



SDC Network

Disaster Risk Reduction

Interview with Rebecca Nadin (ODI) and Jan Kellett (UNDP), key authors of the SDC co-financed report “*Risk-informed development - From crisis to resilience*”. The report was presented and discussed in September 2019 at SDC.

Dear Rebecca and dear Jan, thank you very much for having presented this rich report, striving to grasp the complexity of ‘Risks’ related to development in all its dimensions.

Risk informed is already a key word in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR). What is new, or different, in your research?

Rebecca (R): The SFDRR is rather technical and addressed the DRR community, calling to assess multiple threats. Our report reaches out to a broader public, stakeholders of different sectors. To develop a risk informed management approach, it is key to understand priority risks and risk tolerances or levels of risk acceptance of all involved stakeholders, such as governments, policy makers, investors, impacted groups. Trade-offs, contradicting goals of development interventions and risk management must be considered. E.g. when developing the energy sector, potential negative side effects or new risks must be analysed.

Jan (J): The SFDRR focuses on disaster risks arising from natural hazards and the interplay of that hazard with vulnerability and exposure. However, it does not sufficiently consider other risks related to anthropogenic factors e.g. pollution, pandemics (see illustration below). In addition, DRR is recognized as a development topic, but there

is still a long way to go for the adequate translation into practice. Therefore, UNDP’s advocacy focus through the SFDRR negotiations was the promotion of DRR as a development topic, deeply connected to the context of each country.

“We have to focus on key aspects for risk informed development, not all can be done.”

You call to address the complex range of risks, which are interconnected, transboundary, transitional and transformational. Nevertheless, if the analyses are too broad, is there not a danger that specific, technical or operational risk analysis methods become useless? How can single tools be precise enough and at the same time reflect complexity? How to overcome operational challenges of limited system boundaries e.g. time and budget frames, geographic and sector-specific action radius?

R: A rather broad analysis from the very beginning of any development initiative should ensure that all relevant risks are addressed. The challenge is rather how the data is used. We should use our resources with more focus; existing (risk) analyses should be understood, accessed and used by the full range of actors. Some tools might

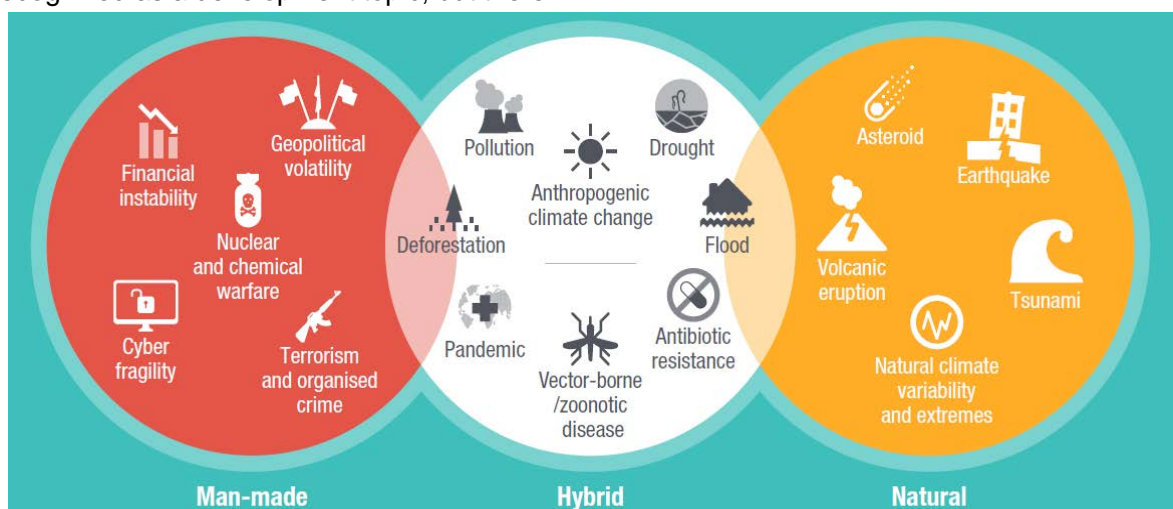


Illustration: Multiple threats that can pose complex risks to sustainable development

need an update to include risk tolerances, preferences and trade-offs. But generally, we do not need new tools. It is about pooling information together, since today we often work too sector specific.

