

Global Initiative on Disaster Risk Management (GIDRM) Community-Based Approaches to Risk-Informed Development in Georgia

CONTEXT

Extreme natural events, slow-onset events such as droughts and sea-level rise, and technological or human-induced hazards often have disastrous impacts if the resilience of people and infrastructure is not sufficiently strengthened. As urbanization continues apace, coupled with inadequate health care, environmental degradation, fragile statehood and violent conflicts, disaster risks become more acute, complex, and increasingly interdependent. Climate change amplifies these factors.

Disasters have impacts on a variety of areas such as public health, economy, governance, tourism, critical infrastructure (e.g., hospitals, transport, water, communication) and can have devastating effects in already fragile contexts. The current **COVID-19 pandemic** illustrates the vulnerabilities and interdependencies of all socio-political and economic areas and sectors worldwide. The pandemic has pushed many health systems to their limits, and the rapid spread of the virus has also created immense economic and socio-political burden in almost all sectors and areas of society. Increasing interdependencies and complex hazards and risks confront us with the challenge of finding new and more resilient approaches to reduce the risk of critical infrastructures failure.

Despite an increasing understanding of the complexity of risks, these are not always adequately considered in development planning and programming. **Disasters suddenly wipe out many years of development successes and reduce the development opportunities of countries.** Achievements in terms of poverty reduction, combating illnesses and improving access to health care, education and services are fragile and undermined by new and emerging threats. A lack in understanding and managing systemic risks jeopardizes the achievement of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Current approaches frequently address just one threat at a time, typically a natural hazard, rather than considering several new global threats or multiple, simultaneously occurring risks. Disaster risk management is still largely focused on responding to disasters rather than adopting a cross-cutting, preventative approach to minimize risks. Decision-makers often lack the necessary skills and capacities to adequately deal with risks.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: RISK-INFORMED DEVELOPMENT

The debate around risk-informed development (RID) is becoming increasingly relevant at international level. It refers to an understanding of development that takes account of a wide range of **interdependent, dynamic, cross-border and, in some cases, simultaneous risks**.

KEY MESSAGES ON RID:

- (1) Development is taking place in a complex and uncertain environment of risks – at the same time current development pathways are creating risk faster than we can manage risk
- (2) Risk needs to be understood as being interdependent and systemic
- (3) Disaster risk reduction is not enough – we need to transform our development pathways to risk-informed development
- (4) Building capacities and promoting an enabling environment to make decisions risk-informed is key
- (5) Fostering the participation of all members of society and systemically addressing inequalities are cornerstones of risk-informed development
- (6) There is no universal blueprint – risk-informed development needs to be tailored to the context with enough flexibility to re-evaluate and adapt continuously
- (7) Risk-informed decision-making is a prerequisite for sustainable development and fundamental to preventing the creation of risk



GIDRM IN GEORGIA

In Georgia, GIDRM supports community-based approaches to risk-informed development. The objective is to better protect populations and critical infrastructure through improved risk perception and assessments considering the systemic nature of risks and to strengthen risk-informed decision-making processes.

The National Environmental Agency of Georgia (NEA) will be supported in building the capacities of future professionals to better understand and manage landslide risk in Georgia. A cutting-edge landslide monitoring system will be installed in Gveso (Tsageri), a high-risk area in the Northern part of Georgia. In addition, a baseline assessment of existing university level programs related to hazard and risk assessments will be conducted to identify gaps and entry points for specific capacity building measures. As a follow up, interested representatives of universities – mainly students – will be trained through practical knowledge exchange and field visits to Gveso. Furthermore, capacity building of NEA on hazard assessment, data management, analyses and interpretation is foreseen as part of the project.

To promote a systemic understanding of risks at the community level, an impact chain assessment will be conducted for Gveso village focusing especially on the interdependencies between hazards, land use practices (agriculture) and access to health services. Landslides, floods, and similar hazards lead to limited access of community members to health care services due to road blockages, injuries, or disruptions in health care provision due to electricity shortages or lack of clean



water. Understanding and evaluating the concrete interdependencies will allow the community members to take more risk-informed decisions on investment and planning priorities and advocacy messages to the regional level.

In addition, the GIDRM is aiming to support the enabling environment for risk-informed development in Georgia. Focusing on the six core dimensions of an enabling environment for RID (finance & resources; knowledge & information; culture & people; partnership & collaboration; organizational capabilities; policy & regulations), entry points for RID will be identified and capacities of various stakeholder groups will be built based on the identified needs.

The activities will result in a guideline on risk-informed development in mountainous areas incl. recommendations for systemic risk assessments, entry points for risk-informed decision-making at the community level and capacity building measures.



The Global Initiative on Disaster Risk Management (GIDRM) is an initiative commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). GIDRM III (2020-2023) supports selected decision-makers and regional organisations in Southern Africa, Asia and Latin America in strengthening their capacities and skills to foster risk-informed development while taking into account context-specific fragility factors.