Disaster Risk Management Policy Diagnostic Tool

Methodological Note

Introduction

Developing and strengthening the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) policy framework is an essential condition for enhancing resilience and supporting job creation at the country level. However, there is no widely agreed set of criteria defining what constitutes an effective and mature DRM system, making objective assessment challenging. In the absence of clear standards, it becomes difficult to evaluate the policy and institutional setting for DRM and rigorously measure progress. This lack of clarity ultimately hampers the identification of critical gaps and priority reforms needed to build disaster and climate resilience.

To fill this gap, the proposed DRM policy diagnostic tool enables task teams to conduct a high-level, standardized diagnostic of a country's DRM policy framework. The tool is grounded in a comprehensive review of DRM policy programs supported through Development Policy Financing (DPF) with Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Options (Cat DDOs) since 2009. This review has supported the articulation of an idealized DRM policy framework, against which a country's existing framework is benchmarked. Consistent with the DPF results chain, the diagnostic goes beyond assessing the formal adequacy of policy and institutional arrangements. It also examines the status of implementation of key reforms, as well as the extent to which expected outcomes have been achieved. The results of the diagnostic are interpreted as the distance between the current DRM policy setting and this idealized frontier of good practice in DRM. Importantly, while the evaluation approach reflects lessons learned and good practices that underpin effective DRM frameworks, it is not intended to serve as prescriptive guidance.[1]

The DRM policy diagnostic tool prioritizes objectivity and rapid assessment to help structure in-country DRM policy dialogue and inform operational engagement. Based on task team inputs, the tool computes maturity levels across key DRM policy dimensions and provides a quantified snapshot of a country's DRM policy and institutional setting. This facilitates the identification of areas of relative weakness and supports the prioritization of policy reforms that may be considered for support through DPF instruments, including but not limited to Cat DDOs. Therefore, the diagnostic serves as an entry point for policy dialogue rather than a definitive assessment and can be repeated over time to track progress and changes in policy maturity. The diagnostic can be complemented with more in-depth analysis and qualitative insights to further advance the understanding of existing DRM practices and provide relevant policy advice.

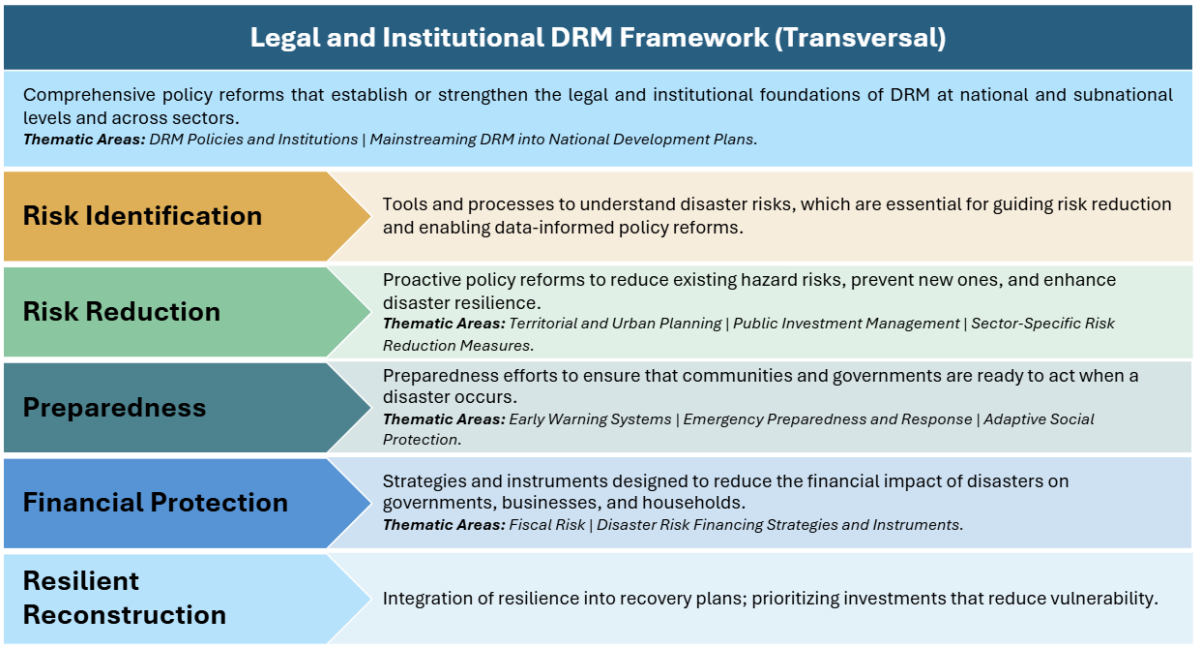
Defining maturity levels for the different pillars and thematic areas of the DRM framework

[1] Disaster risk is highly context-specific and this diagnostic is only an initial step toward developing an appropriate and effective DRM policy program. Task teams are encouraged to consult the report Driving Resilience Through Policy Reforms for further guidance on how to structure a context-relevant DRM policy program.

