



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: WHERE IT ALL STARTS

Global Urban Resilience
Monthly Programme



INTRODUCTION

This session marks the second event of the ISRM Global Urban Resilience Monthly Webinar Series, which has been developed in collaboration with esteemed organisations including the UK National Preparedness Commission, the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), and other global partners. Today's session focuses on the critical importance of community-level resilience, particularly in challenging and disruptive environments where daily life involves navigating complex, often extreme circumstances.

Resilience is not perceived as a theoretical or conceptual idea, but as a tangible, lived experience for individuals who face everyday challenges like securing basic necessities such as clean water, food, and shelter. Panellists include experts with significant experience in disaster risk reduction, sustainability frameworks, and community-based resilience efforts.

Together, these leaders will engage in a meaningful conversation aimed at addressing real-world, practical strategies for fostering resilience in the face of unpredictable and increasingly frequent disruptions. The session seeks to inspire actionable insights that strengthen the foundation of resilience at the community level worldwide.



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The concept of resilience, particularly in the context of community resilience has become a key focus in sustainability and risk management over the last decade. First of all, ICLEI is an international non-governmental organisation with an extensive network of 2,500 cities that aspires to address issues around sustainability, urban resilience, and climate adaptation.

It is of outmost importance to define and measure resilience effectively, particularly in terms of community impact. Some key points raised:

- **What constitutes a "community"** - is it just a physical entity defined by geographical boundaries and institutional frameworks, or is it more about the social connections and collective strength of individuals?
- **How does resilience relate to human security?**
This aspect often gets overlooked when discussing climate impacts but is critical when considering the fragility of societies.
- **How do we measure resilience effectively?**
Assessing impact at the local level is crucial to ensure that policies and programs are delivering real benefits.

Finally, we need to highlight the need for a more holistic approach to resilience—one that integrates institutional strategies, community engagement, and measurable outcomes. The debate around definitions and measurement methods shows that resilience is not a one-size-fits-all concept, but rather a dynamic, evolving framework that must be tailored to specific local contexts.



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As a Lecturer at the University of Gloucestershire and a practitioner working in Indonesia, we need to focus on the role of universities and educational institutions in resilience-building, particularly through research, curriculum development, and community outreach. In fact, our extensive work the Building Universities in Leading Disaster Resilience (BUID) project has been instrumental in fostering collaboration among eight Indonesian universities to enhance systemic resilience.

In Indonesia, universities play a critical role in disaster preparedness by integrating research with direct community engagement. This unique institutional setup allows academics to combine their research efforts with meaningful interventions, such as working with communities at the foot of volcanoes to enhance disaster preparedness or supporting vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to shift gears from what resilience is to how institutions and policies can effectively implement and sustain it.

It is also significant to highlight key differences in resilience-building approaches across regions. While Indonesian universities have systemic structures for research and community service, similar initiatives in the UK and Europe often emerge from individual academic interests or institutional strategic priorities. Therefore, it is our priority to create systemic, policy-driven frameworks to sustain long-term resilience efforts all over the world.

A central question is how to make community resilience meaningful by ensuring influence, impact, and legacy. Thus, we need to advocate for a structured approach to measuring impact through tangible outputs, data collection, and policy integration, ensuring that community resilience efforts lead to lasting change.



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Since 2010, Amadora has been actively working on community resilience, driven by the need to address challenges such as urban floods, traffic accidents, landslides, fires, and extreme meteorological events. Prior to 2010, the city faced difficulties due to limited stakeholder participation in urban planning and risk analysis. However, by joining the Making Cities Resilient campaign, Amadora was able to place resilience at the centre of its municipal agenda.

A key factor in the city's progress has been strong political leadership, with the mayor playing a central role in mobilising stakeholders and implementing community resilience strategies. Amadora has built a dynamic network of stakeholders, including local authorities, schools, private sector organisations, NGOs, and community groups, to collaboratively work on disaster risk reduction. This collaborative approach has fostered a culture of shared responsibility, where each sector contributes to resilience-building initiatives.

One of the city's major initiatives includes developing annual resilience action plans, with a particular focus on risk education. Schools play a significant role in this effort, with more than twenty actions and training sessions per year designed to educate children on climate change, disaster and emergency preparedness. By instilling awareness and preparedness at a young age, Amadora is strengthening long-term resilience within its communities.

