



Module 5: Safeguard Natural Buffers to Enhance Ecosystems' Protective Functions

Uscore2: City-to-City Peer Review Tool

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INTRODUCTION

Uscore2 is a peer-to-peer review process for cities, designed with funding from the European Commission, it enables cities to share and learn from good practice in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in other cities across the world. Uscore2 focuses on the use of city-level peer reviews as a tool with which the activities of one city in the area of disaster risk management and civil protection are examined on an equal basis by fellow peers who are experts from other cities. This approach facilitates improvements in DRR through the exchange of good practice and mutual learning, whilst also maintaining impartiality and transparency. This peer review programme integrates an evidence based methodology for impact evaluation, enabling participants to demonstrate the value generated by the investment in the peer review.

Cities undertaking a peer review of safeguarding natural buffers to enhance ecosystems protective functions for DRR will generally be undertaking this as part of a wider review as outlined in the Uscore2 Step-by-Step Guide to City-to-City Peer Reviews for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Step-by-Step Guide provides an essential overview of the peer review process, the Impact Evaluation Methodology (IEM) used to measure the impact of the peer review and the 11 Modules for conducting city-to-city peer reviews for DRR.

It is strongly recommended that cities interested in inviting another city to peer review their DRR activity work through the Step-by-Step Guide as a precursor to undertaking Module 5.

This Module Guide gives information relevant to those steps in the peer review process which are specific to Module 5.

During the development of Uscore2, the peer review process has been piloted by three cities: Amadora (Portugal), Salford (UK) and Viggiano (Italy). The pilot cities spoke positively of their experiences:

“Peer reviews are interactive and about mutual learning, exchange of good practice and policy dialogue, a support tool for prevention and preparation under the EU civil protection mechanism and promote an integrated approach to disaster risk management, linking risk prevention, preparation, response and recovery actions.”



BACKGROUND

This Module aims to help build resilience through safeguarding and managing natural ecosystems that offer protection against hazards and the impact of environmental change (UNISDR n.d). Relevant ecosystem services may include, but are not limited to: water retention or water infiltration; forestation; urban vegetation; floodplains; sand dunes; mangrove and other coastal vegetation, and pollination (UNISDR, n.d). These systems are increasingly being recognised as central to improving societal resilience to disasters (Birkmann et al. 2013), and in protecting the built environment through safe and sustainable land-use and consideration of the relationships between infrastructure and ecosystem functions (Johansen 2016).

Actions addressing the interlinked challenges of disaster risks, sustainable development and climate change are a core priority given that 90% of recorded major disasters caused by natural hazards from 1995 to 2015 were linked to climate and weather, including floods, storms, heat-waves and droughts (UNISDR, 2015).

The growing awareness of the relationship between climate change and the increased occurrence of extreme weather events with escalating impacts on the environment and society has fostered synergies between Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), reflected in the main strategies recently developed (Sendai Framework for DRR, Paris Climate Agreement on Climate Change, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, New Urban Agenda, Quito UNISDR, EU Adaptation Strategy).

The benefits of linking and integrating the knowledge base, as well as policies and practices, emerge in this perspective with the need to identify synergies and integration opportunities for example integrating

resilience-based land use and emergency planning in urban development and social aspects (The ESPREsSO Project, 2017).

Ecosystems which contribute to a city's resilience may be situated outside of the city's administrative boundaries and may lie beyond its geographical area. Examples include upstream moorlands that manage floodwater run-off to the benefit of downstream cities or river catchments that can cross national borders. The true value of a remote ecosystem may not be easily realised or acknowledged by a city. Scientific and technical assessments may be used to help to identify the extent and value of the relationship between ecosystems and disaster risks (McPhearson et al., 2016); this can be facilitated through peer review. The management of the ecosystem to preserve its benefits may be the responsibility of other local or national organisations or may even be owned by the private sectors.

