



Urban Disaster Risk Reduction

The combination of climate change and urbanisation leads to an increasing exposure of cities to disasters. A better resilience against such climate change induced shocks and stresses is essential for municipalities to grasp their socio-economic growth potential. Therefore, SECO supports cities to strengthen their ability to prepare, withstand, and recover from the effects of a disaster in a timely and efficient manner. The focus lies on the safeguard of basic infrastructure services and functions.

Rationale

Today, the world's population and economic activity is concentrated in cities. With the urban population expected to increase from today's 50% to 70% by 2030, cities offer huge development opportunities. At the same time, urbanisation and climate change create significant challenges for cities. The large majority of cities is located near rivers, mountains, or coastlines which makes them vulnerable to negative climate change effects and extreme weather events. Unplanned urban sprawl can even fuel that exposure, leading to increased losses of the economy and more poverty.

Consequently, cities must mitigate climate change risk and respond to evolving challenges. Business-as-usual, reactive planning and misinformed decision-making will not allow cities to face these challenges adequately, let alone adapt and prosper further. Delivering a climate resilient urban future requires risk-aware, integrated and inclusive solutions. This contributes to long-term sustainability as potential future losses can be reduced or avoided, and recovery accelerated. Investing in climate change resilience thus pays off financially and contributes to further economic development.

Approach and Principles

SECO supports cities to better prepare for, withstand, and recover from disaster in a timely and efficient manner. To this end, SECO strengthens municipal capacities to 1. Better understand disaster risks and their threat to people, assets, and the economy, 2. Mainstream them into urban planning and management processes, 3. Prepare, finance and implement necessary DRR measures and investments. This allows municipalities and utilities to operate public services reliably in case of disasters.

SECO's support to urban disaster risk reduction (DRR) is part of its wider support to sustainable urban development ([SECO Urban Public Factsheet.pdf](#)). Urban DRR support aligns with following principles:

- Key intervention area is resilience against climate change induced extreme events and disasters.
- Activities are mainly in urban areas and with cities, often with a link to national level strategies and policies. Municipal administrations and utilities as main project partners.
- Economic infrastructure services and related investments are the focus area. Key sectors such as mobility, energy management, and water are especially important.
- Focus lies on prevention and preparedness, less on post-disaster recovery.
- Grant funding is provided for institutional and policy development, technical assistance and capacity building, less for hardware and investments.
- DRR financing and mobilisation of private finance for resilience are important.

Number of programs and projects since 2013

12

SECO contribution since 2013

CHF 75 million

Geographic reach

Global, partner countries

Topics

Like under the general SECO approach to sustainable urban development, projects on urban DRR are characterised by the fact that they support cities along the urban value chain and seek to have an integrated, cross-sectoral character. This means that municipalities are supported to plan, finance and operate relevant DRR interventions and infrastructure investments. The following table gives an overview on possible areas of work:

Plan			Finance		Operate	
Policies and regulatory framework	Data, diagnosis, and dialogue	Urban planning	Accessing finance	Hardware investments	Institutional	Capacities and skills
Introduce legal and regulatory framework on DRR	Spatial data collection on hazards frequency / intensity and assets	Mainstreaming DRR into Urban Master Plans and sectoral infrastructure programming	Risk informed project prioritisation and preparation (to Pre-Feasibility Study level)	Installation of early warning and monitoring systems	Institutional strengthening of DRR management entity	Capacity building and staff training on DRR
Policy dialogue on DRR	Analytics including risk mapping and modelling	Risk informed planning and decision processes	Access to DRR / climate financing for prioritised investments	IT support systems (linked to data analytics and monitoring systems such as GIS/MSDI systems, DRR dashboard etc.)	Emergency preparedness and response systems (SDC)	Formal and non-formal education on DRR through curricula development etc.
Update regulations on building codes etc.	Inclusion of resilience aspects into GIS and MSDI	Continuous monitoring of risk prone areas	Private sector engagement	Hardware solutions for risk reduction (drainage solutions and nature-based solutions etc.)	Mainstreaming DRR in public asset management	Knowledge transfer, peer learning, national and global platforms

In addition, SECO strives to mainstream the following crosscutting topics in its projects and supports its partners to institutionalize these approaches:

- Climate change is integrated extensively into a very large proportion of SECO's urban DRR projects by the climate change adaptation focus.
- Gender and inclusiveness: Women are affected disproportionately by climate change, due to e.g. restricted land rights, lack of access to financial resources, and limited access to political decision-making. SECO thus puts specific emphasis on integrating gender equality and inclusiveness into the planning of its urban DRR projects.
- Digitalisation: Support cities to profit from digital and smart technologies for efficient and fast risk identification and mapping, risk monitoring, early warning systems or infrastructure solutions for risk reduction.

SECO's activities are well aligned within its Economic Cooperation and Development division, as well as Swiss International Cooperation in general. DRR related activities of SECO include climate resilient urban development and infrastructure services (WEIN), disaster risk financing, as part of public financial management (WEMU), and fostering a climate resilient private sector, e.g., through disaster risk insurances (WEIF/ WEMU). SECO's interventions take into account the experience of Swiss actors in this area, including government entities, such as the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency (SDC) or the Federal Office for the Environment (BAFU), academia, and the private sector.

Further information and contact details

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