

International Recovery Forum 2022

Redesigning Systems for Resilience through Recovery: Assessing Progress and the Unfinished Agenda at the Midpoint of the Sendai Framework

FINAL KNOWLEDGE REPORT

Introduction

The International Recovery Forum 2022 (IRF 2022) was held both online and at the Kobe International Convention Center in Kobe, Japan on 19 January 2022. It convened 400 participants and speakers from 65 countries. It is among the key activities managed by the International Recovery Platform (IRP) in support of its mandate to share experiences and learning among countries and all relevant stakeholders, explicitly designated in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The annual forum is organized around themes to address key prevailing priorities and gaps in knowledge and practice for recovery and building back better. The theme this year, Redesigning Systems for Resilience through Recovery: Assessing Progress and the Unfinished Agenda at the Midpoint of the Sendai Framework, links with the outcomes and lessons emerging from previous IRP Forums and other past and forthcoming relevant global events to advance the field.

Much work has been dedicated to building back better and achieving better recovery outcomes following the adoption of the Sendai Framework. The IRP has worked alongside partners to consolidate knowledge and experience, and support efforts to build back better. Evidence from recent disaster recovery experiences shows how far recovery practice and policy have progressed including incorporating disaster-resilient designs, progress in assessment, planning, financing and recovery preparedness, to name a few. However, challenges continue in achieving the ambitions of building back stronger, faster, and more inclusive and enhancing development prospects.

As we approach the midpoint of the Sendai Framework, planning for disaster recovery has never been more challenging. The multi-hazard environment within which we exist is made more complex by the realities of climate change. Climate change is already affecting every region of the world in various ways through intensified climate-related events, including heavy rainfall and associated flooding, intense drought and extreme heat waves (IPCC, 2021). It threatens to exacerbate risks in countries and communities with limited capacity to address present and evolving vulnerabilities. The increasing frequency and intensity of disasters as a result of natural and man-made hazards continue to bring devastating impacts globally, with serious implications for sustainable development.

The IRF 2022 provided insights into the implementation of Priority 4 and the challenges that remain, while setting a forward-looking agenda for continued progress, including redesigning

systems for resilience. It represents an opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved in disaster recovery under the banner of building back better, what we have learned, what we have overcome, and the challenges that remain and what is on the horizon so that we can continue to innovate and advance preparedness, planning and the practice of disaster resilient recovery. It will contribute to the midterm review of the Sendai Framework and aligns with the theme of the 7th Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2022), “From risk to resilience: Towards sustainable development for all in a COVID-19 transformed world”, and the 5th World Reconstruction Conference (WRC5) “Reconstructing for a Resilient Future: Sustainable Recovery from the Pandemic and Other Disasters”. This knowledge report summarizes the key points highlighted in the sessions and presents the breadth of knowledge that has been shared during the forum.

Keynote

Keynote 1

The first keynote presentation provided background on how the build back better concept has developed in theory and practice. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) explained that building back better is an opportunity to build resilient nations and societies through recovery, by applying disaster risk reduction measures and improving the development prospects of affected communities, including in housing and infrastructure reconstruction, as well as livelihoods and economic revitalization, while considering the local culture and environment. It opens up prospects not only to recover what was lost but also to improve development pathways for greater resilience and sustainability.

The build back better concept broadly entered the development discourse following the devastation caused by the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia, and the challenges experienced in rebuilding the impacted communities without recreating the same risks. The concept gained momentum in the recovery efforts from the Central Java Earthquake and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, among others. They were able to build capacity for using resilient housing reconstruction, engaging more than 300 local community members and delivering over 100,000 strengthened brick houses within a year in Central Java. In the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan, not only were buffer zones and resilient standards followed in constructing a sea wall, but also support was provided in restoring fishery- and agriculture-related livelihoods in the area. This resulted in the revitalization of local fishery production, reconstruction of processing facilities and markets, and the creation of new jobs that overall increased the incomes of households.