Currently, the city is working on an updated Resilience Action Plan, engaging stakeholders through regular meetings to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Key elements of the plan include information sharing, trust-building, and inter-sector collaboration. The overarching goal is to enhance the city's capacity to anticipate and respond to disasters, minimising economic losses and human impacts.

Amadora's experience highlights the importance of a structured, politically supported, and community-driven approach to resilience. Through strong leadership, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning, the city serves as a model for integrating disaster risk reduction into urban governance.

Community resilience is fundamentally about connection, a people-centred approach, and access to knowledge and information for better decision-making at the community level. The Red Cross has long been engaged in resilience-building through a community-based approach, investing in understanding what constitutes resilience at various levels—individual, family, and organisational. Key elements of resilience include the ability to anticipate risks, reduce impact, recover effectively, and tailor solutions based on specific contexts.

Resilience is also closely linked to social security, access to healthcare, education, and overall well-being. It is important to highlight how crises, such as those in Syria, reveal the complexity of vulnerability—not just environmental but also social. Humanitarian organisations play a role in strengthening knowledge, access to social services, and connectivity within communities to address these challenges.

A multi-sectoral, integrated approach is essential for effective resilience-building. It requires collaboration across government, academia, the private sector, and civil society. Rather than starting with available resources, the approach should begin with the needs of the community and then identify solutions through partnerships. We need to stress the importance of scaling up these efforts by advocating for policies and resources at larger levels, ensuring communities have access to the right information and support to make informed decisions that safeguard lives and livelihoods.

Finally, yet importantly, we need to underscore the need for innovative, inclusive, and scalable strategies to enhance resilience globally, with the Red Cross and national societies continuing to play a critical role in this effort.

INFLUENCE, IMPACT, LEGACY

NE:

We acknowledge the challenges in resilience-building but it is crucial to focus on developing tools and mechanisms for measuring resilience. While significant advancements have been made in defining resilience indices and quantitative assessments, there remains a gap in understanding resilience at the local community level. Most existing tools focus on institutional or societal resilience rather than capturing how resilience is formed, maintained, and weakened within specific communities.

A key distinction is made between community and societal resilience. Communities are defined by shared values, cultural identity, and social cohesion, extending beyond geographic boundaries. Religion, traditions, and social connections play a crucial role in fostering solidarity. In contrast, societal resilience operates at a higher level, governed by laws, regulations, and formal structures. This distinction is important when assessing vulnerabilities, as community-level challenges are often harder to map using conventional institutional frameworks.

An ongoing project under the Urban Climate Resilience Program, implemented in 10 cities worldwide, including the city of Izmir in Turkey can be a great example of addressing this gap. The project uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative resilience assessments, such as the Community Resilience Measurement and Capacity (CRMC) tool, interviews, and focus group discussions. A key feature of this initiative is the follow-up assessment: after implementing community-designed solutions, such as early warning systems, the project revisits the community a year later to evaluate the real-world impact.

We also need to highlight the importance of ensuring that resilience solutions are meaningful at the individual level. For example, an early warning system might seem successful on paper, but its true value is determined by its effectiveness in reaching vulnerable individuals, such as elderly residents without formal addresses. The ultimate goal is to ensure that resilience strategies lead to real, transformative impacts rather than just producing favourable reports or data visualisations.

DR:

Having conducted a quick real-time survey among all the participants, whether they believe their society is more resilient or more fragile compared to a decade ago, it is very disappointing. The overwhelming response indicates that most people perceive society as more fragile, despite years of focus on resilience-building efforts. A few participants acknowledge improvements in resilience policies, but the dominant sentiment is concern over increasing fragility.

This leads to a broader reflection on why, despite sustained efforts and expertise in resilience, the perception of vulnerability remains high. We need to ask ourselves critical questions about the maturity of understanding, availability of resources, and validation of resilience strategies. It is important to understand that while resilience is a pressing issue, it competes with multiple global challenges for attention and funding, making it difficult to secure prioritisation.

The key questions posed focus on whether global stakeholders are truly paying attention to resilience-building efforts, whether these initiatives are having a meaningful influence, and whether they are leaving a lasting impact. It is essential to emphasise on the need to assess whether resilience programmes are creating tangible change or simply remaining as theoretical discussions amid an increasingly complex global landscape.

