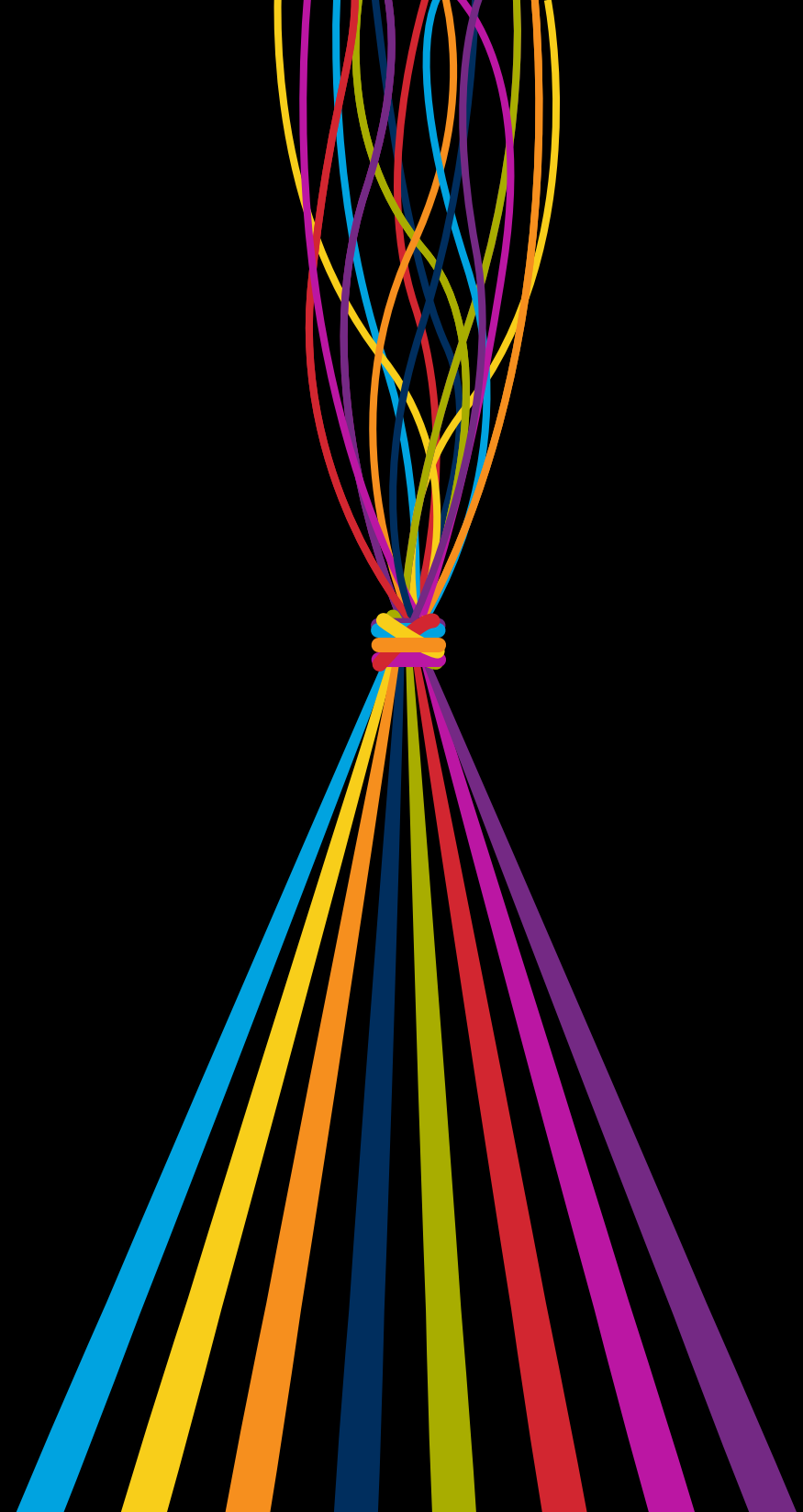




Recovering the Future

A Framework for Transformative
Recovery from Disasters

Habitat Professionals Forum
World Urban Forum 2026



The Habitat Professionals Forum



The HPF supports the UN-HABITAT in providing the breadth of expertise and depth of experience required to implement the UN-Habitat Agenda for sustainable urban development, as set out in the UN-Habitat's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

AdP-Villes en développement
Association of Urbanistic Jurisprudence (AUJ- CJUR)
Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA)
Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP)
Commonwealth Association of Surveying & Land Economy (CASLE)
Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization (CSU)
Eastern Regional Organization for Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH)
European Association of Geographers (EUROGEO)
European Council of Spatial Planners (ECTP-CEU)
Global Planners Network (GPN)
Iberoamerican Federation of Urban Planners (FIU)
International Association for Urban Development (INTA)
International Association of World Heritage Professionals (IAWHP)
International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

The HPF is the affiliation of members of regional and international professional associations and supporting partners whose combined expertise is central to promoting and achieving sustainable territorial development. Its members are independent, non-profit and non-governmental organisations.

International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC)
International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA)
International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)
International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP)
International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI)
International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP)
International Society for Urban Health (ISUH)
International Union of Architects (UIA)
International Water Association (IWA)
Metropolitan and Territorial Planning Agencies Global Network (MTPA-gn)
American Psychological Association (APA)
Territoire Europe (TE)
UN-HABITAT - Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE)
Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing /Inclusive Cities (WIEGO)

Table of Contents

Preamble	04
Section A The Challenges & Principles for Recovery from Disasters	05
1 The Need for Change- The Global Context & Housing Challenge	06
2 The Established Frameworks for Disaster Recovery	08
3 Transforming “Build Back Better” to “Recovering the Future”	10
4 Guiding Principles & Processes for Transformative Recovery from Disaster	13
Section B Capacity Building to Deliver Regenerative & Sustainable Recovery	17
5 Global Priority Outcomes for Transformative Recovery	18
6 Global Priority Regions for Disaster Future-Proofing	24
7 Delivering Transformation - Adding to the Recovery & Future-Proofing Toolbox	26
8 Call to Action	31

O Preamble

Recovery from disasters is an urgent and growing global challenge. Natural and human-made disasters are increasingly frequent and unpredictable.

Despite policy advances, recovery efforts often reproduce vulnerability, inequality, and unsustainable development patterns. Climate change, environmental degradation, rapid urbanisation and forced migration continue to expose billions of people to escalating risks, whilst recovery approaches are frequently fragmented, short-term, and poorly coordinated.

Disaster recovery is one of the multiple crises faced globally - the poly-crisis of climate change, conflict, biodiversity loss, technological change, demographic pressures, and deep-rooted inequality. The global housing crisis and disaster recovery should therefore be addressed together through integrated and systemic approaches.

This Framework for Transformative Recovery from Disasters (The Framework) aligns with international human rights commitments, particularly the right to adequate housing and living conditions, and supports key global agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other conventions on social, economic, and cultural rights. A human-rights based approach is central to recovery programmes if they are to be transformative.

This Framework contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New Urban Agenda, and UN-Habitat strategies by promoting integrated land-use planning, landscape-based approaches, and future-proof recovery efforts to reduce risk and build resilience. The Framework also complements the range of established good professional practice, including those produced by the UN-Habitat and HPF member organisations.

This Framework identifies key priorities for action. These include secure land tenure, the prevention of housing displacement, affordable housing, access to clean water and sanitation, poverty reduction, ecosystem-based risk reduction, protection of cultural heritage, strong community participation and improved social cohesion. It highlights the importance of landscape and territorial systems as essential infrastructure and environmental services for resilience.

This Framework calls for responses to disasters to ‘Recover the Future’ by reducing structural vulnerabilities, and creating more sustainable, resilient, regenerative and equitable human settlements. The principle of “Recovering the Future,” enables communities to have hope and expectations for a safer, more equitable, climate-adaptive life. It therefore provides guidelines that ensure that “Building Back Better” is transformative.

The Framework therefore calls for a fundamental shift from output-based approaches to rights-based outcomes. It emphasises the regenerative role of landscapes, long-term spatial planning for resilience and justice, cross-sector collaboration, legal systems ensuring land security and participation, and climate-adaptive decision-making. It is consistent with the findings of the HPF Post-2030 Project which highlighted the need to translate the SDGs into action.

The Framework sets out how Habitat Professionals can fulfil their critical role in guiding recovery. As architects, engineers, geographers, health, heritage, housing, landscape architects, lawyers, planners, real estate professionals, surveyors and other professionals, the HPF draws on global expertise in shaping policy and action in a more transformative way towards resilience. The Framework represents their commitment to addressing one of today’s defining challenges.

This Framework calls on governments, communities, organisations and development partners to ensure that recovery programmes result in more resilient, equitable, and sustainable futures for those devastated by disaster.