The keynote speaker explained that since the adoption of the Sendai Framework, for a growing number of governments it is no longer a question of whether to build back better from disasters, but how this concept can be fully realized in recovery. Following the 2015 Nepal Earthquake and the 2018 Sulawesi Earthquake, building back better principles have guided land use planning, resilient housing reconstruction, coastal protection, and livelihood recovery, all using a scientific basis.

Anchoring recovery assistance on science and evidence is a principal component of JICA's international assistance. Not only is data and ground-truthing essential but also resilient techniques and standards are adapted to the country context. This has allowed JICA to ensure that recovery assistance adopts build back better principles and facilitates community acceptance to ensure sustainability.

"It is important to build back better by putting it in policy and regulations, and link it to sustainable development," said Mr. Kimio Takeya, Distinguished Technical Advisor on DRR, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in his keynote presentation. This would also link it to investments in resilience before a disaster and sustainable development towards risk-informed development.

Keynote 2

The keynote presentation by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Government of the USA showed how they have learned from implementing the Sendai Framework and offered forward-looking perspectives for improving recovery practice and building back better on the road to 2030. The keynote highlighted how the recovery environment has changed with climate change, and new and emerging risks. Consequently, recovery solutions need to be developed that are flexible and adaptable to meet future challenges and the specific needs of the communities affected by disasters and climate change. Planning and preparedness initiatives need to capture potential cascading and compounding risks and their escalating impacts in the future. The competition for scarce resources between multiple events can impact capabilities and can cause delays in response and recovery. Dealing with compounding multiple disasters alongside long-term crises such as a pandemic will be an ongoing challenge through 2030.

Building climate resilience into recovery practice is a priority for FEMA. Towards this end, a climate resilience framework has been created to increase climate literacy among emergency managers, build climate-resilient communities, and empower risk-informed decision making.

The keynote emphasized the importance of pre-disaster recovery preparedness in order to achieve better recovery outcomes. "More attention must be given to strengthening systems pre disaster. Establishing and integrating the desired recovery outcomes early in a disaster event can go a long way to realizing those desired outcomes sooner", said Ms. Cynthia Spishak, Associate Administrator, Office of Policy and Program Analysis (OPPA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), USA.

There is a great need to strengthen systems and build recovery capacities before a disaster. Bringing together key recovery stakeholders at all levels of government and the non-government sector and engaging in recovery planning before an event helps to map out desired recovery outcomes in advance, as well as the steps toward achieving desired outcomes, and mechanisms for measuring progress and success. Priority must be given to building partnerships between recovery stakeholders around long-term recovery before disasters.

Moving forward through 2030 with the Sendai framework as guide, FEMA will focus on strengthening preparedness and readiness efforts to address new and emerging risks through a people-first approach. This means acknowledging the disproportionate impact disasters have on

underserved and minority communities, and developing measures to achieve more equitable recovery outcomes, including targeted resources; expanding and improving eligibility, outreach, and access, while reducing administrative burden for recovery programs; and improving access to data and decision support. FEMA will focus on developing strong coordinated partnerships that leverage the resources and expertise at all levels of government, the academic, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. It will work toward incentivizing risk reduction by leveraging investments that encourage resilient behavior such as insurance coverage, resilient and sustainable building code standards, and mitigation interventions. It will support better risk-informed decisions for planning response and recovery from disasters by leveraging available climate data and future projections. Finally it will build climate resilience and adaptation, knowledge and capability within the global emergency management community.

