



SBC contributions to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

The Role of Community Engagement and Behavioural Insights in Building Safer, More Resilient Communities Against Adverse Events

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is a key component of UNICEF’s work around the world and is intricately linked with UNICEF’s efforts to [protect children from the negative effects of the triple planetary crisis](#). Extreme weather events that can lead to disasters such as heatwaves, floods,

drought, wildfires and tropical storms are becoming more frequent and more severe as we continue to warm our planet to unsustainable levels and disrupt the earth’s systems. [Children are especially vulnerable to disasters](#) which can affect their physical and mental health, their education and their futures. Reducing the risk from these hazards through physical, social and psychological adaptation can save countless lives and livelihoods.

However, [getting people to make changes to how they live to protect themselves against hazards that many perceive to be unlikely is difficult](#). Social and behavioural change (SBC) approaches can help improve public buy-in for DRR activities and effectively implement DRR policies and behaviours. UNICEF is working to enhance social and behaviour change in DRR by understanding people’s attitudes and perceptions of risk, supporting locally-grounded, community-led, and people-centred approaches, and fostering a culture of preparedness. This includes leveraging social networks, engaging local influencers, and promoting community participation through behaviourally-informed strategies. By prioritising these elements, UNICEF aims to empower communities to actively participate in DRR policies and systems, ultimately building resilience and improving disaster preparedness.

UNICEF can help National Disaster Management Agencies (NDMA) and relevant line ministries:

1.	Create a national committee of all local community-led organisations working on DRR locally. Support the inclusion of these community representatives and coordination with other stakeholders.
2.	Conduct national level social and behavioural research to understand risk perception, institutional trust, as well as barriers to, and opportunities for disaster preparedness and risk reduction behaviours. Gather data on how these factors affect children in particular.
3.	Support NDMA in the development and testing of effective campaigns to encourage preparedness behaviours including child-centred campaigns. Identify the key motivational drivers for long term investment on perceived low probability events. Conduct training for policymakers, emergency responders, and community leaders on effective communication strategies during disasters.
4.	Support NDMA to identify messaging, communication and social engagement channels most effective in encouraging response to early warning systems including for children and their families.
5.	Work with NDMA to create the mechanisms for civil society and community-based organisations to participate in the design and improvement of national DRR and EWS and to leverage local knowledge and assets. Ensure the national plans build on Community Disaster Plans.
6.	Work with NDMA to understand, improve and maintain levels of public trust in, understanding of and adherence to government-issued warnings for disasters including within and between different communities.
7.	Incorporate social and behavioural research into DRR training methods and education curricula to enhance the effectiveness of such programs.
8.	Integrate DRR perspectives into the vast array of existing programmes based on community engagement, participation, empowerment and/or trainings, as well as similar engagement activities focused on family and parenting.
9.	Establish or leverage existing feedback and accountability mechanisms to monitor the quality and improve DRR / EWS systems and activities (including campaigns).

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| 10. | Design and implement small-scale / nudge interventions, such as reminders and prompts, to encourage disaster-prepared behaviours (e.g., maintaining emergency kits, securing homes). |
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UNICEF can help district and local governments:

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| 1. | Form community engagement groups that regularly engage with local populations to mobilise community in DRR planning and decision-making processes. Ensure the active participation of vulnerable, groups, women, children, elderly, and people with disabilities. |
| 2. | Engage with community and faith leaders on DRR to tailor and disseminate relevant guidance, especially for those with children through trusted members of the community to enhance and improve local DRR implementation and EWS adherence. |
| 3. | Identify groups/communities with lower risk perceptions, lower adherence to EWS and lower implementation levels of DRR policies and develop plans of engagement with these groups grounded in social and behavioural research. In particular, target groups in which these perceptions and lack of engagement negatively impact children's vulnerability, leveraging the most effective influencers and narratives. |
| 4. | Work with underserved populations to tailor messages to local realities, languages, dialects, and cultural practices to ensure they resonate with the community. Use local channels and traditional forms of communication to increase reach and awareness. |
| 5. | Involve community members in mapping local hazards and resources. Organise community meetings and workshops to discuss these local risks and use participatory approaches to collectively develop and practice emergency plans, ensuring they reflect local needs and capacities. Establish localised early warning systems using simple and reliable communication channels like radios, mobile phones, and community notice boards. |
| 6. | Publicise successful disaster responses and preparedness activities to demonstrate the effectiveness of government efforts and community collaboration. Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of community members and local organisations in disaster risk reduction. Build DRR with involvement of community leaders, participatory planning, localised messaging, transparent and consistent communication, visible government presence and efforts, feedback mechanisms and responsive adjustments, visible preparedness measures, inclusive practices. |
| 7. | Promote the adoption of sustainable and preventive practices including land use, community health and sanitation to reduce vulnerability post-disaster. |
| 8. | Integrate SBC-informed DRR content into the existing trainings of local community mobilisers, frontline workers and social service workforce. |
| 9. | Reinforce local community feedback mechanisms, including by strengthening the capacity of community radios and helplines and the ability of underserved community to use them. |