The trans-boundary and trans-organisational characteristics of ecosystem protection pose new challenges for the integration of DRR and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) strategies. Cities will be required to negotiate appropriate and effective agreements with those responsible for the preservation of the ecosystem to ensure the continuation of the benefits the ecosystem confers on the city's resilience. (The ESPREsSO Project, 2017).

Cities must integrate the CCA with their DRR policies and plans to ensure effective dynamic risk reduction strategies to address the continuously changing nature of the threat posed by climate change.

The UNISDR highlights the importance of the following processes:

- Recognising value and benefits from ecosystems in disaster risk prevention and protecting and / or enhancing them as part of risk reduction strategies for cities
- Identifying low-hazard areas for development planning (ESPRESSO Project, 2017 p.5)
- Identifying natural buffers in the rural hinterland of the city, watershed and wider region and cooperating with municipalities there to establish a regional approach of land use planning to protect the buffering ecosystems
- Anticipating changes from climate trends and urbanisation and planning to enable and establish ecosystems to withstand these, enhanced as required by green and blue infrastructure / nature based solutions.

The peer review process facilitates the improvement of DRR through assessing the use, protection and understanding of the critical services provided by ecosystems as protective barriers against hazards. Peer review allows expert advice to be exchanged so that cities can enhance the resilience of communities and infrastructure, support recovery from disasters and reap economic benefits as the result of “reducing risks and contributing to urban resilience and sustainability” (UNISDR, n.d).

References

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Further Information

For further information on peer reviews visit: www.Uscore2.eu. Also refer to ISO 22392 when published. Currently it is in draft and will contain further information about peer reviews.



HOW CAN THE SAFEGUARDING OF NATURAL BUFFERS BE ASSESSED AND IMPROVED?

The description of Essential 5: Safeguard Natural Buffers to Enhance Ecosystems' Protective Functions taken from the UNISDR's Making Cities Resilient website given below, describes actions that cities can take to improve resilience in this area.

Essential Five: Safeguard Natural Buffers to Enhance Ecosystems' Protective Functions

Establish the level of awareness of the clear benefits of linking and integrating the knowledge base, as well as policies and practices, on DRR and CCA

- Establish a knowledge base on the role that ecosystem services may play in the city's disaster resilience
- Identify the critical ecosystem services related to the city risks
- Define a set of key health / performance indicators for the critical ecosystem
- Measures extent, health (perhaps captured as species diversity) and buffering capacity for each ecosystem.

Integrate the critical ecosystem services into city's policies and planning

- Define policies and codes to integrate resilience-based land use and emergency planning in urban development and social aspects
- Embed green and blue infrastructures into projects across the city – in new urban development, regeneration and infrastructure projects.

Engage in trans-boundary communication and cooperation. CCA and DRR issues can in part be mitigated by the emergent recognition of "border regions": cross-border areas with a shared history, close relations and cultural values. In these areas, practitioners on either side of a border are more likely to interact regularly and have a better working knowledge of issues specific to their neighbours

- Identify trans-boundary ecosystem services and ecological infrastructures that enhance city resilience
- Identify and promote trans-boundary agreements and collaborations to enable policy and planning for the implementation of ecosystem based approaches
- Enhance risk management capabilities by bridging the gap between science, legal / policy issues and local knowledge, through seeking inputs from a large range of stakeholders (scientists, technical expert practicing in the relevant areas, decision makers, civil society) therefore improving the combination of bottom-up and top-down knowledge and processes.

HOW CAN THIS BE MEASURED?

The following table describes the high level indicators for Essential 5 taken from the Disaster Resilience Scorecard Preliminary Level Assessment. These are used in this Module as indicators against which to gather evidence and make recommendations.