Section A

The Challenges & Principles for
Recovery from Disaster

1 | The Need for Change - Global Context & Housing Challenge

- 1. Recurrent disasters, human conflicts and war are now among the fastest-growing drivers of housing loss, homelessness, and forced displacement and migration worldwide.** In many contexts, housing losses from disasters exceed the rate at which safe and affordable housing is produced, trapping households and communities in cycles of insecurity and social inequity.
- 2. The risk of disaster is however no longer a series of isolated or exceptional events.** It is a systemic interconnected global phenomenon. Climate change is intensifying the frequency and severity of floods, heatwaves, droughts, storms, and sea-level rise. The number of people affected by disasters has nearly doubled in the first two decades of the 21st century.
- 3. Disasters are becoming more frequent and severe,** with time shrinking between crises. In 2023 alone, there were nearly 400 disasters which affected almost 100 million people. Currently, global infrastructure losses exceed \$700 billion annually and over 120 million people are displaced by global conflict, a third of whom have become refugees.
- 4. These challenges are reinforced by the unprecedented impacts of man-made disasters from armed conflicts.** Regional tensions, and territorial violence are producing the destruction or disappearance of cities, urbanised areas, and rural settlements, as well as massive displacement of peoples, profound changes in territorial patterns, and severe environmental degradation. This Recovery Framework therefore also relates to areas and communities affected by conflict, territorial violence, and forced displacement.
- 5. Conflict, poverty, and inequality interact with exposure to hazard, creating complex and protracted crises.** Disaster-related displacement is rising year on year, often becoming long-term or permanent. Many displaced peoples remain un-housed and are unable to return safely to their original homes, while others return to places that remain fundamentally unsafe, only to be displaced again by subsequent events.
- 6. There is a strong imbalance in the geography of disasters.** Asia bears the largest share of disaster-affected populations due to population density and exposure to floods and storms. Sub-Saharan Africa faces compounding risks from droughts, floods, and conflict, while Latin America and the Caribbean suffer repeated hurricanes, floods and coastal storm inundation.
- 7. The areas at risk are also areas of rapid and often informal urbanisation,** pushing development into floodplains, deltas, unstable hillsides, sensitive coastal zones and desert areas. This brings poor settlement design, heat-stressed urban areas, diminished quality of life, lack of identity and impacts on self-confidence. Plummeting biodiversity and environmental degradation are weakening ecosystems that once buffered human settlements from risk and provide vital environmental services.
- 8. Armed conflicts and territorial violence are generating an explosive transformation of territory, simultaneously affecting human settlements including rural areas, towns and cities.** In the Middle East, the destruction of cities, towns and rural communities has triggered massive displacement and the emergence of precarious settlements. In Africa, many conflicts take place in rural areas, forcing farming communities to abandon their lands and creating intense pressure on the receiving cities. In Asia, insurgencies and geopolitical tensions are profoundly altering rural livelihoods and driving forced migration toward urban areas. In Latin America, violence linked to territorial control, illegal mining, and organised crime is also expelling rural populations.
- 9. These processes result in the loss of productive land, disorderly urban expansion, and the collapse of basic human services.** Many displaced communities end up settling in environmentally fragile or highly vulnerable areas as their only option. The convergence of war, territorial violence, and rural-urban displacement is becoming a structural threat to territorial stability and global human security.
- 10. Recurrent disaster-hit regions are therefore an integral component of the global housing crisis.** For example, in the Asia-Pacific in 2022 alone, there were over 140 climate related disasters, leading to over 7,500 deaths, affecting over 64 million people. Repeat disasters are widespread, as illustrated in other cyclone prone areas, for example in the Caribbean and Sri Lanka.

11. Urban areas are at the centre of the housing crisis and concentrate risk when development is poorly planned; when there is a lack of legislation, regulation, or urban planning to prevent or manage disasters; and where infrastructure is inadequate and governance is weak. Informal settlements, in particular, are often located in the most hazardous locations and are systematically excluded from formal recovery mechanisms, despite housing some of the most vulnerable populations.

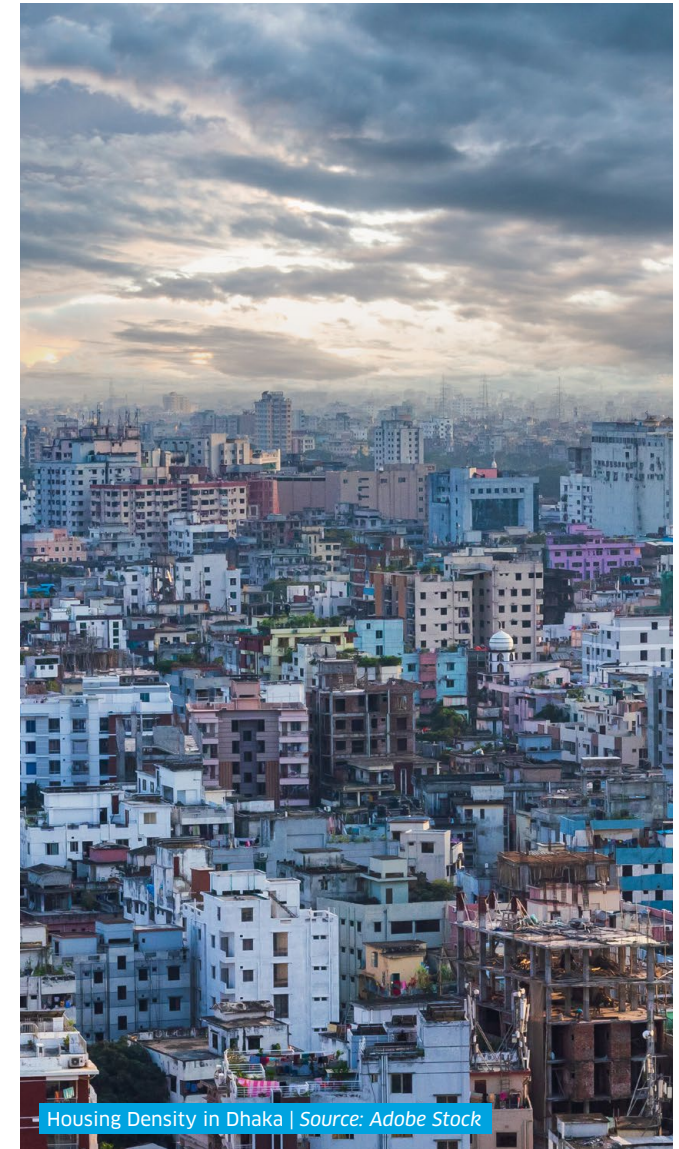
12. The risk of disaster is intensified by the ways territories are planned and governed. Too often, recovery is driven by short-term political imperatives, emergency funding cycles, and sectoral silos. Decisions are made under pressure, with no agreed strategic spatial vision, limited analysis and expertise, and inadequate community participation. Legal frameworks for planning, construction, landscape and urban design, and management to address disasters are not often in place. Exacerbated by insufficient attention to long-term spatial and social consequences, the result is a vicious cycle in which disasters repeatedly erode social development gains and deepen inequality.

13. In areas of armed conflicts, recovery often faces serious institutional barriers. The lack of coordination among national authorities, local governments, humanitarian organisations, and technical sectors leads to scattered and inefficient responses. In many cases, housing reconstruction, infrastructure rebuilding, the restoration of urban services and the landscape

proceed without any vision based or informed analysis of the physical, cultural, economic or landscape context. This fragmentation results in duplication of efforts in some areas and neglect in others, delaying recovery. Without clear governance mechanisms and inter-institutional cooperation, the reconstruction of cities and territories affected by war becomes even slower, uneven, and vulnerable to new risks.

14. To avoid repeating or creating new vulnerabilities disaster recovery must therefore be framed by Rights-based Outcomes and not in terms of reductive Numbers-based Outputs. Recovery must be seen as more than merely the replacement of individual dwellings but the creation of homes in the context of identity, culture, heritage, economics and regional landscape aspirations. Decisions taken during recovery shape land markets, tenure arrangements, affordability, building standards, and access to services for decades.

15. Equitable recovery must prioritise secure, adequate and affordable housing and the creation of quality environments for displaced households and informal communities, recognising their right to the city, quality of life in towns and villages, and to safe healthy shelter. Recovery and housing agendas must be aligned strategically and in action, at local, regional, national and international levels.



2 | The Established Frameworks for Disaster Recovery

16. The Sendai Framework has shifted the global focus from just reacting to disasters, towards systematically managing and reducing underlying vulnerabilities and inequalities. It transcends technical disciplines and resonates politically because it embodies a well-accepted universal value - the moral obligation to reduce risk and prevent avoidable suffering.

17. Priority 4 of the Sendai Framework specifically addresses the challenge of recovery. It integrates disaster risk reduction measures into the restoration of infrastructure, services, and livelihoods to reduce future risk by increasing a

SENDAI Framework Priority 4

Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to 'Build Back Better' in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

"Experience indicates that disaster preparedness needs to be strengthened for more effective response and ensure capacities are in place for effective recovery. Disasters have also demonstrated that the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase, which needs to be prepared ahead of the disaster, is an opportunity to "Build Back Better" through integrating disaster risk reduction measures. Women and persons with disabilities should publicly lead and promote gender-equitable and universally accessible approaches during the response and reconstruction phases."

nation's preparedness to respond to disasters. It also promotes the principle of Build Back Better (BBB) as the basis of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. This includes avoiding building back in high-risk areas and unsafe development patterns.

18. There is however growing concern that risk-creation is outpacing risk-reduction, placing all seven Sendai targets under pressure. This is highlighted in successive UN Global Assessment Reports on Disaster Risk Reduction. Although figures vary by country and sector, the overall pattern is clear. Most disaster-prone countries continue to prioritise short-term reconstruction and economic recovery over longer-term investments in human habitats to strengthen resilience and sustainability. There are ongoing and significant gaps in national recovery frameworks, financing, and professional capacity to operationalise BBB at scale.

19. A strong legal framework of international instruments is important for addressing housing, land and property restitution, especially in situations of displacement caused by armed conflict. These include in particular the Pinheiro Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons, which address the consequences of forced displacement.

20. The Pinheiro Principles guide nation states, international organisations and humanitarian actors in restoring homes, lands and properties to persons arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived of them. Their scope extends to refugees, internally

displaced persons and other similarly situated displaced persons, even when they do not strictly meet the legal definition of a refugee. The Instrument recognises that displacement may occur under diverse circumstances related to conflict or violence. It affirms the right of affected persons to return to their places of habitual residence or to obtain effective restitution of their property. The principles aim to restore legal security; repair injustices caused by displacement and support sustainable processes of return to place and social reconstruction after conflict.

21. The future risk to communities and nations also stems from patterns of urban development that exacerbate exposure to hazard events (e.g. earthquakes, wars or human conflicts). The challenge is to stop exacerbating underlying drivers of risk arising from poor strategic planning, namely: (i) unplanned and rapid urbanisation; (ii) poorly managed land and environmental degradation; (iii) inadequate and non-risk-informed policies; and (iv) the failure to have regard to the interdependence of urban and rural areas and cities within their bioregions.

22. Overall, therefore, the application of the 'Build Back Better' component of Priority 4 is progressing more slowly than needed. The development of Recovery Readiness Assessment Frameworks (RRAFs) should help assess the effectiveness of post-disaster arrangements, including technical capabilities. A RRAF measures the readiness to respond to disasters. However, it is essentially aspatial (i.e. not related to specific place or location). BBB depends on tackling the

underlying causes through a proactive strategic spatial strategy related to places and not just processes, if it is to be transformative.

23. There is a need for deeper alignment of international legal and policy frameworks, with the Sendai Framework, and international instruments (Refer paragraph 39). The integration of the SDGs into Recovery Strategies is particularly significant because of their direct relevance to the form of recovery that should be pursued. The holistic perspective in this Framework directly advances multiple SDG goals related to climate action, quality of life and quality of the environment and sustainable communities, while also reinforcing rights, equity, and institutional partnerships

24. The context for achieving this however is being reshaped by the combined impact of pandemic, global conflicts, technological revolutions and climate change. The ways people think about mobility, livelihood, food consumption, and production; social, leisure, and health amenities, and usage of urban public and community spaces are all being rethought. Living in rural landscapes, supported by innovative communication technologies, is gaining pace. The urban-rural migration and land tenure dynamics are shifting. Integrating landscape into strategic city planning must become the new norm for future-proofing, enhancing the ability of communities to adapt to climate change and be more resilient to disasters.