Panel Sessions

The IRF 2022 included two panel sessions: assessing six years of progress and challenges in “build back better” for implementing the Sendai Framework and redesigning systems for resilience through recovery to advance “build back better” through 2030. Panel Session 1 assessed the progress, achievements, enablers and barriers in building back better and how these have informed improvements in recovery policies, governance, programmes, and outcomes. It reflected on the following questions:

- What do governments and different stakeholders consider having been the most significant advances to date in enhancing preparedness to build back better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction? What are the primary enablers for progress (e.g., structures, policies, or processes)?
- What have been key barriers in building back better?
- How could countries and different stakeholders have been better supported in the implementation of building back better?
- In which areas has progress been easiest, and in what areas has it been most challenging?
- In what ways can current recovery mechanisms be improved to deal with the multi-hazard, systemic nature of risk?
- Has recovery been able to integrate disaster risk reduction towards the achievement of other goals (e.g., poverty reduction, sustainable development, climate change mitigation and adaptation)?
- Has recovery been inclusive, focusing on an all-of-society engagement?
- Has recovery received appropriate financing to build back better and invest in resilience?

On the other hand, Panel Session 2 discussed priorities and options to advance the implementation of building back better in the context of multiple hazards and systemic risk. It leveraged advances in risk reduction in recent years and lessons from past disasters and identified good practices that lead to transformative and resilience actions in recovery. The panel explored ways in which countries can build back better in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic to further invest in disaster risk reduction and adaptation to cope with intensifying climate-related events and recurring disaster losses. The following questions guided the discussion during the session:

- What priorities are necessary to make further advancements in building back better by 2030?
- What new initiatives and partnerships will become available to governments and other stakeholders going forward?
- How must pre-and post-recovery planning change to facilitate building back better?
- What adjustments or critical measures must be taken to ensure that building back better is no longer treated as an option, but is a practice applied to all recovery initiatives?

Panel Session 1: Assessing Six Years of Progress and Challenges in Implementing of Sendai Framework Priority 4

The session highlighted key areas of progress and enablers in building back better since the adoption of the Sendai Framework. As noted by the keynote speaker and the panel, an important marker of progress is the growing, widespread recognition and adoption of the concept of building back better. This has enabled many disaster-prone countries as they develop disaster risk reduction plans, and enhance their capacities for recovery. Countries are increasingly embracing a longer-term view for recovery, development and resilience leading to more inclusive and cross-sectoral processes for recovery and development planning that are paying dividends toward resilience. “If we are not addressing development priorities in our recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction effort, we are really setting ourselves up to repeat the same experiences that we are actually going through when we are in response phase, and potentially also exacerbated impacts or effects,” said Ms. Litea Biukoto, Team Leader, Risk Reduction, the Pacific Community. It was further noted that the growing engagement of the private sector in recovery readiness has been a significant development since the adoption of the Sendai Framework, moving beyond business continuity planning to standards-setting, establishing incentives to integrate disaster-resilient standards, public-private partnerships, among others.

Panelists from the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), The Pacific Community and the Government of Nepal underscored the critical role of institutional and legislative arrangements in providing the legal basis for recovery activities through the recovery framework and recovery plan. “To establish and strengthen DRM institutions and systems at all levels of governance is so important,” said Mr. Anil Pokhrel, Chief Executive, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority, Government of Nepal, “we need to work with local governments because they are the ones who are at the forefront in terms of really integrating these risk considerations and multi hazard risk concentrations into future planning.” The explicit incorporation of recovery and building back better in strategic disaster risk reduction frameworks and plans guides the work of disaster management authorities and practitioners, including institutional strengthening for coordinated recovery.

Panelists highlighted important advancements and continued challenges for recovery readiness. Panelists pointed to the need to build capacities for recovery. Nepal noted that one of the important lessons learned from its recovery from the 2015 Nepal Earthquake was the need for significant investments in building the capacities of local governments and communities for recovery. CDEMA and its members states have made important progress in this regard, by developing an auditing tool to identify baseline capacities for recovery and areas for improvement. It has also established the Caribbean Resilient Recovery Facility (CRRF), a regional mechanism

that pools recovery expertise across the region and builds surge capacity for recovery, improving recovery readiness and closing gaps in capacity. Zimbabwe noted that building back better and delivering resilient recovery outcomes takes time, and administrative hurdles can frustrate efforts to build back better. The need for delivering not just greater resilience in recovery, but also on faster timelines is a common challenge for recovery planners and can be aided by investing time and resources into recovery preparedness measures.