It is also significant to highlight the critical relationship between communities and wider society, emphasising the shift from centralised control to local empowerment. We appreciate the co-designing of resilience programmes with and by communities, reflecting a growing recognition that the role of central governments and institutions should be to enable and support rather than dictate.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

LC:

An example from Hurricane Katrina in 2005 illustrates this shift in thinking. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) initially approached disaster response as direct crisis management but later acknowledged that its real role should be to support communities managing their own crises. This led to a conceptual change in emergency response, recognising that the true "first responders" in any disaster are the affected communities themselves, not official agencies arriving later.

All in all, we need to stress the importance of these insights, noting that communities often initiate their own recovery efforts long before formal responders arrive. This session introduces powerful concepts about resilience and emergency management, with a hope to explore them further in the future.

The challenges and strategies for building resilience in Amadora, the smallest but most densely populated municipality in Portugal is fundamental. In fact, the city's size has facilitated stronger community relationships, but also presents unique challenges in risk management and disaster preparedness. Since 2010, efforts have been focused on fostering collaboration among all stakeholders, including local authorities, emergency services, NGOs, schools, and academic institutions, to create a more resilient community.

A key priority has been improving risk communication and raising public awareness. Despite over a decade of resilience initiatives, there remains a gap in community perception regarding the effectiveness of these efforts. Enhancing communication about prevention, response capacity, and community resilience is seen as crucial for future progress.

Moreover, social cohesion and interconnectivity within the city are also highlighted as vital components of resilience-building. Amadora has actively engaged in partnerships with other cities at both national and international levels, particularly through European projects that facilitate data sharing and knowledge exchange.

Several local initiatives demonstrate innovative approaches to disaster risk reduction. The Senior Academy for Civil Protection engages elderly volunteers in awareness activities, recognising them as a vulnerable group in disasters. Another project incorporates artistic expression to involve people with disabilities in discussions about climate change and risk reduction. Schools have been a major focus, with over a decade of educational programmes involving all stakeholders, reinforcing the connection between schools and the wider community.

Looking ahead, the emphasis remains on strengthening community engagement, maintaining interconnectivity, and ensuring effective communication to sustain and expand the impact of these resilience efforts.

DR:

It is fundamental to underscore the importance of community stakeholder integration, ownership, and empowerment in resilience-building. Despite the UK not being considered a deeply religious country, faith-based institutions play a crucial role in community resilience. During the London Resilience Gold Command project in 2012, aimed at sustaining the legacy of the Olympics and fostering a resilient society, it was discovered that in London, no one is ever more than 300 meters from a place of worship, such as a church, synagogue, or mosque.

These religious institutions provide immediate and deep connections to local communities. Beyond their spiritual roles, they serve as social and support networks, often collaborating with one another through joint activities and community initiatives. The findings revealed that these religious and community networks form a vibrant, powerful, yet often overlooked part of London's social fabric. Despite their significant contributions, they were not formally recognised in official resilience planning, highlighting the need to integrate such grassroots structures into broader emergency response and community resilience strategies.

NS:

It is important to focus on the role of local community networks in resilience-building, particularly in Indonesia, where informal networks are deeply embedded in society. In my work, I've seen just how fragmented community needs are across different regions. In Jakarta, for example, some communities struggle with waste management, while others face challenges related to earthquake and volcanic preparedness. Coastal areas have their own unique resilience issues, and then there are places like Paro, where the entire community is still recovering from the 2018 triple disaster. Each region has different priorities, making it difficult to apply a one-size-fits-all approach. Therefore, this diversity in challenges makes it difficult to establish a universal impact assessment framework.

While quantitative measures, such as the number of trained volunteers or the use of virtual reality for disaster preparedness, provide some indicators of success, assessing the true effectiveness of resilience programmes remains complex. Without a disaster event to benchmark against, measuring preparedness in a meaningful way is challenging. Another key issue is the difficulty of scaling up successful local initiatives to different contexts, as solutions may not easily translate across regions due to differences in economic conditions, geography, religion, and culture.