Developing a sound DRM policy assessment requires a system-wide perspective. Unlike traditional sectors, DRM cuts across infrastructure sectors, such as energy, water, transport, urban development, as well as socioenvironmental sectors, such as education, health, social protection, and environmental management. Disaster risk also affects economic growth and fiscal stability. In short, disaster risk is a development challenge arising from the interaction of hazard, exposure, and vulnerability conditions. While having a sound regulatory framework in place to manage the immediate impacts of disasters is vital, building disaster resilience therefore requires a more comprehensive, multisectoral policy approach.

Recognizing this, the proposed tool builds upon the World Bank DRM framework. This framework provides a structured approach to evaluate a country's policy and institutional setup for DRM.[2] It is organized around six essential policy dimensions of DRM related to the legal and institutional DRM frameworks, risk information, risk reduction, emergency preparedness and response, financial protection, and resilient recovery (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The DRM Policy Framework: Pillars and Thematic Areas



The diagnostic tool enables the assessment of the maturity of a country's DRM system across each DRM pillar and thematic area. In practice, maturity for each thematic area is assessed through a structured set of closed (yes/no) questions. These questions are designed to reflect the logic of the results chain applied in DPF operations, progressing from policy and institutional inputs through the implementation of reforms to outcomes that contribute to strengthening disaster resilience. Each question thus captures a core policy element expected under a given thematic area, including: (i) the existence and adequacy of the legislation and institutional setting; (ii) policy implementation and enforcement, drawing on standard DRM outputs; and (iii) achievements and outcomes using indicators that reflect changes in behaviors, institutions, or systems. It is important to note that progress across these dimensions is not necessarily linear: countries may deliver critical DRM outputs in the absence of a fully developed policy or institutional framework.

[2] Drawing on practical country experiences and global good practices, this framework was first proposed in 'The Sendai Report' (Ghesquiere et al. 2012) and is aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Guidelines for Using the Tool

This is a high-level assessment designed to be objective and quick. The tool assesses each thematic area using a set of closed Yes/No questions presented in an offline questionnaire. Users should review official documentation (legal, regulatory, institutional, and budgetary) and consult with colleagues and national authorities to provide an informed answer. This is particularly relevant for cross-cutting questions, where inputs from colleagues from sectors such as Water, Transport, Health, and Agriculture may help in gathering information.

Once all questions are completed, the web tool computes maturity levels for each thematic area and generates composite scores, key metrics, and visual outputs. Responses are scored in a binary manner: affirmative responses receive one point and negative responses do not receive points. An "Unknown" option is also available and is treated as a negative response.[3] Questions within a given thematic area are aggregated, and the total score for each thematic area is compared to the maximum possible score, thereby capturing the gap between the country's current DRM policy setting and the idealized DRM policy benchmark. Maturity is defined as the distance to the DRM policy frontier and classified into four levels:

- **Nascent**: Achieved less than 25% of total points.
- **Emerging**: Achieved between 25% and 50% of total points.
- **Established**: Achieved between 50% and 75% of total points.
- **Mature**: Achieved more than 75% of total points.

