

POLICY BRIEF

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Nature-based Solutions for integrated planning and implementation of disaster and climate risk management

Brief on a toolkit on Nature-based Solutions for Comprehensive Disaster and Climate Risk Management developed by UNU-EHS and UNDRR

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Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for Comprehensive Disaster and Climate Risk Management (CRM)

The climate emergency and the growing intensity and complexity of risk has necessitated convergence across approaches to reduce risk, adapt to a changing climate and avert, minimize and address losses and damages. There is, hence, a strong need for synergies across planning processes, wherein risk is a common denominator and comprehensive disaster and climate risk management (CRM) a common approach to do so.

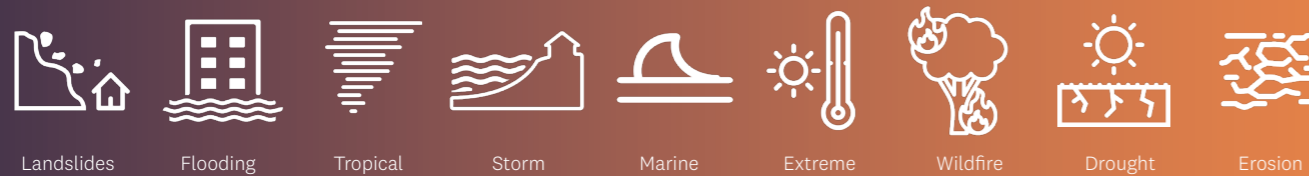
Nature-based solutions (NbS) are being recognized as one important means to enable such CRM approaches for planning and implementation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA). The targeted implementation of NbS can and does prevent or reduce disaster and climate risks, enhance adaptive capacity, while providing multiple benefits for society, the environment and the economy. NbS are also beneficial for addressing multiple other global challenges we face, including biodiversity loss and land degradation. They also contribute to food and water security, human health as well as social, economic and urban development, which are essential in reducing vulnerability.

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for ...

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR)

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION (CCA)

Comprehensive Disaster and Climate Risk Management



Source: UNU-EHS

The multiple benefits of NbS are recognized in the multilaterally agreed definition of NbS adopted at the 5th Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). It states that NbS are “actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems, which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services and resilience and biodiversity benefits” (UNEA, 2022).

Achieving the intent of NbS will be possible through integrated planning, and in the context of CRM, ensuring integration in DRR and CCA planning instruments. Leveraging the maximum benefit of NbS requires linking approaches across sectors and planning levels.

National planning landscape

The main vehicles for implementing global agendas and policy frameworks are the respective national planning instruments. NbS offer a key means to ensure better synergy across these plans and strategies to address multiple but related challenges, goals and targets. This brief promotes a comprehensive disaster and climate risk management approach to build such synergies and recommends to formally and purposively integrate NbS into relevant national level planning instruments. These are (i) National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), which aim to prioritize adaptation needs and appropriate action, (ii) National and local disaster risk reduction strategies, which aim to prevent the creation of new risks and reduce existing ones, and (iii) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), which aim to facilitate conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Many of these plans already make use of NbS, inclusive governance and stakeholder engagement across planning scales and planning elements. Planning scales include international, national, sectoral, sub-national/local scales and transboundary while planning elements include the plan’s vision, main goal, sub-goal and strategic activities.

A way forward is to support countries in developing integrated plans, with emphasis on integrating NbS. The approach is not new. Several Pacific Island Countries have initiated the approach, first at the national level and then at the regional level. The current approach is more advanced as it builds on a thorough and shared understanding of risk at different timescales and takes into account the diversity of contexts.

NAPs

UNFCCC,
Paris Agreement

Prioritizing
adaptation needs
and appropriate
action

DRR Strategies

Sendai Framework
for Disaster Risk
Reduction

Preventing
creation of new
risk and reducing
existing ones

NBSAPs

CBD, Kunming-
Montreal Global
Biodiversity
Framework

Facilitating
conservation and
sustainable use of
biodiversity

“Human activities are at the root of our descent toward chaos. But that means human action can help to solve it.”

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

Roadmap towards NbS for integrated planning

As part of the CRM approach to integrated planning and implementation, a Toolkit with five modules has been developed as a step-by-step guide for the coherent integration of NbS into a CRM strategy. The first of the five tools aims to conduct a stocktaking exercise, whereby information on the natural environment, as well as hazards, vulnerability and impact are documented and assessed. This complements the second tool which determines the status of the national and subnational planning landscapes, with special attention to the extent to which NbS have been integrated. Together, the first and second tools form the basis for the third where the appropriate NbS options are identified.

Adequate stakeholder engagement and inclusive governance are essential for the success of CRM approaches and the integration of NbS. This is the basis on which tool 4 was developed. The final tool is preparing the integrated plan.

This can be implicit and explicit in various elements of planning instruments, such as the vision, goals and activities. All tools have additional resources and use cases.

The toolkit aims to capacitate the relevant actors at national and subnational levels to enhance planning and implementation of integrated approaches. This is particularly important in the current landscape, one that United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres describes in this way: “Humanity is waging war on nature... Ecosystems are disappearing before our eyes.” Through a CRM approach that integrates NbS, this trend can be reversed or retarded. While acknowledging the dire circumstances, the United Nations Secretary-General also offered hope: “Human activities are at the root of our descent toward chaos. But that means human action can help to solve it.”