Stakeholder integration presents another challenge, particularly in environments where institutions compete for funding, research recognition, and prestige. Universities, for example, often focus on teaching and research excellence, with community outreach seen as secondary. If institutions, whether academic or corporate, are to play a meaningful role in community resilience, they must be held accountable and given real incentives to prioritise local impact. It can't just be a 'nice-to-do'—there needs to be a system in place that ensures they take responsibility and actively contribute to the communities around them.

A broader systemic shift is needed to bring community resilience to the forefront, ensuring that organisations with the resources and knowledge capacity are both inspired and enabled to support their communities. This requires rethinking how institutions are evaluated, integrating community engagement into performance metrics, and fostering a collaborative rather than competitive approach among stakeholders to maximise the impact of resilience efforts.

FRAGMENTED SOCIETY

DR:

The concept of community fragmentation, referencing Nadine's earlier remarks and relating it to the situation in Beirut has a substantial part in shaping resilient cities. For example, if you want to get fit, it helps if you're already healthy. If you're not, it's much harder. The same goes for community resilience—you need societal stability and integration. If a society is fragmented, I struggle to see how resilience can be built on that foundation.

In conclusion, we should focus on the importance of ownership, engagement, and empowerment in community transformation. To illustrate this, Medellín, Colombia, is a great example of a city that successfully turned itself around by providing economic opportunities to marginalised communities. By integrating favelas into the economy, the city fostered stability and development. The core message is that economic empowerment serves as a foundation for broader societal improvements—when people have jobs and financial security, other challenges become easier to address.

KS:

We should emphasise on the importance of unity in addressing community fragmentation and resilience-building. It is essential to highlight that while different organisations use various approaches to engage communities, a unified strategy is crucial for scaling efforts effectively. In the Middle East, for example, projects often introduce complex frameworks while lacking fundamental community engagement. Simplifying approaches and fostering collaboration can bridge these gaps.

In addition, we need to stress that competition among organisations - for funding and recognition—can hinder progress. Instead, greater emphasis should be placed on collective visibility and knowledge-sharing. True resilience comes when communities take ownership of their development, as seen in cases where local groups independently set up early warning systems.

Localisation of resources, knowledge, and actions is key. The most successful projects occur when communities drive their own initiatives. Collaboration, synergy, and learning from one another can enhance impact, ensuring that responses address real community needs rather than external agendas.

CREATING IMPACT

DR:

It is significant to discuss the methodology behind urban resilience and major city management by emphasising that meaningful change is more achievable at the city level than through national policy. We should also highlight the accessibility of city policymakers and the growing awareness that cities are taking the initiative in resilience efforts. However, we need to ask ourselves whether current discussions and strategies are genuinely making cities more resilient or if they are merely theoretical exercises. For that reason, it is crucial to reflect on whether, in a few years, tangible improvements will be evident or if urban fragility will persist despite ongoing discussions.

Moving forward, we express hope that bringing people together will drive real action. The concept of “Champions” within communities—local leaders who can implement and advocate for resilience initiatives—is highlighted as a key approach, something that has been actively discussed with partners like International Federation of Red Cross Crescent Cities (IFRC).

The challenge now is to turn these discussions into tangible outcomes that improve people’s lives on the ground. We need to answer an important question: How can we ensure that individuals feel a real difference in their daily lives? This underscores the need for practical implementation, community engagement, and sustained efforts to make resilience-building efforts meaningful and impactful at the local level.

Moreover, we should point out that systemic change is essential but difficult, requiring generational effort rather than minor adjustments. It is essential to highlight the importance of global city networks in driving transformational and transactional change, ensuring mutual benefits for all involved.

It is also crucial to draw a distinction between engineering-based solutions and a more ecological, holistic approach, which considers resilience as part of a broader living system. This perspective emphasises creating an environment that is vibrant, robust, and adaptable rather than just mechanically prepared for crises.

To maintain a positive outlook, we need to shift the focus to victories—successes that have been achieved in resilience-building. The goal is to extract insights from these victories that can be applied across different contexts, empowering individuals and organisations to make meaningful changes within their own spheres of influence.

To conclude, it is important to highlight the challenge of prioritising resilience efforts given limited resources and unlimited demands. The Resilient Cities Network raises an important question about how to effectively allocate resources while maximising impact. Additionally, there is a focus on scaling up from pilot projects to broader, sustainable initiatives. This is particularly relevant for programmes like Build, which has completed a three-year phase and now faces the challenge of transitioning into a long-term, sustainable model. The key issue is how to take innovative approaches developed in smaller projects and expand them to create lasting, systemic change.