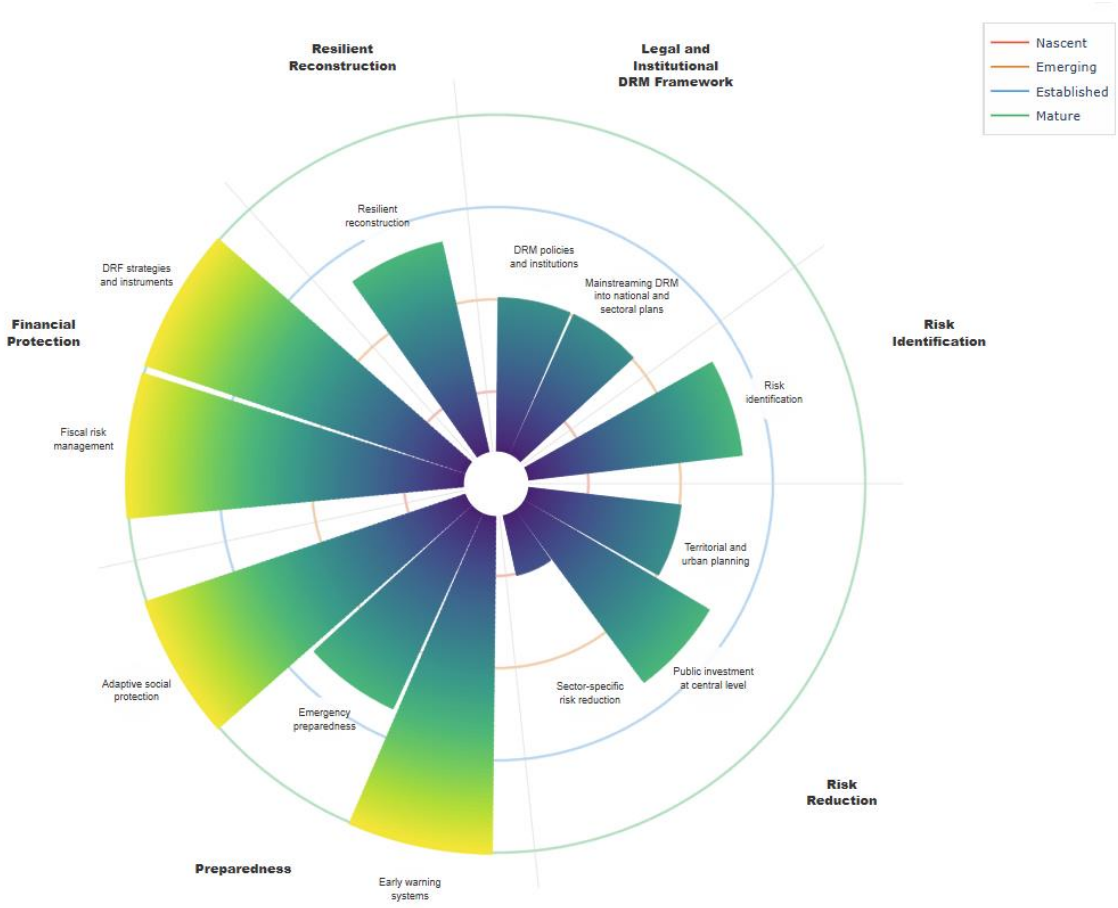
Interpretation of Assessment Results

Assessment results are presented at the pilar or thematic arealevels to reflect the system-wide perspective required to evaluate the DRM policy framework. DRM policy frameworks need to effectively bring together many key dimensions. A mature framework hinges not only on a strong emergency preparedness system, but also on risk-informed territorial planning, actionable risk information, financial protection, and risk reduction at the sectoral level, each often managed by different institutions. This complexity means that weaknesses in one area can undermine the whole, leading to missed opportunities, leakage of value, and uneven benefits.

The petal diagram automatically generated through the web-based tool encapsulates this systemic vision (Figure 2). This petal diagram can be leveraged to effectively communicate the results of the assessment with CMU or counterparts. Each petal represents a thematic area of the DRM framework, with petal length reflecting the maturity level achieved: the longer the size of the petal, the more advanced the country is in this dimension. Conversely, shorter petals indicate areas where the policy framework is weak, not enforced, and/or not producing the expected outcomes. On the other hand, progress across different petals reflects the extent of DRM mainstreaming across key sectors.

Figure 2. Example of petal diagram summarizing the results by thematic area

[3] In practice, when no evidence is available to support either a positive or negative response, it most often indicates that the conditions required for policy implementation have not been fulfilled.



Together, these dimensions provide key insights into the overall maturity of the national DRM system. Countries with mature DRM systems typically have most petals exceeding the nascent level, with some approaching the frontier (i.e., exhibiting a level of advances close to the global benchmark frontier). Results are also aggregated by DRM pillar to highlight key strenghts and gaps in a more succinct way. Finally, a text generated through Large Language Models summarizes the results.

Ultimately, this tool supports policy dialogue—whether to inform the preparation of a Cat DDO operation or to guide Technical Assistance—helping identify the less advanced aspects of a DRM policy framework to effectively support countries shifting from reactive disaster response toward a proactive, strategic approach to managing disaster and climate-related risks.