J: We should explore how expertise and assessment can be combined at country level and pool our resources e.g. through multiple donor frameworks such as the UN Development Assistance Framework.

“We do not need new tools, but must consider relevant risks early enough and make risk assessment accessible for all relevant stakeholders.”

The report features examples of risk-based decision frameworks. How are these different from existing tools for multi-hazard risk assessment and action planning?

R / J: Our report on risk informed development is not a tool, but an umbrella of tools. Different tools are relevant for different stages. We defined good practices of tools and their application. Some of the available tools to analyse information may need to be updated, such as for financial and cyber risks related to geopolitical volatility. The available information must be pooled. Nowadays we often work in specific sectors and fail to use all available information. It is important to assess all

Good practice principles:

- ✓ Inclusive and transparent;
- ✓ Phased and iterative;
- ✓ Flexible and adaptable;
- ✓ Continuous learning and reflection.

Examples of risk-based decision frameworks / tools (report p. 34 ff):

- IRGC Risk Governance Framework (IRGC, 2017).
- UKCIP Risk Framework (Willows and Connell, 2003).
- IPCC 5th AR: Foundations for Decision Making (Jones et al. 2014) - Adaptation Needs and Options (Noble et al., 2014)
- G20/OECD Disaster Risk Assessment and Risk Financing Methodological Framework (2012)
- ISO 31000 Risk Management Guidelines (2018).
- SDC Climate, Environment, Disaster Risk Reduction Integration Guidance. (CEDRIG).

available aspects and address risks at an early stage of development, by including all concerned actors.

You suggest 7 steps for risk-informed decision approaches. For which step do you see the main challenges from an SDC perspective as a donor and implementor of development projects?

R: We have to focus on key aspects not all can be done. Strengthening internal and external M&E systems is a challenge for many institutions. Risk governance considering multiple risks and interacting with various actors is a big task. We consider SDC as an open, potential thought leader. Hence, the process and results of risk evaluations can be exchanged and transferred to governmental and other partners in order to share broadly.

7 steps to enabling risk-informed decision approaches for resilient and sustainable development (report p. 41 ff):

1. Build capacities and expertise to deliver risk-informed decisions.
2. Evaluate risk tolerances and decision criteria.
3. Utilise and modify tools and methods for risk-informed development.
4. Strengthen data collection to provide the evidence base.
5. Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems (M&E) and their transparency.
6. Promote cultures of risk governance and risk communication in development.
7. Look for innovative financing mechanisms for risk-informed development.

How does the report refer to and feed into the discussions and outcomes of international process (such as the recent Global Platform for DRR/GPDRR or the Global Assessment Report/GAR) and national dialogue on risk?

J: Based on the UNDRR mandate, the GAR has a disaster risk entry point. The GAR 2019 increasingly looked at interactions of disaster risks. One of the key differences is that our report is addressed to a broader audience than the GAR or UNDRR events such as the GPDRR – this is a reflection of the wider set of risks discussed in the report. In addition, I believe our report is particularly useful for the national dialogue on risk.

R: The report was shared with the UNFCCC secretariat, based on their interest to better understand interaction of climate change and other threats and transition risks.

The report is rather a conceptual framework. What are the next steps?

R: So far, our work focused rather on the approach and tools than on practical aspects. With the support of SDC, we plan a second study, which looks more into the multiple threats in contexts of ongoing donor programmes. We'll have an in-depth look at the country contexts of Niger and Myanmar, which will hopefully also reveal some good practices.