NE:

First of all, we acknowledge the complexity of driving large-scale change but it is crucial to emphasise on the power of local action. While global policies and discussions are essential, real impact often happens at the community level, where individuals—referred to as “Champions” or “Gatekeepers”—play a crucial role. These Champions are influential figures within cities who can take resilience-building initiatives forward, integrating them into municipal departments, local policies, and community programmes.

Successful urban resilience efforts rely on these key actors to bridge the gap between high-level discussions and on-the-ground implementation. By equipping them with the necessary knowledge, tools, and resources, they can inspire action, foster collaboration, and ensure that resilience strategies are not just theoretical but actively improve the lives of people in their communities.

We also need to stress the importance of partnerships and stakeholder engagement, as resilience-building is not a one-person or one-organisation effort. The creation of networks, where Champions can share insights, best practices, and challenges, strengthens the collective ability to address systemic urban issues. Ultimately, investing in these local leaders is one of the most effective ways to create sustainable and meaningful change.

NS:

It is our priority to emphasise the need to rethink educational systems, particularly curriculum design, to instil resilience thinking from an early age. This shift should go beyond universities and start at the school level, ensuring that students grow up with an understanding of their responsibility toward society and their individual influence on the world.

At the university level, the focus should be on shaping graduates who are not just career-driven but also socially responsible and future-ready. Educators play a crucial role in fostering confidence, networks, and mentorship for students, helping them develop a vision for their contributions to society. For example, mentors and networks played a crucial role in shaping my own path, and this reinforces just how important it is to support students beyond traditional academic learning.

Furthermore, educators should adopt an outward-looking approach by collaborating with policymakers, organisations, and international networks like ISRM. This engagement exposes students to real-world challenges and encourages them to actively participate in multi-stakeholder dialogues. The impact of this approach is evident in student engagement, as many express a desire to apply classroom learnings to their communities and maintain long-term collaboration.

Ultimately, the message is clear: educators must recognise their power in shaping future leaders and take responsibility for nurturing graduates who can become "Champions" of resilience and societal change.

LC:

It is significant to underscore the significance of city-to-city collaboration and shared learning in fostering resilience at the local level. Portugal has developed a robust network of resilient cities, where over 50 municipalities actively engage in knowledge exchange through regular meetings. This initiative, part of the "Making Cities Resilient" campaign, encourages municipalities to learn from one another, bringing fresh ideas and strategies to improve their own resilience frameworks.

A key takeaway is that resilience-building is not the work of a single department or leader but requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach. While mayors provide political support and high-level leadership, the real transformation occurs through the efforts of various city departments—such as education, social services, environmental management, and urban planning—working together with local communities and organisations. This systemic approach ensures that resilience is embedded across multiple sectors, rather than being treated as a separate issue.

We also need to highlight the role of institutional capacity and governance in resilience-building. By fostering cooperation among various actors—public institutions, private stakeholders, and community groups—cities can create an environment where information flows efficiently, and coordinated action becomes possible. Amadora, for instance, has implemented an early warning system model after successful international examples. This system is tailored to the city's unique needs, leveraging data-sharing among stakeholders to enhance disaster preparedness and response.

Overall, while challenges remain, the tangible progress as seen in cities like Amadora demonstrates that resilience is achievable through collective action, long-term commitment, and the continuous integration of lessons learned from past experiences.

KS:

Over the past two decades, there have been significant advancements in resilience-building. Initially, resilience was not even a widely discussed concept, but today, it has become a central focus with a holistic approach. One major achievement has been the creation of communities of practice and collaborative platforms, such as Resilient Cities, where organisations and the private sector actively engage in resilience discussions and initiatives.

Access to resources and knowledge has also improved significantly. Previously, there was limited funding and expertise available, but today, resilience efforts benefit from broader support, including contributions from universities and research institutions. The private sector is increasingly recognising its role in enhancing resilience and giving back to communities, which marks a meaningful shift in approach.