Panelists shared other significant advances in applying building back better principles, such as in undertaking structural integrity assessments, revising the building code, designing houses and infrastructure to be climate-resilient, and developing resettlement programmes. Incorporating disaster-resilient elements, including through technology, became an integral component not only in recovery but also in national development. Working with local governments and communities, including traditional leaders in Zimbabwe, also provided an opportunity to leverage local capacities and factor in the local context and specific needs to ensure that no one is left behind.

The limited fiscal space and insufficient resources to fund recovery in many countries form a substantial barrier. In this regard, support from international partners and civil society organizations was highly recognized.

Panel Session 2: Redesigning Systems for Resilience through Recovery: Setting the Agenda for Advancing Building Back Better through 2030

The session offered prospective insights into building back better and identified priorities to make further advancements in recovery towards 2030. As the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent shocks have shown, building back better and delivering greater resilience and improved development prospects continue to present challenges. Greater attention is needed toward preparedness for recovery. For example, post-disaster needs assessments depend on baseline data being available to plan recovery better. Inclusive recovery planning often depends on developing inclusive bodies, partnerships, and processes pre-disaster. It is necessary to ensure the perspectives, needs and goals of vulnerable populations are represented, toward a more equitable recovery. Increasing recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of societal systems calls for systems thinking for recovery planning and leveraging potential synergies. In the latter half of the Sendai Framework implementation, the concept of building back better is made all the more vital because of the increasing frequency and the severity of natural hazards, and the increasing vulnerability of populations. New and emerging risks would further complicate future challenges, and, thus, necessitate a forward-looking agenda to advance recovery practice.

The focus on resilience particularly on investing in resilience before a disaster was a common theme in the session. “We learned that based on the robust or aggressive funding, pre-investment funding, by the government, we can ensure that disaster risk reduction can be implemented and to start recovery in order to build back better for a whole of government approach for big disasters such as a flood disaster,” reported Mr. Jerry Fano, Head, Project Impact Analysis and Evaluation, Department of Public Works and Highways, Government of the Philippines. Revisiting policies for resilience has been undertaken, for example, by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) which has revised its policy framework to focus on ecological resilience, physical resilience, financial and social and institutional resilience. The experience of

the Government of the Philippines shows how allocating a larger budget to invest in flood mitigation significantly reduced inundation, economic losses and the number of people affected. The Government of Portugal also undertook a paradigm shift from response to prevention in its strategy. This reveals that redesigning systems for resilience offers an opportunity to achieve better recovery outcomes.

Some priorities that have been identified moving forward include an enhanced understanding of risk, nature-based solutions, financing, capacity development and continued knowledge sharing, to name a few. A better understanding of risk through enhanced risk assessments, particularly within the context of climate change, was highlighted. An all-hazard approach in coming up with disaster risk reduction measures was considered essential, especially in ensuring a risk-informed recovery. Nature-based solutions are recognized to offer co-benefits in achieving recovery outcomes and sustainable development goals, including reducing the risk of forest fires in Portugal.

Financing is central when countries are looking at post-disaster systems or post-pandemic assistance. Addressing recovery financing challenges through diverse financing modalities, such as ADB's revised emergency assistance lending policy, disaster contingent financing, or the Caribbean parametric insurance facility, can be explored. Financing support or tax incentives can be provided by governments as recommended by the Government of Portugal to allow populations with less financial resources to undertake resilient investments. Capacity development, particularly for in-country experts and practitioners to assess disaster impacts, and design and implement recovery programmes, was deemed important. Finally, learning from international experiences can only happen through documentation, including good large-scale models of building back better, and knowledge sharing so that other countries can learn from them and adapt in their recovery plans. For this, the IRP has a critical role to play.