25. The landscape context for the Framework, through engagement and visioning, addresses spatial possibilities and aspirations to give communities agency, integrating social, environmental and economic factors including topography, hydrology, mobility, identity, space, climate, ecosystems and human settlements, as well as strategies for climate adaptation, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, regenerative ecosystems.

26. The principle of landscape-framed recovery supports a wide range of goals across sectors and stakeholders, ensuring that recovery contributes to long-term climate resilience, human well-being (including mental health) and improved livelihoods for both cities and rural communities. By considering the entire landscape, rather than isolated sectors, recovery investments can address environmental, social, economic and the overall sustainability linking the following themes:

- **Rights-based Recovery and Equity** in delivering spatial and social justice
- **Housing, Land and Basic Services** as a place to belong, not just a commodity
- **Resilient Cities** based on the infrastructure of territory/landscape
- **Climate and Landscape** delivering regenerative recovery
- **Institutions and Partnerships** as the basis of a Global Restart Campaign

SENDAI Framework

Seven Targets to Achieve by 2030

Substantially Increase

- a. Number of countries with national and local DRR strategies
- b. International cooperation to developing countries
- c. Availability of and access to early warning systems and DRR information

Substantially Decrease

- d. Global disaster mortality
- e. Number of affected people
- f. Economic loss in relation to GDP
- g. Damage to critical infrastructure and service disruptions



Disaster Recovery | Source: Adobe Stock

3 | Transforming from “Build Back Better” to “Recovering the Future”

27. Recovering from disaster provides an opportunity for a more sustainable, equitable and resilient future. This Framework therefore reframes the processes of disaster recovery and regeneration as critical for human health, quality of life, quality of the environment, emotional and psychological stability, territorial identity, and a dignified life.

Transformed Development Trajectories

Case Study | Reclaimed Landscape, Germany

Emscher Landscape Park is a 472 km² regional green infrastructure network in Germany's Ruhr region, developed through the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Emscher Park – a state-initiated programme running from 1989 to 1999 – in response to the region's industrial decline. Rather than treating landscape as amenity, it became the structural framework for economic and spatial transformation. The restoration of the heavily polluted Emscher River formed its ecological spine, while former coal and steel sites were converted into public parks and cultural landmarks. Since 2006, the park has been coordinated by the Ruhr Regional Association (Regionalverband Ruhr), connecting 20 cities and two districts through green corridors, cycling routes, and habitat networks. The project redefined the Ruhr as a polycentric, post-industrial metropolitan landscape rooted in ecological regeneration.

28. Recovery requires fundamental analyses of the territory, soil, climate, water systems, culture, economy, heritage, history and identity, to understand the social, environmental and economic interactions and conditions that give rise to vulnerability and to understand the possibilities of addressing these in future through an integrated approach, instead of a default position to rebuild what was lost.

29. Transformative recovery involves envisioning what kind of futures are possible and desirable. It needs to be grounded in the recognition, protection and reparation of human rights; and translated into directive and legal norms for collaborative working across all sectors and disciplines including governance, finance and investment strategies and embedded in a landscape-led, regional spatial vision and land-use policy framework. This applies as much for historically blighted industrial environments as modern day disaster-torn regions, as illustrated in the presumption in favour of urban regeneration, for example in the Ruhr (Germany) and the West Midlands (UK).

30. United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) provides a critical governance foundation for effective disaster recovery and long-term resilience. While not disaster-specific, its focus on accountable institutions, rule of law, and inclusive decision-making directly shapes recovery outcomes. Strong institutions enable coordinated, transparent, and timely recovery efforts, reducing delays and misallocation of resources. Inclusive governance ensures that affected communities—especially

vulnerable groups—are actively involved in decision-making, leading to more equitable and context-appropriate rebuilding.

31. The rule of law supports enforcement of building standards and land-use planning, helping prevent reconstruction in high-risk areas and reducing future disaster impacts. Furthermore, stable and peaceful societies create the conditions necessary for sustained recovery, investment, and resilience-building. Integrating SDG 16 into disaster policy frameworks strengthens accountability, improves governance capacity, and ensures that recovery processes contribute not only to rebuilding infrastructure, but also to reducing risk, protecting rights, and supporting sustainable development.

32. “Building Back Better” must no longer be interpreted as a return to a previous state of normality when it is unlikely to result in resilient outcomes. Many recovery programmes, have no legal or planning frameworks with an integrated approach to disaster prevention or recovery and lack a human-rights based approach to the rights threatened by such disasters, and “Building Back Better” has come to mean constructing more resilient buildings in the same locations, with little consideration as to whether those sites remain viable under future climate and environmental conditions.

Envisioning Futures

Case Study | UN-Habitat Urban Thinkers Campus, Birmingham, UK (2024)

The West Midlands National Park, reimagines the future of a blighted industrial region to drive inclusive social, economic and environmental change, setting a new agenda for the role of landscape as a strategic mechanism for sustainable city region recovery and transformation. Reclaiming the landscape at scale as the very infrastructure upon which communities depend and through which their relationship with this territory is shaped, it is an integrating and holistic approach, bringing fresh insights and impetus to shape the future. It has established a resilient economic, cultural, social and environmental way of working that makes tangible connections between visions, strategy and policy to inform delivery.



- 33. The principle of Recovering the Future acknowledges that the most resilient form of recovery may involve rethinking land use patterns,** for example as in the relocation of the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta to higher, safer ground. This will require difficult conversations about risk, trade-offs, and loss. It however will create opportunities for more sustainable, equitable, and adaptive outcomes, for example the work being undertaken through organisations such as Slum Dwellers International. Decisions must be based on community-led, inclusive and culturally defined processes to ensure social legitimacy, local ownership and capacity, and sustainability.
- 34. Heritage and culture are critical to Recovering the Future embodying local components and materials to ensure the spirit of the place.** This requires a renewed vision for living historic cities, recognising them as complex and resilient systems where cultural heritage, social life, environmental processes, and economic activities are connected.
- 35. Historic cities and places are therefore not static just to be conserved.** They must be recognised as safeguarded living environments shaped by ongoing change. Transformative recovery from disasters must recognise memory, collective identity, local knowledge, and community practices as key resources for resilience, climate adaptation, and social cohesion. Recovery must be based on integrated governance that brings together interdisciplinary expertise and local and intangible knowledge, includes monitoring and evaluation in policy-making, and ensures meaningful community participation in decision-making.
- 36. Mainstreaming future-proofing into recovery requires a deliberate shift away from project-by-project programmes of reconstruction.** It also needs to incorporate guaranteed human-rights, linked to management and legal frameworks and to architecture, strategic landscape and regional planning, environmental and urban design. Recovery, landscape, community engagement and resilience must not be just technical add-ons. They must be organising principles that guide spatial decisions on planning, location, design, governance, and investment. They must be grounded in human dignity as fundamental and derivative rights whose fulfilment is essential to all public policy.
- 37. Transformative Recovery must create a sustainable prospect for the future of local and regional communities.** It must create opportunities for communities not only to reduce disaster risk but also to have a wider perspective to avoid the risks in the first place. These opportunities include regeneration and new development pathways, reducing structural vulnerability, and securing a better quality of life and environment for all with more equitable, climate-adaptive human habitats. Where necessary this needs to be linked to strengthening or creating new well integrated local governance and institutional capacities.

38. The opportunity for transformative recovery must be seized as key to creating a more sustainable future for local communities in line with SDG 11 and the new Urban Agenda.

This alignment across housing, infrastructure, livelihoods, and environment requires creating a proactive vision expressed through integrated, multidisciplinary practice and strategies. Tackling underlying disaster risks requires a longer term framework to be in place that supports this synthesis and focuses on continuous improvement over time through creating a proactive strategic landscape-led spatial strategy. Historically, for example, this approach has been used to shape urban growth in the Randstad (Netherlands) and in Singapore.

39. Transformative recovery needs a longer term vision of recovery and regeneration from past unsustainable development trends. This requires a shift from ad hoc project by project assessments to integrated, place-based strategies. Recovery programmes must balance urgency with allowing time for participation, learning, and adaptation. Otherwise recovery planning and actions risk reproducing the very vulnerabilities it seeks to address, as for example in areas suffering wildfires in California and Australia. The alignment of housing, infrastructure, livelihoods, and environment requires vision through integrated, multidisciplinary practice and strategies including financial, governance and legal frameworks.

Transformative Urban Growth Strategies

Case Study | The Randstad, Netherlands

“The Randstad 2040 Structural Vision positions landscape not as residual space but as the primary framework of regional spatial strategy. Organised around four guiding principles, it places strong emphasis on climate resilience and the integration of green (landscape), blue (water), and red (urbanisation). The vision reframes the Randstad as a constructed delta landscape where water management, ecological networks, and urban development must be designed together. It marks a shift from protecting landscape as a constraint on sprawl toward an affirmative, integrated approach where landscape generates both spatial quality and competitive advantage. Landscape here is infrastructure, not scenery.”

Embedded Nature in Urban Growth Strategies

Case Study | City in Nature Strategy, Singapore

Singapore’s [City in Nature](#) vision, a core pillar of the Green Plan 2030, builds on a planning trajectory from Lee Kuan Yew’s Garden City vision of the 1960s to the current ambition of integrating nature as a structuring system across the entire urban environment.

Delivered through five strategies coordinated by NParks – expanding nature parks, intensifying nature in gardens, restoring habitats, building ecological corridors, and strengthening community stewardship – the vision sets measurable 2030 targets: 200 additional hectares of nature parks, 300 km of nature ways, 500 km of park connectors, and every household within a 10-minute walk of a park.

The vision is embedded across multiple planning instruments. It is integrated into the URA Master Plan through an Ecological Profiling Exercise informing land use decisions and safeguarding ecological connectivity. Blue infrastructure is treated alongside green: the ABC Waters Programme naturalises canals, drains, and reservoirs into multi-functional blue-green corridors managing stormwater, supporting biodiversity, and providing public amenity simultaneously.

Singapore demonstrates that in a land-scarce city-state of 728 km², landscape can become a national planning priority through systematic integration into streets, rooftops, waterways, and corridors – making green and blue infrastructure inseparable from spatial strategy at every scale.