In specific regions like MENA, efforts are being made to develop anticipatory action frameworks—allocating resources based on climate and risk data to better understand and address population movements, health impacts, and disaster preparedness. Unlike before, when risks were addressed in isolation, the current approach integrates multiple hazards and fosters knowledge-sharing to improve preparedness.

Furthermore, smaller cities and local governments, despite limited resources, are making progress by collaborating and strengthening their capacity. Measuring collective achievements at global and regional platforms, such as the Global Disaster Risk Reduction Platform, highlights the substantial progress made worldwide.

While challenges remain, the focus now is on multi-sectoral approaches, advocacy, and collaboration among governments, donors, and international organisations. Resilience-building has evolved beyond just preparedness and response—it now includes nature-based solutions, epidemic preparedness, and innovative risk reduction strategies. These achievements underscore the progress made and the ongoing commitment to strengthening community resilience worldwide.

FINAL THOUGHTS

NS:

It is important to note a fundamental shift in how resilience is built and sustained within communities. Instead of focusing solely on prioritising specific communities or vulnerabilities—an approach that can be challenging due to limited resources and vast demands—the emphasis has been on creating systems that make resilience self-perpetuating. This means developing institutions, governance structures, and networks that embed resilience into their frameworks, ensuring long-term impact beyond individual projects.

The Build programme exemplifies this approach by moving away from ad hoc disaster response efforts toward structured, integrated models. In Indonesia, where disaster risks are significant, the programme has established institutions that coordinate research, curriculum development, volunteering, and community outreach. This has resulted in a more cohesive, organised effort to strengthen resilience, where stakeholders—including academics, government bodies, and local communities—work together in a sustainable way. These institutions are now accountable for monitoring and quantifying their impact, ensuring that resilience-building efforts remain effective and adaptable over time.

A major achievement of Build is the formation of both national and international networks that extend beyond Indonesia. These networks facilitate ongoing collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and stakeholder engagement, making resilience-building efforts more comprehensive and sustainable. The establishment of a National Association ensures that the work continues beyond the initial programme, integrating resilience into broader governance structures.

Another key theme is the need to rethink the language used in resilience and capacity-building initiatives. The term "capacity building" is often associated with a one-way transfer of knowledge from the so-called developed world to developing nations.

However, the Build programme has demonstrated that learning is a mutual exchange—Indonesian partners contributed critical local insights that shaped the programme's success, and in some cases, these approaches are now being adapted for use in the UK. For example, discussions with the University of Manchester explore how the volunteering model developed in Indonesia can be implemented in British universities, reinforcing the idea that resilience-building is a shared global effort.

All in all, we need to underscore the importance of inclusive, participatory, and systemic approaches to resilience. By embedding resilience within institutions and fostering reciprocal learning, the Build programme provides a model for sustainable, long-term impact that extends beyond immediate disaster response to create communities that are prepared, adaptive, and self-sufficient in the face of future challenges.

DR:

To illustrate the need to shape more resilient communities has also demonstrated over the years, Sheela Patel from SPARC in India by emphasising the importance of local knowledge and autonomy in addressing challenges in slum areas. Instead of outside interference, Sheela Patel argues that communities need direct resources such as funding and essential infrastructure (e.g., pumps) to implement solutions themselves, as they have been doing for generations. This underscores the broader theme of trusting and empowering local communities rather than imposing top-down approaches.

One of the most significant achievements highlighted is the ability to have a seat at the table, ensuring that voices advocating for resilience and community needs are not only present but actively heard. This marks a major shift from a decade ago when such representation was either minimal or entirely absent. The progress made in securing a platform for meaningful dialogue and decision-making reflects the growing recognition of resilience as a critical issue that requires collaboration across different sectors and levels of governance.

We need to stress that being included in key conversations and policy discussions is itself a victory, as it allows for better-informed decisions and stronger advocacy for necessary actions. Over time, this presence has helped shape resilience strategies, integrate diverse perspectives, and ensure that community needs are properly addressed.

While significant strides have been made, there remains a wealth of challenges and discussions to be had. The ongoing engagement of various stakeholders, experts, and policymakers will be essential in driving further progress. The focus remains on sustaining this momentum, ensuring that resilience-building efforts continue to be prioritised, and that those working in this space retain their influence in shaping future initiatives.

