroots women, are both the first respondents, reaching communities where the national government often cannot, and the ultimate actors of policies. By being those most at risk, local actors must be enabled to participate, influence, and make decisions on risk-informed development policies and practices. They have critical and ancestral knowledge and experience of the threats they face and the actions which would help reduce existing risks.

5. Understand and incorporate the needs and priorities of those most at risk through disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data.

Different individuals within a community face different challenges and levels of risk. Disaggregated data is essential to understand how to best tackle this wide range of threats with measures that can prove adequate to the entire community (including its most marginalized groups).

6. Create inclusive and contextualized solutions.

Drawing upon indigenous wisdom (ancestral knowledge), the innovation of youth and persons with disabilities, the experience of elders, and nature-based approaches along with appropriate, inclusive technologies, will widen the range of who is reached by these solutions. Gender perspective needs to be included.

More often than not, local actors, especially grassroots or community women, are both the first respondents, reaching communities where national government often cannot, and the ultimate actors of policies. We must empower, secure access to resources and recognize the strengths of local actors, make pathways for their participation in decision-making processes and actions toward sustainable development and provide them with the resources and capacities to lead sustainable development at local level. This should include teaching risk awareness and decision making in K12.