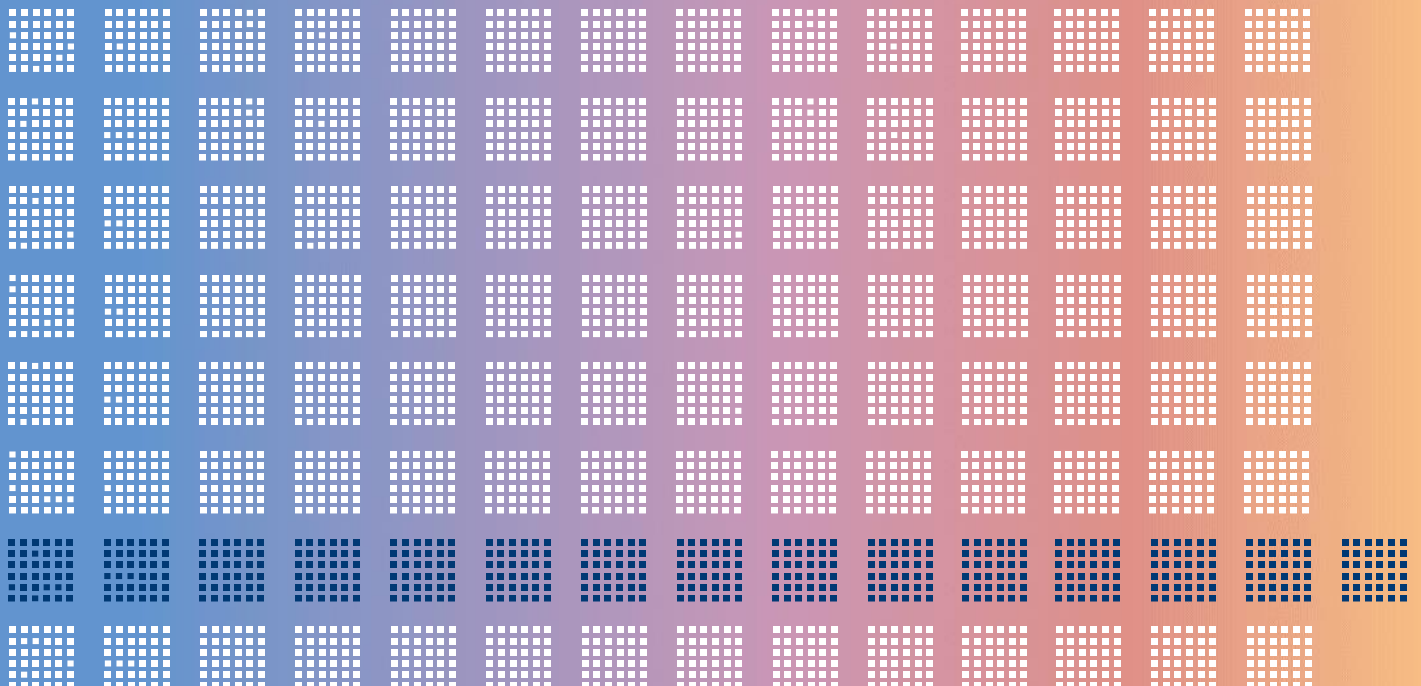




# TRANSFORMING DEVELOPMENT TO MINIMIZE RISK CREATION

Knowledge Exchange at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2025)

## Summary Report



## TRANSFORMING DEVELOPMENT TO MINIMIZE RISK CREATION

On June 3rd, 2025, ahead of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Global Initiative on Disaster Risk Management (GIDRM) hosted a knowledge exchange titled ***“Transforming Development to Minimize Risk Creation”***.

The event brought together over 40 professionals from various countries, sectors, and institutions – creating a rare and valuable opportunity for open, cross-sectoral exchange. Participants from ministries, research institutions, NGOs, UN agencies, and local governments, came together, all sharing one goal: to better understand how disaster and climate risks can be meaningfully integrated into development planning and decision-making.

Risk-informed development (RID) was approached not as a technical fix but as a shift in how we think about progress, investments and long-term resilience. By fostering cross-sectoral dialogue, the event aimed to highlight practical experiences and good practices across key development areas – social protection, urban development, and natural resources, nature-based solutions (NbS) and ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (EcoDRR).

### SETTING THE SCENE: WHY WE GATHERED

**Dr. Martin Schuldes**, BMZ Head of Division for Peace and Security, opened the event emphasizing that DRR should be considered at the earliest stages of development processes and must be integrated across all sectors and levels of governance. RID must not remain the domain of DRR experts alone – it requires a broader coalition of those shaping decisions in social policy, urban planning and environmental management, as reflected in the event’s multi-sectoral design.

This message was further deepened by **Marcus Oxley** (Resilience Solutions), building on findings from the newest [UN Global Assessment Report](#). He pointed to a paradox: while disaster mortality is declining, economic losses and systemic risks are increasing. The real issue, he said, is not just risk to development – but risk stemming from development. When decisions are poorly planned, when growth overlooks vulnerability, increasing risk and disasters are often the outcome. Instead of *building back better*, we need to ***build better before***. This requires integrating systemic risk thinking into national development plans, sectoral strategies and everyday policy decisions.