4 | Guiding Principles & Processes for Transformative Recovery from Disaster

40. The Recovery Framework is grounded in a set of interdependent principles for 'Recovering the Future' rather than rebuilding a vulnerable past.

An example of this is avoiding the rebuilding of housing and infrastructure in major floodways or areas impacted by coastal erosion. These principles guide decisions on spatial planning, legal and regulatory frameworks, including investment, design, governance, and professional conduct throughout recovery processes. They seek to implement the obligations and aspirations of the panoply of international commitments.

41. The obligations and commitments that the Framework aligns with, include the following:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,
- The Geneva Conventions, and the Additional Protocols I - II to the Geneva Conventions,
- the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1951 Refugee Convention,
- Pinheiro Principles on Housing and Property Restitution for Refugees and Displaced Persons,
- UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement,
- UN Sustainable Development Goals, and New Urban Agenda,

- UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan, and
- HPF International Participatory Charter and International Landscape Convention.

42. The Recovery Framework also supports the range of HPF guidance on the delivery of environmentally sustainable development, including: the HPF Roadmap to Recovery; the HPF International Participatory Charter; and the proposed international landscape convention. It also complements the range of established good professional practice published by the UN-Habitat (e.g. IGUTP, Her City, the Guide for Integrated Planning in Africa and CRPT), and the HPF member organisations (e.g. the ECTP-CEU European Charter).

43. The HPF Post-2030 Project has highlighted through detailed survey analysis that although the SDGs remain sound, their effectiveness

depends on strengthening implementation at the operational level. A key priority is recognising housing as foundational, either as a dedicated goal or a central structural pillar. A shift from broad targets to specific outcomes is needed in this regard, especially in access to essential services, protection from eviction, and the reduction of homelessness. Governance remains the core constraint, making it crucial to strengthen local institutional capacity. Finally, climate change considerations must be fully embedded across sectors, integrating resilience into housing, land use including food security, and infrastructure systems. These concerns relate to the delivery of the Disaster Recovery Agenda. Accordingly, the Recovery Framework proposes the following Guiding Principles and Participatory Processes for transformative Recovery from Disaster.



Rotterdam: A City with a Sustainable Approach to Rising Seas & Rainfall | Source: Adobe Stock

4 | Guiding Principles for Transformative Recovery from Disaster



1. Integrated

Recovery must be explicitly aligned with binding United Nations human rights instruments and global commitments.



2. Binding

Recovery entails the creation or transformation of frameworks and regulatory processes at national, subnational, and local levels, which reflect and mandatorily guide resilient recovery policies and actions. Aspects include regulatory, legal, planning, architecture, urban design and landscape, urbanisation, civil construction, citizen participation, management and financial services.



3. Comprehensive

Recovery as public policy must begin with a multidimensional and interdisciplinary analysis of the causes and threats of disasters. This includes the structure of the built environment and the infrastructure of landscape, including soil, subsoil, air, water systems, identity, culture and heritage. An understanding of the social, economic and cultural systems that generate vulnerability must be incorporated into legal and governance instruments that integrate strategic spatial planning policy, regeneration, governance and engagement into construction and management processes.



4. Human Rights Guaranteeing

All actions, policies, norms, programmes, and projects for recovery must be oriented towards recognising, guaranteeing, realising, and advancing the human rights involved in recovery and resilience. This includes a dignified life; the integrity of persons and assets; access to clean water; housing; urban services; public space; mobility; a healthy environment; secured heritage; food; health, education and recreation services; living culture; transparency and access to information; including modern telecommunications. The right of refugees and displaced persons to voluntary return, in safety and dignity, to their original or former habitual homes and lands wherever possible; the right to remedy and reparation after conflicts; legal security; access to land; access to justice; and the right to effective participation, which together constitute the foundation of the Right to the City.



5. Equitable and Just

Priority must be given to those most exposed and with the least capacity to recover, with safeguards aimed at guaranteeing human rights and preventing forced displacement, unemployment, loss of heritage, deprivation of basic needs, and land speculation.



6. Spatial and Landscape-Led

If recovery programmes are not to generate new risks or perpetuate those that existed prior to a disaster, political and financial decisions must be based on recognising landscape as a key part of the infrastructure upon which communities depend. Action therefore must have regard to the need of resuscitation, regeneration and wiser use of the landscape, as proposed for the International Landscape Convention (2026). This involves integrating physical and cultural parameters relating to ecology, landscape, heritage, buildings and infrastructure, with human settlements and their social, cultural, and economic systems. Integrating landscape ensures effective place-based solutions and engaged communities in dealing with global challenges.



7. Community, Culture, and Communication Centred

Establishing legal and enforceable mechanisms to guarantee effective participation, encourage synergy among stakeholders, and community organisations; the effective use of telecommunication networks for communication and design of community-based recovery strategies; and the recognition of local knowledge and cultural ties to territory and place.



8. Long-Term Adaptability

Clear and effective legal frameworks, integrated planning and adaptive urban design, phased implementation, and adaptive governance. This requires effective and ongoing research, monitoring, review and evaluation to identify and support changes when and where required, what is working and what needs to be addressed and ways to do so.



9. Capacity Development

Prioritising the regions with high exposure to disaster and low institutional and professional capacity.



10. Professional and Accountable

Ethical, interdisciplinary, measurable and evaluable practice, ensuring accountability and the active defence of safe and just solutions.



11. Social Justice

Ensuring that actions, policies, financial resources, and projects and programmes guarantee the human rights involved in recovery phases, or in the restoration of the minimum conditions necessary for human settlements and are enforceable through administrative or judicial channels.

4 | Participatory Processes in Recovery: Co-Producing Resilient Futures

44. Citizen participation constitutes a place-based, legal, social, and political process through which all stakeholders (such as communities, professionals, and institutions) define issues and challenges, explore options and find solutions, negotiate trade-offs and compensations, and collectively build long-term futures. The following principles are drawn from the HPF International Participatory Charter:

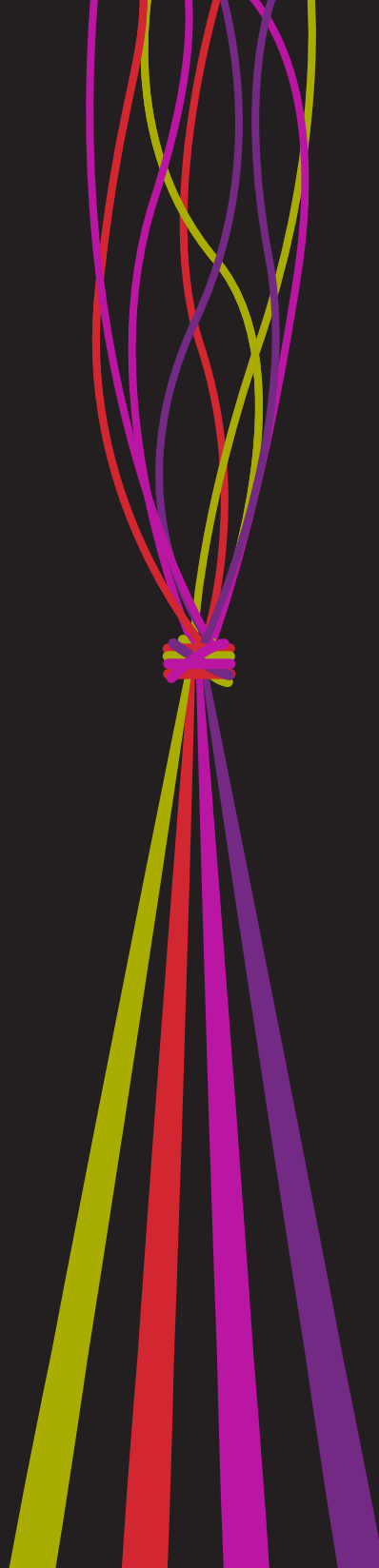
- **Effective disaster recovery cannot be achieved through technical solutions alone.**

Experience across diverse contexts consistently demonstrates that recovery and development programmes which fail to engage affected communities meaningfully are more likely to reproduce vulnerability, deepen inequality, and undermine long-term resilience. Participation is therefore not an optional supplement to recovery; it is a foundational condition for recovering the future.

- **Participation processes help reveal the root causes of vulnerability.** Locally place-based expert knowledge about risk and livelihoods build trust and legitimacy in recovery decisions. Participation in recovery strengthens social and political processes. It enables all stakeholders, professionals, and political processes to learn and jointly define issues and challenges, explore options and find solutions, negotiate trade-offs, and shape long-term spatial futures.

- **Participation must be understood as a fundamental right of residents of human settlements.** It extends as a prerogative to all residents of human settlements, regardless of their social or migratory status, age, disabilities, or location, and benefits people by the sole fact of being persons, irrespective of whether they are owners, occupants, holders of tenure, and whether they live in formal or informal, urban, rural, or Indigenous settlements.
- **Co-produced recovery processes recognise communities as holders of knowledge and agency,** not merely as beneficiaries of assistance. Too often participation is reduced to late-stage consultation on predetermined plans, offering limited influence by communities over the outcomes. This Recovery Framework instead emphasises co-production, in which communities are involved from the outset in shaping recovery visions, priorities, and pathways.
- **Participation is essential for equity and spatial justice,** ensuring the representation of all residents of human settlements, with particular attention to inclusion of marginalised groups (informal settlement residents, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, and displaced populations), who are least able to access formal recovery mechanisms, yet most affected by disaster impacts. Participatory processes must therefore be deliberately designed to ensure inclusive representation, address power imbalances, and avoid reinforcing pre-disaster inequalities.

- **Participatory visioning plays a particularly important role in recovery.** By creating shared, long-term reference points for development, such processes help align short-term recovery actions with long-term resilience goals. Through this work, communities and institutions can explore alternative futures relating to the shape and form of their place, integrating housing, landscape, infrastructure, livelihoods, environment, and identity to create coherent spatial frameworks.
- **Communities need to be supported by interdisciplinary professional resources** with knowledge and skills to act as intermediaries in the interpretation and understanding of the legal, governance and financial frameworks that impact them.
- **Professionals must act with commitment to human rights and human dignity,** particularly to people in situations of greater vulnerability. This will require innovative approaches in urban, landscape regional planning and management, throughout the entire recovery cycle. It calls for a genuine sensitivity to the risk-related challenges that affect populations in so many ways.