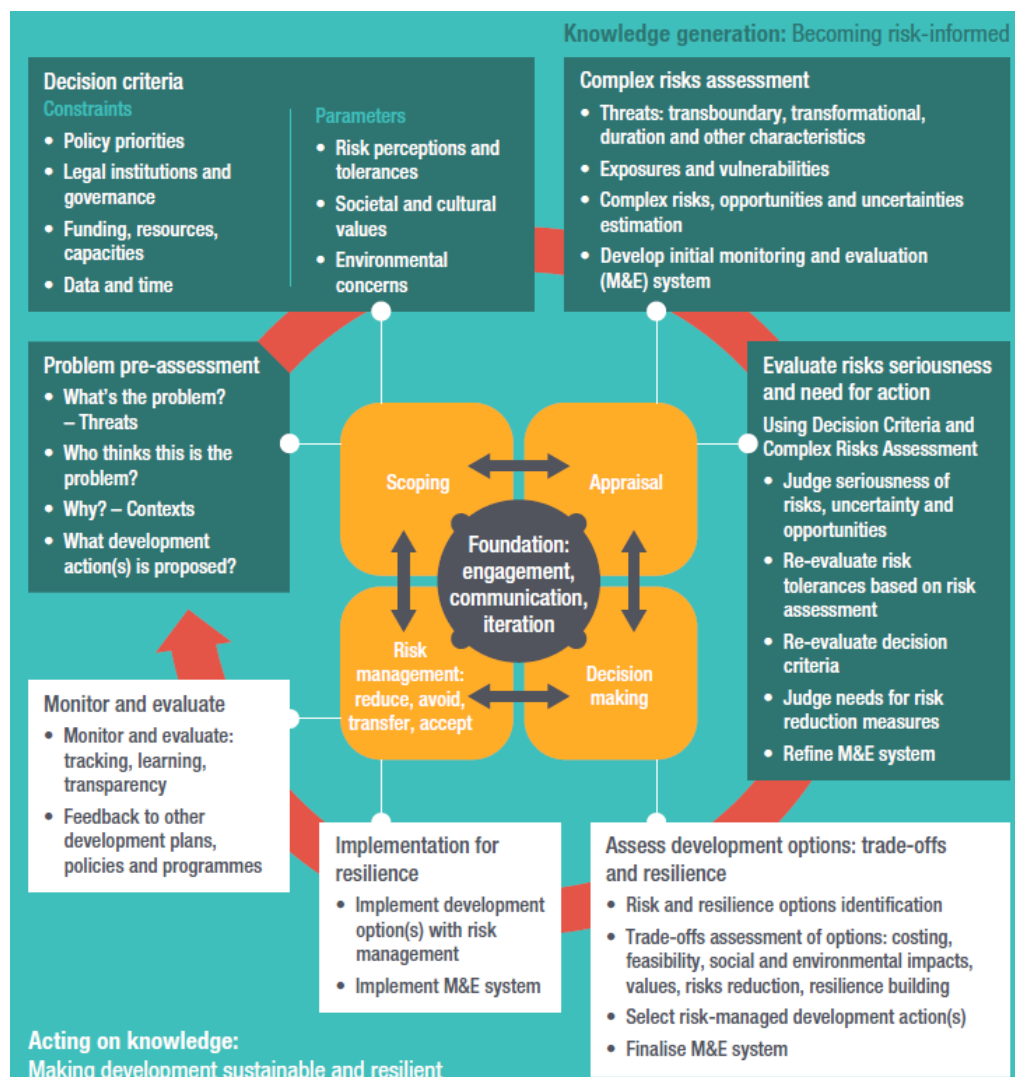


Illustration: Summary of risk-based decision frameworks for risk-informed development.

Web references

Risk-informed development - From crisis to resilience, report by ODI UNDP SDC (May 2019)
<https://www.odi.org/publications/11314-risk-informed-development-crisis-resilience>

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SDC DRR Shareweb: [BBL event](#) with the presentation for download:
<https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DRR/Pages/Content/Event-Detail.aspx?ItemID=444>