***“Disasters are a symptom of unsustainable development.”***

— Marcus Oxley

### WORKING SESSIONS: SHARING EXPERIENCES ACROSS SECTORS

The heart of the event was an interactive exchange in three working groups discussing how risk is – or could be – integrated into sectoral planning, drawing on specific examples, challenges, and innovations from experiences and different country contexts represented in the event:

- 1) social protection,**
- 2) urban development, and**
- 3) natural resources, NbS and EcoDRR.**



## SOCIAL PROTECTION

From India's large-scale Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) Program to targeted cash transfers in Madagascar and Pakistan, participants shared how social protection systems are increasingly being used to support disaster response and resilience building. Digital tools and social registries were seen as powerful enablers. Strong administrative and digital infrastructure can enable bottom-up planning. Another good practice entailed linking emergency response with long-term livelihood support. The group also raised challenging questions around equity, inclusion, barriers to data sharing as well as institutional silos between DRM and social protection.

*Key takeaway:* Social protection systems can serve as platforms for both anticipatory action and resilience building, thereby bridging short-term needs and long-term resilience, but require political support, data integration, and flexible design. They can be anticipatory, not just reactive, but only if risks are integrated into the design from the start.

## URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Examples from Colombia, Pakistan, and the SADC region showed that integration of risks in urban development revolves around governance, planning, and political will. The examples underscored the disconnect between local innovation and national policy frameworks. Moreover, participants highlighted how rapid urbanization, especially in informal settlements, continues to create new layers of risk. Several promising practices were discussed, such as improving urban services in vulnerable areas, inclusive public space planning, seed financing for community risk-reduction initiatives and integrating DRR into land use planning. Yet, a shared concern remained: the need to break down sectoral silos and create stronger institutional leadership in risk-informed urban planning.

*Key takeaway:* Participants emphasized several important needs to ensure breaking sectoral silos in urban planning:

- better coordination across sectors and clearer institutional mandates,
- stronger government roles in urban planning, as well as for cities and local actors in driving DRR and resilience building initiatives, and
- improved alignment of public and private sector incentives.

## NATURAL RESOURCES & NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS

This group explored how ecosystems, if managed well, can serve as buffers against climate and disaster risk. From agroforestry in the Caribbean to community-driven early warning systems in South Asia, examples showed that nature-based solutions are already delivering results. Country examples from the Philippines, Pakistan, and Thailand, and inputs from NGOs and researchers, showcased inclusive practices through community-led DRR and climate-smart agriculture, successful integration of ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) in land-use planning, and challenges in institutionalizing NbS in policy and budgeting. Participants also flagged persistent barriers, such as a preference for grey infrastructure, the lack of funding for NbS, weak monitoring frameworks for NbS and EcoDRR measures, as well as an underestimation of the economic value of ecosystems.

*Key takeaway:* There was a strong consensus that locally led, inclusive approaches – especially those that combine indigenous knowledge with evidence-based planning – are key to successful NbS implementation. Working with nature needs to be reframed as foundational, not optional, for risk-informed development.

## INSIGHTS AND JOINT REFLECTION

Participants highlighted the importance of political will, inclusive platforms for local engagement, and the challenge of scaling up from pilot projects to systemic change. Moreover, documenting evidence and building business cases for RID was highlighted as a necessary step for further institutionalizing action for risk prevention.

Participants shared how risks are being gradually embedded into policy – but this often still faces resistance, fragmentation, or short-term thinking. The discussions confirmed that while local initiatives are flourishing, an enabling environment for RID – the suitable legal, financial, social and political dimensions – is still needed for sustained impact.

In the words of Marcus Oxley, “**addressing risk is not about single interventions – it is about enabling environments**”. Risk reduction must be approached with systems thinking and long-term vision. Policies, budgets, institutions, and evidence must all align to **make RID the default, not the exception**.

Strengthening RID also means addressing the structural inequalities that shape vulnerability – by designing systems that are inclusive, participatory, and responsive to diverse needs. Across all groups, the importance of designing inclusive and equitable DRR approaches was underscored. Participants highlighted how social protection systems must account for barriers faced by women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities, particularly when

using digital tools or registries for targeting. Community-led approaches, especially in natural resource management and NbS, were recognized as not only effective, but essential for ensuring local ownership and inclusive decision-making. As several participants noted, **RID cannot be achieved without addressing the inequalities that shape vulnerability**.

The event reaffirmed that disaster and climate risk cannot be tackled in isolation – they must be addressed within the core structures of development planning, where decisions are made across sectors. Investments in development should be evidence-based and risk-informed, whereas DRR approaches need to be linked to national budgeting and planning systems.

Ms. Jacqueline Begerow, project lead of GIDRM, closed the event by thanking BMZ for their support and all participants for their contributions. She underlined the importance of building alliances and sustaining collaboration to embed RID across development cooperation. The knowledge exchange created a space for reflection, cross-sectoral learning, and forward-looking ideas on how to scale risk-informed development. Integrating RID across development is not only possible – it is already happening. What is needed now is scale, structure, and support. GIDRM looks forward to continuing this conversation and working alongside its partners to make risk-informed development a reality.

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### **Global Initiative on Disaster Risk Management**

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 32 + 36  
53113 Bonn, Germany  
[info@gidrm.net](mailto:info@gidrm.net) | [www.gidrm.net](http://www.gidrm.net) | [www.giz.de](http://www.giz.de)

### **Contact**

Jacqueline Begerow | [jacqueline.begerow@giz.de](mailto:jacqueline.begerow@giz.de)

### *On behalf of*

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)  
Division G23 — Peace and Security

BMZ Berlin  
Stresemannstraße 94  
10963 Berlin, Germany  
+49 (0)30 18 535-0 | [poststelle@bmz.bund.de](mailto:poststelle@bmz.bund.de) | [www.bmz.de](http://www.bmz.de)