Section B

Capacity Building to Deliver
Regenerative & Sustainable Recovery

5 | Global Priority Outcomes for Transformative Recovery

45. The goals of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction remain sound (see Table A). The key challenge is to ensure the delivery of these goals and commitment to its four priorities. The current Sendai guidance and assessment criteria focus on Outputs, by putting in place institutional and governance processes and recovering specific losses. The **Recovery Framework** focuses on the Outcomes, in terms of longer-term sustainability envisaged in SDG 11 to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable by 2030. ***In this context, recovery must be based on rights outcomes, not number outputs.***

46. Rebuilding after crisis is not just a construction project; it is a social contract. Effective disaster risk reduction (DRR) requires more than emergency responses; it demands structural reforms that address the social, economic, physical and cultural drivers of vulnerability. Delivering affordable housing, eliminating land speculation, securing land tenure rights, and embedding recovery within its landscape context are mutually reinforcing pillars of risk-informed development. When integrated into DRR strategies, these measures should reduce exposure to hazards, prevent secondary displacement, protect vulnerable populations, and

promote long-term resilience, quality of life and quality of the environment - a place to call home.

47. By shifting recovery from profit-driven redevelopment toward inclusive, risk-sensitive planning, governments can transform post-disaster reconstruction and regeneration into an opportunity to “Build Back Better” - reducing future losses while advancing equity, environmental stewardship, and social stability.

48. The following priorities have therefore been identified that should guide strategies, policies and programmes for recovery from disaster:

- a. Establishing Order through Law:** where action is based on clear, binding legal norms;
- b. Delivering Affordable Housing:** recognising that providing appropriately located affordable housing is a frontline in delivering resilience;
- c. Eliminating Speculation in Land Values:** which inflates property values in recovering areas and prevents displaced residents from returning;
- d. Securing Land Tenure Rights:** as foundational to equitable disaster recovery;
- e. Embedding Recovery in its Landscape and Cultural Context:** as the infrastructure upon which communities depend and through which their identity is shaped, creating productive, protective, cultural, physical and environmental systems.

Table A: Global Targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)

Reduce Disaster Mortality	Substantially reduce global disaster mortality rates by lowering the number of deaths caused by disasters by 2030.
Reduce Number of Affected People	Substantially reduce the number of people affected globally, including those injured, displaced, or otherwise impacted by disasters.
Reduce Economic Loss	Reduce direct disaster-related economic losses in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP).
Reduce Damage to Critical Infrastructure	Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, particularly health and educational facilities.
Increase DRR Strategies	Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies in place.
Enhance International Cooperation	Enhance international cooperation with developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement national actions.
Increase Early Warning and Risk Information	Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information for all people.

Priority Action: Establishing Order through Law

49. 'Order through Law' is critical in disaster reconstruction. Recovery must not be based on discretionary or improvised decisions, but on clear, binding legal norms. This requires the State to act within a structured legal framework to restore certainty, protect rights, and prevent future risk. After a disaster, social and economic pressures can generate fragmented or politically driven responses.

50. Legal ordering ensures that recovery programmes and projects follow standards grounded in public interest by:

- Requiring public authorities to act according to new norms
- Providing legal confidence for residents, investors, and municipalities
- Placing primacy of life, environment and safety above economic or political considerations.
- Justifying interventions on the basis of public interest, general welfare and global challenges
- Providing accountability and transparency in the allocation of reconstruction resources
- Where necessary, rebalancing rights

51. Together, these principles transform recovery from emergency reaction into governance aligned with constitutional rights and sustainable development objectives.

Framework for Reconstruction and Resilience

Case Study | Guerrero's Post-Otis, Mexico

Following Hurricane Otis (October 2023) – the most powerful Pacific hurricane ever to make landfall in Mexico, devastating Acapulco and causing an estimated US\$15 billion in damage – the State of Guerrero developed three legal instruments to institutionalise disaster governance and reconstruction. The governor acknowledged that substandard construction and past corruption had amplified the devastation, making new regulatory frameworks a political as well as technical necessity.

The December 2023 Decreto de Nuevos Lineamientos para la Construcción en la Franja Costera established binding coastal construction standards covering materials, climate adaptation, and emergency refuge requirements. Ley No. 830 de Atención a Desastres, Reconstrucción y Recuperación (August 2024) created a statewide framework covering the full disaster cycle, with civil society participation requirements and basic income guarantees for affected populations. Ley No. 861 de Gestión Integral de Riesgos y Protección Civil (September 2024) addressed integrated risk management.

These instruments shift disaster response from improvised action to a legally grounded system embedding resilience into construction, coordination, and social rights.

Rebalancing Reports

Case Study | Public Hydraulic Domain, Spain

Public Hydraulic Domain (DPH) reduces flood risk, as demonstrated in the Ebro River basin around Zaragoza. Following repeated floods, including a major event in 2015, authorities mapped flood zones and imposed strict land use controls.

A key feature of the DPH is the *withdrawal or limitation of private rights*, as land within designated floodplains is legally reclassified as part of the public hydraulic domain. This means landowners may lose the right to develop, build, or fully utilise their land, and in some cases must accept periodic flooding as part of flood management.

In Zaragoza, this has enabled the restoration of natural floodplains and the creation of river parks, reduced peak discharge and improved environmental quality. However, this approach has generated conflict, particularly with farmers who face reduced income and land value due to restricted use. While compensation is sometimes available, it is not always sufficient, leading to perceptions of unfairness. Additionally, strict regulations can limit urban expansion and involve slow bureaucratic processes.

Overall, the DPH in the Ebro basin is an effective example of preventative flood management, but its success relies on challenging political and social trade-offs.

Priority Action: Delivering Affordable Housing

- 52. Delivering Affordable Housing:** The delivery of affordable housing at scale and in risk-free locations should be in the frontline of action within disaster risk reduction frameworks. When low-income households lack access to safe, secure, and serviced housing, they may have no choice but to settle in hazard-prone areas such as floodplains, unstable slopes, or environmentally degraded peripheries. This spatial marginalisation increases exposure to disasters and perpetuates cycles of displacement. Temporary shelters, while necessary in emergencies, should not substitute for providing permanent, risk-informed housing, and creating resilient community-based solutions.
- 53. Embedding affordable housing within DRR means integrating hazard mapping, resilient construction standards, and access to infrastructure into housing policy.** It also requires inclusive zoning, public land allocation, and financing mechanisms that prioritise vulnerable groups. By reducing unsafe settlement patterns and ensuring proximity to livelihoods and services, affordable housing becomes a preventative investment that lowers long-term disaster losses and strengthens community stability.

Delivery of Affordable Housing Provision Post Disaster

Case Studies | India and Chile

The outcomes of housing provision in post-disaster reconstruction can either reduce vulnerability and support long-term recovery or entrench displacement and precarity depending on the recovery policies and programmes shaped by governance, design, and how far communities retain agency.

India (2001): Following the Gujarat earthquake, which killed over 20,000 people and destroyed more than one million homes, the state government adopted a multi-track reconstruction policy in which owner-driven reconstruction was a central approach, giving homeowners financial and technical assistance to rebuild themselves. Approximately 77% chose this route. However, audits found that at least 30% of owner-built houses were missing required earthquake-resistant structural elements. The broader legacy was institutional: Gujarat's response directly produced the State Disaster Management Act 2003, which became the blueprint for India's national Disaster Management Act 2005.

Chile (2010): Following the magnitude 8.8 earthquake and tsunami, reconstruction in Constitución incorporated an incremental housing model developed by architecture firm Elemental. Piloted in Iquique in 2003, the approach delivered structurally complete but partially finished houses through social housing subsidies and a public-private partnership, while residents completed the remaining half using their own resources over time. This combined state support with household agency, delivering 484 families into permanent ownership with flexibility to expand.



Villa Verde Incremental Housing in Chile | Source: Arquitectura Viva

Priority Action: Eliminating Speculation in Land Values

54. Eliminating Speculation in Land Values: Land speculation undermines disaster risk reduction by inflating property values in recovering areas and preventing displaced residents from returning to safer, serviced neighbourhoods. Speculative investment distorts recovery priorities, favouring

short-term profit over risk-informed land-use planning. This often pushes low-income households toward cheaper or available but more hazard-exposed land, increasing systemic risk.

55. DRR-aligned governance must regulate speculative practices through land value capture, taxation of vacant land, and transparent land administration. Stabilising land markets ensures that reconstruction prioritises safety, equity, and environmental suitability rather than capital gains.

Controlling speculation is therefore central to preventing secondary displacement and ensuring recovery reduces risk - not redistributing it.

Eliminating Land Speculation Following Disasters

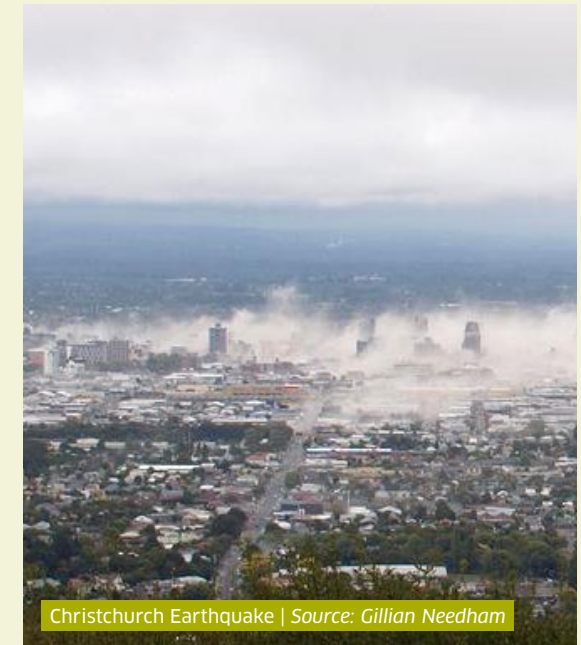
Case Studies | New Zealand and Haiti

Post-disaster land markets can either stabilise or destabilise recovery, shaped by tenure systems, speed of intervention, and pre-existing institutional capacity.

Following the 2010–2011 Christchurch earthquakes, the New Zealand government designated residential red zones and offered voluntary buyouts to approximately 7,857 property owners in 2007 rateable values, providing price certainty and preventing distressed sales in unsafe areas. However, the scheme was not without controversy: those who declined faced withdrawal of infrastructure and insurance, creating strong financial pressure for acceptance, and with uninsured homeowners initially excluded from compensation offers, leading to legal challenges.