To conclude, we should emphasise on a sense of optimism and empowerment, recognising that despite global challenges, there are dedicated individuals and organisations actively working to create meaningful change. We should also acknowledge the importance of connection, collaboration, and ongoing learning, as well as inviting participants to stay engaged and reach out for support whenever needed.

LC:

First of all, we need to highlight two significant achievements in recent years that have strengthened resilience efforts at the municipal level. The first major victory is the establishment of a dedicated municipal budget for resilience actions. Unlike previous funding structures, where resilience efforts were often included under broader categories like civil protection, this budget is specifically allocated for strategic resilience initiatives.

The key advantage of this dedicated fund is that it allows for long-term planning and targeted investments in areas such as early warning systems, infrastructure improvements, and disaster preparedness measures. Importantly, the allocation of these funds is determined in collaboration with the mayor and various stakeholders, ensuring that resources are directed toward the most pressing resilience needs. This structured approach marks a shift from reactive responses to proactive planning.

The second major achievement is strong political commitment and leadership support. Having the trust and backing of the mayor has been essential in driving meaningful change. Without this high-level commitment, resilience efforts might struggle to gain traction or receive adequate funding. The leadership's willingness to prioritise resilience has enabled municipal teams to implement necessary actions efficiently and effectively. Political willpower ensures that resilience remains a consistent priority rather than a short-term project that fades with changes in administration.

Beyond these victories, it is crucial to point out the importance of stakeholder dialogue and participatory decision-making in defining resilience priorities. Rather than imposing top-down decisions, the municipality engages with stakeholders—including community representatives, technical experts, and policymakers—to ensure that priorities align with both political objectives and on-the-ground realities. This approach recognises that political priorities may not always match technical or operational needs, so continuous engagement is essential to balancing different perspectives. Each year, a process of reassessment takes place to define new priorities, targets, and roadmaps for the following year.

Looking ahead, the municipality is focusing on developing a Resilient Action Plan that will serve as a guiding framework for resilience efforts. This plan not only outlines immediate actions but also establishes a broader long-term vision extending to 2030. With growing experience and maturity, the city is now in a position to implement long-term resilience measures effectively.

NE:

It is fundamental to underscore the critical importance of prioritisation in resilience-building efforts, particularly within the framework of multi-level partnerships and governance. While addressing local vulnerabilities is essential, these efforts must be aligned with broader policies and city-wide planning to be effective. Without this integration, resilience-building risks becoming fragmented, reactive, and short-term rather than proactive and sustainable.

A multi-level governance model ensures that decision-making is not isolated at any single level—whether local, municipal, or national—but rather coordinated across different sectors and stakeholders. This means that while communities identify their immediate risks and needs, policymakers and city planners must work to embed these concerns into long-term development plans, regulatory frameworks, and financial strategies. The challenge is not just recognising the importance of resilience but ensuring that it is institutionalised and consistently funded.

Prioritisation, therefore, extends beyond just identifying critical actions; it also involves strategic allocation of resources, investments, and financing mechanisms. Without dedicated funding and financial commitment, even the most well-intended initiatives struggle to move beyond the pilot phase. Cities must develop clear financial strategies for resilience, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and transparently. This could mean securing dedicated municipal budgets, forging public-private partnerships, or accessing international funding mechanisms to sustain long-term resilience programs.

Ultimately, achieving meaningful resilience requires a holistic and systematic approach. By linking local needs with strategic planning and financial investment, cities can create a resilience framework that is not just reactive to disasters but actively builds long-term sustainability. True resilience is built through sustained commitment, cross-sector collaboration, and a governance structure that bridges the gap between local action and strategic vision.

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ABOUT

ABOUT THE ISRM GLOBAL URBAN RESILIENCE PROJECT

The ISRM Global Urban Resilience Project was developed out of a series of papers written together with the International Federation of the Red Cross / Red Crescent Societies, and more recently in partnership with the National Preparedness Commission.

It is designed to bring together academics, policy makers and practitioners from across the global urban resilience and major city management spectrum to facilitate action-oriented dialogue and interaction from multiple perspectives.

The launch of the ISRM Management Award in Global Urban Resilience and Major City Management in May 2024 set the foundation for the latest series of programmes, based on the 130 participants from over thirty countries who participated in the programme.

For more details on the Global Urban Resilience and Major City Management project, or to discuss how you can be involved, please contact

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