Participants in the IRP Forum 2022 offered their inputs toward two of the key questions considered by the speakers in the IRP Forum and the Mid-term Review of the Sendai Framework. Participants were asked to reflect on the last six years, and consider their country's experiences and perspectives to vote on the primary enabler to building back better. Of the five possible choices, 24% of the participants indicated recovery policies, laws, and regulations as having been the most important, followed very closely by pre-disaster recovery planning (23%). Multistakeholder participation and long term financing were also very highly regarded by the voting participants at 21% and 20%, respectively. Finally, 11% of respondents indicated that technical capacity had been the primary enabler of building back better in the first six years of Sendai Framework implementation. Participants were also asked to opine on which one recovery theme or area they believed needed to be strengthened from now to 2030. More than 23% of the respondents indicated that recovery financing was the area in greatest need of strengthening, while 20% of respondents believed that inclusive recovery should be the top priority. Nearly 15% of respondents believed damage and needs assessments needed strengthening, while equal numbers of participants had also indicated partnerships and international cooperation and pre-disaster recovery planning as top priorities. Finally, 12% of participants believed that addressing systemic risk in recovery should be prioritized for strengthening.

Conclusion

The current context of the ongoing pandemic, record-high natural hazard events, climate change, and the setback to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals underscore the necessity and timeliness of assessing progress and challenges for resilient recovery and consideration for what adjustments and actions are necessary for implementing the Sendai Framework moving forward. The past six years have shown significant progress in enhancing the understanding of building better principles and its operational design, and the increase in the capacity to share and communicate, highlighting the way forward in disaster recovery and building by better. It would be essential to build on past experiences while using innovative ways to use and adapt existing tools.

The International Recovery Forum 2022 has provided a significant venue to reflect on the progress in implementing building back better in recovery within Priority 4 of the Sendai Framework and the challenges that remain while a forward-looking agenda for continued progress has been discussed and identified. It provided a platform for sharing innovations, solutions, lessons and experiences from recovery practitioners from the local, national, and international levels for us to learn from one another, and to improve recovery practice so that we can build back better from disasters. Among the key outcomes of the IRF 2022 is the recognition of the importance of an all-society approach with coordinated and complementarity actions across sectors and stakeholders that go beyond traditional silos particularly with the private sector and local communities, using science-informed and evidence-based planning and processes to ensure building back better. “Recovery investments must be made part of national multi-year budgeting and long-term sustainable development planning by governments”, added Ms. Paola Albrito, Chief of Branch, Intergovernmental processes, Interagency co-operation and Partnerships, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). This includes the passage of economic reforms to enable diverse financing modalities that support long-term recovery and ensure proper planning, financing and engagement in long term sustainable development strategies.

Further, greening was identified as one of the less exploited innovative approaches to recovery, particularly for the infrastructure sector. It should be used more systematically in the future as this approach responds to climate change while providing opportunities for affected sectors and communities that can pay dividends towards short and long term economic recovery and resilience and other benefits such as the preservation of natural resources.

Finally, recognizing that disasters and crises are cascading, recovery needs to be set in the context of a country’s multi-level but intersecting and interconnected dimensions from socio-economic to institutional to ensure that recovery policies integrate a systemic approach to risk and contribute to building a robust multi-stakeholder risk governance framework towards risk-informed recovery.

The discussions in the IRF 2022 have shown how we can and are already using recovery from disasters and the global health crisis to create opportunities for building resilience, addressing the underlying vulnerabilities that were exposed and exploited by the pandemic itself and achieving new, more sustainable pathways for development. A stronger alignment between recovery priorities, long-term resilience and climate objectives, and development plans is called for. The Sendai Framework and other international agreements such as the Sustainable Development

Goals, Paris Agreement and New Urban Agenda provide a holistic roadmap that can support this and should be taken advantage of to achieve sustainable and resilient recovery outcomes through 2030 and beyond.