In contrast, following the 2010 Haiti earthquake, which displaced over 1.5 million people and destroyed an estimated 250,000 residences, pre-existing land tenure weaknesses were dramatically amplified. Land rights had long advantaged those with formal title, while the majority of residents had no legally enforceable claim to land or dwelling. The absence of a functioning cadastral system, combined with delayed reconstruction and forced evictions from public and private land, prevented return and entrenched long-term displacement. Two years after the earthquake, nearly 500,000 people remained in informal settlements.

These contrasting cases illustrate how zoning frameworks, compensation mechanisms, and functioning land tenure systems fundamentally shape whether post-disaster land markets support or undermine recovery.”



Christchurch Earthquake | Source: Gillian Needham

Priority Action: Securing Land Tenure Rights

- 56. Securing Land Tenure Rights:** Secure land tenure is foundational to equitable disaster recovery. Without recognised tenure, households are frequently excluded from compensation, reconstruction assistance, and formal planning processes. This exclusion heightens the risk of eviction, land grabbing, and permanent displacement.
- 57. Tenure security enables residents to invest in resilient construction, participate in planning, and remain anchored in safer communities.** Flexible recognition of informal or customary tenure systems, gender-sensitive land policies, and transparent documentation processes strengthen both rights and resilience. Tenure security reduces vulnerability before disasters occur and safeguards recovery outcomes afterward.

Securing Land Tenure Rights Following Disasters

Case Studies | The Philippines and Sri Lanka

Land tenure rights in post-disaster recovery determine whether reconstruction serves affected communities or displaces them in favour of more powerful interests – and the outcomes in the Philippines and Sri Lanka reveal strikingly similar failures despite different disaster contexts.

Following Typhoon Haiyan (2013), the Philippine government declared coastal no-build zones and committed to relocating residents to safer sites. However, rebuilding within no-build zones was permitted for hotels and commercial uses but prohibited for residential dwellings. By 2016, only 25,000 of a promised 205,000 housing units had been completed, relocation sites frequently lacked basic utilities, and an estimated 200,000 people faced prolonged displacement. Without meaningful tenure security, poor and landless households risked exclusion from lasting recovery.

Following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Sri Lanka, the government imposed coastal buffer zones prohibiting residential reconstruction within 100–200 metres of the coastline. Tourism operators received exceptions almost immediately, generating widespread perceptions of land appropriation. Relocation settlements were frequently built 10–15 kilometres from original homes, severing livelihoods dependent on coastal access. Researchers have since characterised the relocation programme as a second disaster for affected communities.

Together, these cases illustrate that applying land restrictions unequally – protecting commercial interests while displacing poor residents – consistently produces inequitable and failed recoveries.



Emergency Shelters after Typhoon | Source: The Guardian



Displaced by Typhoon | Source: International Business Times

Priority Action: Embedding Recovery in its Landscape and Cultural Context

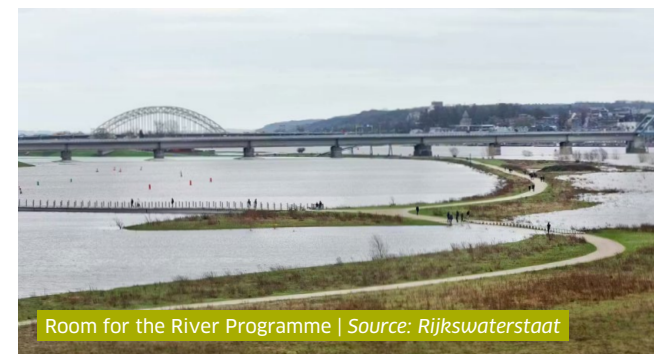
58. Embedding Recovery in its Landscape Context:

Disaster risk reduction requires an understanding of landscape as the infrastructure upon which we depend and a vital cultural, physical and economic resource. This informs spatial visions for recovery at scale in order to create identity, economy, sense of hope, security and sense of place. The landscape and healthy ecosystems have the capacity to protect - wetlands absorb floods, vegetation stabilises slopes and provides coastal protection and regulate climate and water flows.

59. Ignoring landscape during recovery increases future hazard exposure. The integration of nature-based solutions, watershed management, and regenerative land use is essential in reconstruction planning at a regional and local scale as well as settlement design. It improves public health and well-being, reduces hazard intensity and reinforces social identity and economic prosperity. Landscape-led planning, transformation and rebuilding reduces long-term risk, ensuring safer, healthier, and resilient territories.

60. Landscape-led thinking across boundaries shifts recovery away from isolated, site-based projects towards strategic spatial interventions. This allows root causes of risk to be addressed whether they are physical, social and economic, for example, sinking cities and rising sea levels, floods, watershed degradation, coastal erosion, urban heat

accumulation, and ecosystem loss, the location of dislocated and isolated communities, poor health, damaged economies and the significant underestimation of risk. Landscape thinking at scale gives communities the agency to reduce these vulnerabilities in the long term. Landscape-led planning reduces repeated reconstruction of risk.



Embedding Recovery in its Landscape Context

Case Studies | The Netherlands and Nepal

Recovery that aligns with landscape systems can reduce long-term vulnerability; rebuilding that ignores landscape context risks reproducing or compounding existing hazard exposure.

The Netherlands' Room for the River programme, developed in response to severe flooding in 1993 and 1995, represents proactive integration of hydrological processes into regional spatial planning. Rather than raising dikes further, the strategy enlarged river discharge capacity across 39 locations on the Rhine, Meuse, Waal, and IJssel rivers through floodplain excavation, side channels, relocated levees, and flood bypasses. With a government budget of €2.3 billion and a dual objective of flood safety and landscape quality, biodiversity significantly increased in the affected floodplains while flood levels were measurably reduced.

In contrast, following the 2015 Gorkha earthquake in Nepal – which triggered over 20,000 landslides across 14 districts – reconstruction grants enabled rapid rebuilding but approximately 90% of households rebuilt in situ. While building codes recommended avoiding landslide-susceptible slopes, adoption was inconsistent, and landslide hazard in affected areas remained measurably higher four years after the earthquake.

These cases illustrate how embedding landscape and hydrological risk into spatial planning frameworks – rather than treating it as a constraint managed after the fact – is fundamental to reducing long-term vulnerability.

6 | Global Priority Regions for Disaster Future-Proofing

61. All regions face the challenges of disaster recovery.

Some regions face more predictable risks than others and not all regions face equal levels of risk or capacity. The overall EC INFORM RISK index identifies countries at risk from humanitarian crises and disasters that could overwhelm national response capacity. It has three dimensions - hazards and exposure, vulnerability and lack of coping capacity.

62. There has been a general increase in the risk of humanitarian crises at global level,

as highlighted by the EC INFORM RISK data source, in recent years. While there has been an improvement in coping capacity, this has been negated by large increases in the number of people exposed to natural hazards and conflict, and to their vulnerability. The increase in risk emerged especially after 2022, because of escalating armed conflicts that triggered mass displacement and disrupted food systems worldwide. Simultaneously, the number of people affected by natural disasters has surged due to extreme weather events, seismic catastrophes, and large-scale flooding disproportionately impacting vulnerable regions.

63. Although the principles in the Recovery Framework apply to all regions,

they are of particular significance to disaster-prone regions, especially those that have limited capacity to anticipate and respond to disaster, for example, those listed in Table B as being most vulnerable in the INFORM RISK index. Such areas have the highest priority for future-proofing and resilience-building, strategic investment and professional engagement.

64. A set of indicative Global Priority Areas should be identified for support through a transparent, multi-criteria approach that considers:

- The interaction between hazard exposure and social vulnerability,
- Spatial development patterns,
- Institutional capacity,
- Climate stress,
- Scale of population exposure and displacement,
- Poverty, informality, and inequality,
- Unsafe urbanisation,
- Governance constraints,
- Ecological significance, and
- Strategic urban or regional importance.

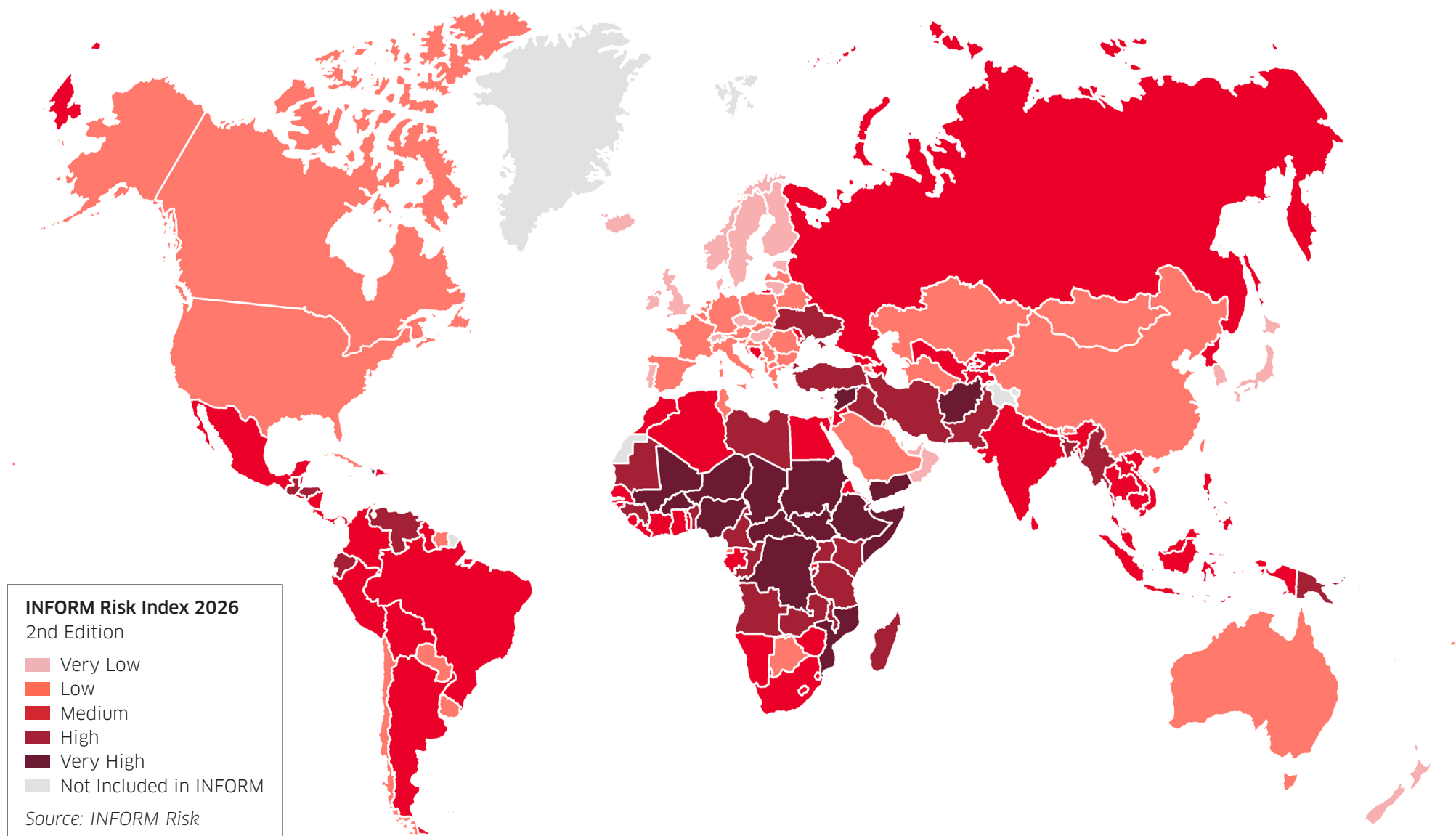
65. These criteria could, for example, identify low-lying coastal and delta regions, arid and heat-stressed urban regions, mountainous and seismically active areas, flood-prone river basins, small Island states, and conflict-affected or fragile contexts.

