



CONCEPT NOTE

Title: High level session, Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance: Lessons from COVID-19

Date and time: Thursday, 4 November 2021 (Day 4)

9:00 - 10:30 AM Jamaica time, Eastern Standard Time Zone (Jamaica, Panama, Mexico, Peru)

Venue: Virtual

Lead organization: Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO)

Co-lead organization: United Nations for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

Contributing Agencies: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC), Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR)

GOALS

1. Unpack the governance issues to address the multisectoral nature of systemic risk and its practical application at different levels of government, regional, national, subnational and community.
2. Share some current practices that have examined systemic risks, including those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, to understand the challenges and opportunities to improve the governance and intersectoral coordination of such complex situations.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

1. Relevant national, subnational and local recommendations that strengthen disaster risk governance in the context of systemic risk are identified.
2. Best practices that strengthen intersectoral coordination mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic are identified.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction priority for action 2 clearly states the need of “Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk”, and the COVID-19 pandemic has made this priority even stronger. Intersectoral coordination, legal framework, policy and plans, up to date risk information to drive decision making, clear participation mechanisms and integration from global, to regional and local levels are some governance elements that the current pandemic has highlighted as key to manage complex situations in the context of systemic risk.

The concept of systemic risk emphasizes the need to understand and manage the interdependent and multidimensional risk variables that are created and magnified between different systems as they interact, across different geographic or spatial scales. This premise was endorsed by the COVID-19 pandemic by showing how an emergency that began as a sanitary one, affected every one of the socio-economic sectors and territorial levels, from the global to the subnational levels.

A prospective management of systemic risk implies, among others, the need for national governments to review their policies, regulations and fiscal incentives that regulate and shape development. It is in the territories where transformations in development practices must manifest and be implemented. A proper interaction between and among sectors must ensure that intersectoral linkages are well understood and accounted for, and this may include incentive mechanisms and practical opportunities for cross collaboration.

In this context, the management of risk information with a multi-hazard and intersectoral approach would be required, along with a new generation of more effective and efficient early warning systems that advise of an imminent hazard; but also, monitor key exposure and vulnerability indicators to allow preparedness and risk reduction activities.

Planning for development continues to be one of the best options, a systems approach to avoiding fragmented responses while recognizing existing organizational and operational challenges that look into the articulation of different sectors, actors, and levels of government. Development planning is the privileged mechanism to give coherence to these different dimensions in search of a common goal and through articulated practices. Integrating DRR into development planning as well as mainstreaming DRR within and across sectors ensures that decisions and activities are risk-centered and risk-informed. This will also help strengthen resilience of the different sectors and their respective systems.

National frameworks for the Governance of systemic risk would also need to include financial mechanisms to encourage the allocation of capital to investments that prevent and reduce risk and strengthen resilience. These should address residual risk as well as current risks and include elements to finance the disaster response when they occur, constitute disaster recovery funds as well as promote resilient public investments.

The progress documented in the Sendai Framework follow-up mechanism shows a marginal achievement of the indicators in the region, mainly related to disaster risk governance. The effects of disasters are more devastating at the local level, where disaster risk governance policies are less well-implemented.



VII Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean

It is proposed that disaster risk governance should have a horizontal implementation approach in order to build intervention strategies at the local administrative level.

According to the data reported by EM-DAT, 2,725 disasters occurred in the region of the Americas and the Caribbean during the period 2000 to July 26, 2021, of which natural phenomena are the most frequent hazard (73%). These disasters have claimed 290,080 lives, have affected 277,396,485 people, and have cost the countries an estimated USD 1.29 billion in damages.

Table 1. Occurrence of disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean from 2000 to 26 July 2021

Type of Disaster	No. of disasters occurred	Deaths	Affected	Cost of damages ('000 US\$)
Biological	81	9,599	3,256,578	N/A
Climatological	194	503	54,580,352	\$ 138,841,108.00
Geophysical	135	227,055	17,799,683	\$ 60,361,375.00
Hydrological	820	16,119	54,510,088	\$ 100,686,015.00
Meteorological	772	19,136	146,542,288	\$ 972,350,898.00
Technological	723	17,668	707,496	\$ 21,084,400.00
Grand Total	2,725	290,080	277,396,485	\$1,293,323,796.00

As cases spread worldwide, WHO classified COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. As of July 26, 2021, 94,080,019 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed worldwide, including 4,162,304 deaths. The first imported case of COVID-19 in the Americas region was identified on January 21, 2020 in the United States. A few days later, on January 25, 2020, Canada also reported its first confirmed case. Since then, there have been 76,090,220 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the region of the Americas and 1,992,005 deaths as of July 2021.

Considering this context, it is necessary to address current challenges and prepare for future ones by: (i) focusing efforts on actions aimed at strengthening Governance; (ii) highlighting the importance of intersectoral and international coordination on disaster risk in a multi sectoral context; and (ii) promoting the full and meaningful participation of all relevant actors at the appropriate levels.

QUESTIONS THAT THE SESSION WILL SEEK TO ANSWER

1. How can policies and institutional arrangements be improved to account for more complex scenarios where multiple hazards interact in more complicated environments?
2. How could risk sensitive development planning integrate these more complex situations?
3. What kind of incentives are needed to ensure solid collaboration across different levels of government and across sectors?
4. What were the main successful interventions that favoured disaster risk governance in the region, during the pandemic caused by COVID-19?



5. How did the previously-established coordination mechanisms improve the response and recovery capacity of countries to COVID-19?
6. How did the importance of transparency and accountability (as key criteria of good Governance) become evident during the COVID-19 crisis? What was the role of CSO in recovering the governance systems after COVID?