66. Recognition as a global priority region could be used to trigger integrated, landscape-led planning support; long-term, flexible financing aligned with resilience outcomes; deployment of multidisciplinary professional expertise; strengthening of local institutions; and monitoring of long-term impacts.

Table B: Risk by Country

Source: INFORM Risk

Country	Risk, Vulnerability and Coping Capacity
Philippines	High exposure (storms, floods); high vulnerability and relatively low coping capacity
India	Major population exposure to multiple hazards; high exposure and vulnerability
Indonesia	Multi-hazard exposure (earthquakes, volcanoes, cyclones, wildfires)
Colombia	High exposure (landslides/floods); high vulnerability
Mexico	Notable exposure (storms/earthquakes)
Myanmar	Exposure to floods/cyclones; high vulnerability and low coping capacity
Bangladesh	Extremely high exposure to cyclones/floods (deltas)
Pakistan	Exposed to heatwaves/floods; high vulnerability and coping limits
Nepal	Earthquake and flood exposure; high vulnerability relative to capacity
Mozambique	High cyclone / flood exposure; limited coping capacity



7 | Delivering Transformation - Adding to the Recovery & Future-Proofing Toolbox

67. The Priority Actions and Regions for intervention are listed in the earlier Sections of this Framework. In view of main concerns about the current outcomes of disaster relief programmes, priority needs to be given to accelerating delivery.

68. Global sustainable development goals and international human rights commitments are the guiding principles in the Post Disaster Needs Assessment. International disaster recovery is guided by a set of complementary frameworks, including the Sendai Framework (policy), PDNA (assessment), Disaster Recovery Frameworks (planning), and operational guidance from UNDP, IFRC, and IRP, which together provide a comprehensive approach to recovery and resilience.

69. In order to deliver the wide range of advice in established Guidance, the following additional key components are promoted as part of any **Recovery Outcomes and Future-Proofing Toolbox**:

- a. Rapid Response Professionals
- b. Community engagement and co-design methods
- c. Landscape-led, regeneration risk and opportunity assessments
- d. Providing context through longer-term strategic spatial planning
- e. Outcomes Monitoring Recovery Frameworks
- f. Professional ethics and accountability checklists

70. These proposed additions to the toolbox are not a fixed set of prescriptions, but rather a structured collection of methods that can be adapted to diverse geographic, cultural, and institutional contexts. The purpose is to translate principles into action and support coherent, future-oriented recovery regeneration processes.

Rapid Response Professionals

71. The role of the professions has never been more critical as cities face accelerating challenges - from climate change and rapid urbanisation to social inequality and environmental degradation. The global community of professions brings the expertise and experience to transform policy rhetoric into action.

72. In responding to disasters, professional support needs a mindset of first responders - prepared, decisive, and able to act under pressure. Being “ready to act” involves:

- Anticipating and understanding risks,
- Maintaining flexibility to adapt to rapidly changing conditions,
- Prioritising safety and resilience from the outset, and
- Ensuring that early actions contribute positively to long-term recovery rather than creating further vulnerabilities.

73. Collaboration must be immediate rather than negotiated during a crisis. Strong communication systems and partnerships in a culture of adaptive thinking and shared leadership are required between government bodies, NGOs, professionals, and community groups. This should not be impeded by administrative delays.

74. The potential of inter-professional action as agents of change - Rapid Response Professionals - could be harnessed by:

- a. Establishing model Inter-professional Operating Procedures and Incident Command Systems based on lessons learned from past disasters rather than continuously re-invented; and
- b. Implementing Habitat Professionals Task Forces and a Global Knowledge Sharing Hub, for example, through memorandum of understanding with the UN-Habitat.

Community Engagement and Co-Design Methods

75. Communities are holders of knowledge and agency and with support can maintain and strengthen social cohesion, and ensure that recovery solutions are culturally appropriate and locally supported. This is recognised in the International Participatory Charter, and developed, for example, by EAROPH in the Yidinji Proposition.

76. Engagement of affected communities in longer-term recovery decisions immediately post-disaster is a special challenge as households deal with their immediate needs. Involvement of communities in these early stages is critical as illustrated by the ‘A Room with a Roof’ Programme in Pakistan.

77. If affected communities are not engaged immediately the risk is that this results in inappropriate housing, poorly located relocation sites, loss of social cohesion and identity, and

reduced livelihood opportunities. Lack of capacity to be involved in such decision-making processes reinforces existing power imbalances. The Sendai Framework specifically calls for women and persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote gender-equitable and universally accessible approaches in responding to disaster.

Community Engagement in Risk Reduction

Case Study | Yidinji Proposition, Australia

The EAROPH report presents the Yidinji Proposition as a climate justice framework developed with Indigenous leaders from Australia and Pacific Island nations. It calls for community-led climate action grounded in Indigenous knowledge, cultural authority, and equitable access to resources. The report outlines five pillars: empowering local governance; enabling adaptation; enabling remediation (including loss and damage mechanisms); enabling mitigation through renewable transition; and enabling long-term systemic transformation. Rather than a sovereignty claim, the report frames the Yidinji Proposition as a practical policy roadmap to direct climate finance and decision-making power toward frontline Indigenous and Pacific communities.

Community Engagement in Early Recovery

Case Study | ‘One Room with a Roof,’ Pakistan

The “One Room with a Roof” project in Pakistan, led by Orangi Pilot Project (OPP-RTI) with support from ACCA, helps flood-affected families rebuild basic shelter after the 2010 Indus floods. Returning villagers construct simple one-room houses using salvaged or local materials, while the project provides affordable roofing kits. These kits include bamboo, steel girders, reeds, plastic sheeting, and mud insulation, designed for durability and climate comfort. Easy to assemble in a day, the roofs enable families to quickly secure safe living spaces. The initiative has already supported thousands of households and continues expanding to reach more communities.

Rebuilding Settlements with Communities

Case Study | Thecho and Machhegaun, Kathmandu Valley, Nepal

In 2015 Nepal was rocked by the 7.8 magnitude earthquake on 25th of April 2015 and combined with aftershocks killed 9000 and severely damaged almost a million houses. The rehabilitation efforts in Nepal overall involved many organisations in the region and around the world, however the national process was slow to start due to various reasons.

In 2016 workshops were held to empower local communities in the reconstruction of earthquake-affected settlements in Thecho and Machhegaun. In response to slow national recovery efforts, organisations including ACHR, CAN, Misereor, and Lumanti supported a participatory approach where residents worked alongside professionals and experts. The workshop emphasised community decision-making, collective planning, and hands-on training, enabling residents to design rebuilding strategies that reflected their cultural heritage and local needs. The workshops provided a model of community-driven reconstruction, offering training to community representatives and enabling the sharing of ideas between organisations and residents about rebuilding settlements together.

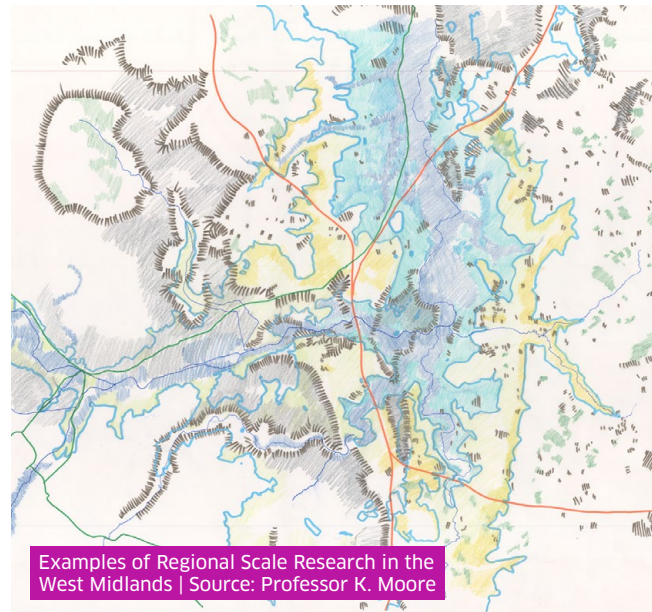
Landscape-led Assessment and Visioning of Risk and Opportunity

78. The importance of landscape and its inherent values and environmental services must be a foundational element of Recovery planning and action. This is recognised in the HPF Roadmap which affirms that Disaster Recovery is not just a question of physical redevelopment and providing more natural areas and open space in towns and cities. It is a question of resuscitation, a need to urgently improve the health of the land, waters and air, the health of communities, their identity, civic pride and resilience. It is a key element in addressing all of the global challenges we face.

79. Landscape is also a key factor to remedying the artificial policy urban-rural divide in recovery, through its place-making approach, reducing inequalities and addressing food security. Landscape is central to recovery, in creating community resilience, engendering confidence by connecting policy to real practice. We need to work spatially - visually, ecologically and economically; and work beyond boundaries across institutional silos, disciplines and sectors. This requires collaboration, combining knowledge, skills and experiences, embracing our differences and diverse views and interests in the mix. Diversity strengthens our adaptability and resilience.

80. The Recovery Framework promotes the following principles recognised in the International Landscape Convention to be incorporated into regulatory systems:

- Assessment criteria based on 'strategic-fit' with inter-generational spatial visions, implementation and impacts;
- Guidelines that allow decisions to reflect spatial physical, material and cultural context and the capacity of the landscape to address global recovery challenges; and
- New metrics to reflect values around environmental, institutional working and innovative governance and financial models.



Landscape-led Assessment and Visioning of Risk and Opportunity

International Landscape Convention

Principles for Recovery

A new international convention to encourage landscape-based visioning in Recovery Strategies and programmes by:

- Considering the landscape as a cultural and natural concept, a physical and abstract entity, having economic and social value,
- Focusing on the experience people have of their physical environment, dealing with the protection of the past as well as the shaping of the future,
- Recognising the vital connections between governance, culture, health and economics,
- Offering inspiration through principles and values, encouraging work across established institutional, geographical and disciplinary boundaries,
- Providing leadership, sharing and rewarding good practice,
- Dealing with the whole space, the rural and the urban, wilderness and human-made, the most treasured and memorable, as well as the unloved and degraded.

Providing Context Through Long-Term Strategic Spatial Planning

- 81. Without a broader context provided for recovery plans they will, of their nature, be short-term and focussed on immediate response and reconstruction.** Without explicitly integrating long-term risk reduction, climate adaptation, regeneration and environmentally sustainable development considerations, communities, towns and cities can easily be locked into unsafe and maladaptive development pathways. Collectively, these risks reproduce vulnerability rather than reduce it, undermining equitable and resilient recovery outcomes and encouraging land speculation.
- 82. Better urban and territorial planning systems are needed.** The planning system needs retooling to consistently include spatial visioning and scenario planning tools to enable all stakeholders to explore alternative futures under conditions of uncertainty and known factors. By considering multiple climate, demographic, environmental, social, economic and governance scenarios, these tools can help align short-term recovery actions with long-term resilience objectives and avoid locking investment into unsustainable pathways.

Strategic Planning for Transformative Recovery

Case Study | Rebuild Green 2030, Ukraine

Rebuild Green 2030 is a systemic recovery platform in support of Ukraine's reconstruction amid war, displacement, and economic disruption. It recognises that rebuilding must go beyond humanitarian aid to restore housing, revive local economies, rebuild industry, and align with climate goals. Rather than a single project, it connects municipalities, Rebuild Green 2030: Participatory and Scalable Recovery in Practice

Ukraine's recovery is taking place under ongoing war conditions, large-scale displacement, damaged infrastructure, and economic relocation. In this context, rebuilding cannot focus only on replacing destroyed assets. It must simultaneously restore housing, support local economies, and strengthen long-term resilience.

Rebuild Green 2030 operates as a practical recovery platform working directly with municipalities. At its core is the Rebuild Green International Hackathon, where local authorities present real sites and defined needs. Multidisciplinary teams work with communities and international mentors to develop implementable solutions, considering regulatory limits, budgets, materials, and delivery capacity. Selected projects move past conceptual proposals into piloting and financing.

The programme applies different financing models depending on scale. Small community projects have been delivered through crowdfunding, volunteer engagement, and local sponsorship, enabling rapid implementation while building local construction skills. Mid-scale cultural and rehabilitation facilities combine donor funding, private sponsorship, and municipal co-financing, linking social recovery with employment and training. At territorial scale, the Eco-Housing District integrates affordable green housing with a registered industrial park, using layered public-private financing and national recovery instruments to create a bankable and replicable model.

Across all projects, circular construction systems, local supply chains, and workforce training reduce dependency on imports and strengthen regional capacity. International partnerships support technology transfer and access to European funding frameworks. The result is recovery that builds future economic and environmental resilience rather than restoring past vulnerability.

Central to the model is the Rebuild Green International Hackathon, which matches local recovery needs with multidisciplinary expertise to produce implementable solutions. Projects are then channelled into structured pipelines for piloting, financing, and replication within a coordinated ecosystem.

Measuring Successful Outcomes: Going Beyond Process Input Measures

- 83. Success in recovery should not be measured solely by the speed of reconstruction or the number of assets repaired or replaced.** Success must be assessed in terms of longer-term outcomes and objectives. These include reductions in risk and vulnerability, equity of recovery benefits, strengthened institutional capacity, and the ability of places and communities to adapt to future change.
- 84. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should combine quantitative and qualitative indicators, capturing social, spatial, environmental, economic and governance dimensions of recovery.** Learning should be embedded throughout the recovery process, enabling adjustment as conditions evolve and new knowledge emerges. This calls for new *Global Shared Knowledge Hubs*.

Ensuring Equitable Access to Professional Resources

- 85. Limited access to professional resources such as legal, technical, and planning expertise constrains informed and fair decision-making, particularly for vulnerable groups.** Professional ethics and accountability checklists help practitioners assess whether recovery proposals genuinely reduce risk, address equity, align with agreed spatial visions

and disaster management knowledge, and are transparent about trade-offs and uncertainties. Monitoring, learning and adaptive management frameworks support long-term learning and adjustment, recognising recovery as an evolving process rather than a one-off project. This needs to be linked to the re-tooling of planning systems and building professional capacity as part of a Global Restart Campaign.

Access to Professional Resources

Case Study | Sri Lankan-Australian Cooperation

Australian professional planning support in Sri Lanka following the 2004 tsunami was in the form of short-term advisory missions, collaborative planning exercises, and capacity-building workshops conducted in partnership with national and local authorities. This support provided guidance on settlement relocation, coastal zone management, and hazard-sensitive land-use planning, and reconstruction frameworks and policy. The long-term benefit depended on the degree to which new practices were embedded within Sri Lanka's governance systems. Overall, it was significant in its focus on technical knowledge transfer and capacity development.

Outcome-oriented Disaster Recovery Monitoring

Case studies | Japan and Indonesia

Tohoku Tsunami and Earthquake - Japan

Following the 2011 disaster, the national Reconstruction Agency monitored within a 10-year recovery framework. In addition to infrastructure delivery, it considered longer-term wellbeing and resilience outcomes indicators included:

- Population return and change
- Livelihood recovery
- Community relocation satisfaction
- Mental health and psychosocial recovery
- Environmental regeneration

Indian Ocean Tsunami - Aceh, Indonesia

Monitoring by a dedicated reconstruction agency (BRR) and others included livelihood and coastal ecosystem recovery included:

- Household income recovery
- Livelihood diversification and economic resilience including income stability
- Poverty reduction and employment trends
- Community participation
- Environmental recovery and regeneration, including mangroves and fisheries

8 | Call to Action

➔ **The scale and nature of contemporary disaster risk and impacts demand a fundamental rethinking of Recovery and Transformation.** In the context of protecting and maintaining cultural identity and community, rebuilding the past is no longer sufficient. Recovery must become a catalyst for safer, more just, and more resilient futures.

➔ **The Habitat Professionals Forum is committed to promoting and supporting this change.** The Professions including planners, architects, landscape architects, engineers, surveyors and a range of allied disciplines - are the critical intermediaries between policy, place, and people. Their responsibilities extend beyond information, advice and technical delivery to include visioning, integration and synthesis, ethical judgement, collaboration and advocacy. Professions and their members are called upon to challenge unsafe, unhealthy norms, to resist pressure to rebuild and increase risk, and to support inclusive, participatory recovery processes that prioritise long-term resilience, regeneration and equity.

➔ **The Habitat Professionals Forum calls on governments, communities, professionals, and development partners to adopt the principles of the Framework. This will enable recovery programmes** to move beyond repetition of past failures and contribute meaningfully to environmentally sustainable development, effective climate adaptation, and realisation of the right to adequate housing and safe, healthy human habitats that improve the quality of life and quality of the environment for all.

➔ **Recovering the Future requires coordinated, long-term vision-led action across all sectors and professions, and at all levels.** Disaster recovery and future-proofing cannot be delivered by any single institution, discipline, or funding stream. The implications for key stakeholder groups are set out in the following paragraphs, highlighting both the actions required and the changes in practice necessary to avoid reproducing past vulnerabilities.

➔ **National governments** as well as inter-government agencies and partnerships play a decisive role in shaping recovery outcomes through legislation, policy, funding frameworks, and institutional mandates. Governments are responsible for embedding risk-informed regenerative spatial planning, resilience criteria, and future-proofing principles into disaster recovery laws, investment mechanisms, and institutional governance. They must ensure that recovery does not bypass planning systems or environmental safeguards in the name of speed, and that emergency powers are time-limited and followed by robust governance processes. Investment in cross ministerial funding to achieve overarching visions, capacity, transparency, and accountability is essential.

➔ **Local authorities** are central to place-based recovery. As the subnational level of government, closest to affected communities and landscapes, they are uniquely positioned to lead integrated recovery planning that aligns housing, landscape, infrastructure, livelihoods, community engagement and environmental management. To fulfil this role, local authorities require: cross sectoral governance

and working practices; strengthened technical, regulatory, and financial capacity; and sustained and long term support from national governments and development partners.

➔ **Communities and civil society organisations are essential co-producers of recovery.** Their experience of disasters, knowledge of place, livelihoods, social networks, cultural practices and environmental parameters is indispensable for effective and legitimate recovery outcomes. Civil society also plays a vital role in enabling and facilitating participation and advocating for marginalised groups. They are vital to ensuring adequate resourcing of the recovery effort is being provided, and for holding institutions accountable.

➔ **Donors and development partners exert significant influence through funding conditions, timelines, and performance metrics.** The Recovery Framework calls for a shift away from short-term, output-focused funding towards long-term, flexible financing aligned with resilience, equity, and institutional strengthening. Emergency relief and initial recovery phases must be designed with this longer-term shift in mind. Donors should align interventions with local priorities, processes and systems, avoiding parallel or disparate structures that undermine local capacity. Their involvement as partners can be a key component of delivering transformative processes and outcomes for more resilient futures.



The HPF wish to thank the large number of organisations and individuals, especially Prof. M. Pisano, who have contributed to drafting this Framework, and the infographic support from:

DIALOG

The Framework for Transformative Recovery from Disasters (© 2026) has been prepared by the United Nations Habitat Professionals Forum (HPF), with active support from the Association of Urbanistic Jurisprudence (AUJ-CJUR), the Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization (CSU), the Eastern Regional Organization for Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH), European Council of Spatial Planners (ECTP-CEU); Global Planners Network (GPN) and International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA).

The need for this Framework supports the implementation of the HPF's Roadmap to a Just and Regenerative Recovery launched at the World Urban Forum 11 in September 2022.

For further information contact:

✉ habitatprofessionalsroadmap@btinternet.com

🌐 [linkedin.com/company/un-habitat-professionals-forum](https://www.linkedin.com/company/un-habitat-professionals-forum)