Ref	Subject / Issue	Question / Assessment Area
P 5.1	Awareness and understanding of ecosystem services / functions	Beyond just an awareness of the natural assets, does the city understand the functions (or services) that this natural capital provides for the city?
P 5.2	Integration of green and blue infrastructure into city policy and projects	Is green and blue infrastructure being promoted on major urban development and infrastructure projects through policy?
P 5.3	Transboundary environmental issues	Is the city aware of ecosystem services being provided to the city from natural capital beyond its administrative borders? Are agreements in place with neighbouring administrations to support the protection and management of these assets?

The full Detailed Assessment from the Disaster Resilience Scorecard for Cities is available through the following link:
<http://www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities/home/toolkitblkitem/?id=4>.

METHODOLOGY

PHASE 2, STEP 7: INFORMATION TO SEND TO REVIEW TEAM PRIOR TO THE REVIEW TEAM VISIT

Please refer to the Step-by-Step Guide for advice on both conducting and hosting peer reviews. This section sets out information that is specific to this Module, which begins in Phase 2.

As set out in the Step-by-Step Guide, if Modules 1 (Organise for Disaster Resilience) and 2 (Identify, Understand and Use Current and Future Risk Scenarios) are not undertaken at the same time as Module 5, then an overview of both the Host City's disaster risk governance and DRR risk assessment should be included in the pre-visit information sent to the Review Team.

The Host City should aim to send the pre-visit evidence to the Review Team three months ahead of the review visit. It is recommended that the pre-visit evidence is limited to 3 – 5 items for each Module.

Suggestions for the type of pre-visit evidence that could be shared between the Host City and Review Team

A selection of evidence should be sent to the Review Team before their visit to the Host City. This could include the type of information listed below or any other information that the Host City and the Review Team agree would be of benefit.

It is **highly recommended** that the Host City prepare a summary of how the city ensures effective Safeguard Natural Buffers to Enhance Ecosystems' Protective Functions including:

- A description of the major ecosystems that offer the Host City DRR protection together with the protective functions / services they perform
- Data on the anticipated impacts of climate change on the Host City and the implications for DRR

- The main agencies working to identify and manage the protective ecosystems within the Host City, including arrangements to work with municipalities / agencies outside of the Host City's administrative borders but whose ecosystem services also afford protection to the Host City
- The Host City's governance arrangements for safeguarding natural buffers and enhancing the functions of protective ecosystems.

P5.1 Awareness and understanding of ecosystem services / functions

- An overview of the resilience functions and services that ecosystems provide to a city, including natural hazard protection or mitigation
- Examples of public education on the negative consequences of global warming and climate change
- An example of a project investing in natural capital / nature based solutions to reduce disaster risks due to climate change
- An example of an assessment of the impact of existing plans, policies and programmes on environmental resilience
- A description of how professionals in the built environment, the Host City and the private sector work with communities to co-design nature based solutions to disaster risk.

P5.2 Integration of green and blue infrastructure into city policy and projects

- An example of a Host City policy or of planning guidance on integrating ecosystem considerations into future planning processes to increase resilience and reduce disaster risk
- An article or description of a project to arrest the degradation of the Host City's protective ecosystems and to restore a key ecosystem
- A statistical analysis of the changing land use in the Host City and changes in the percentage of land covered by blue and green infrastructure over time
- An example of a project to help the community to understand the roles and beneficial functions of green and blue infrastructure and of nature-based solutions to address disaster risks in the city
- A description of an infrastructure development that has included green infrastructure as a co-benefit in the project.



P5.3 Transboundary environmental issues

- A description of an example of working with partners, across administrative boundaries, to carry out risk and vulnerability assessments for a shared protective ecosystem
- An environmental assessment and / or outcomes of scientific monitoring to assess an ecosystem that is shared by several municipalities, including the Host City, or that lies in another municipality but offers benefits to the Host City
- A structure chart and / or description of transboundary environmental governance arrangements for ecosystem-based disaster risk management
- An example of a trans-boundary agreement and collaboration mechanism to implement an ecosystem-based approach to DRR.



PHASE 2, STEP 8: ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PEER REVIEW VISIT

As described in the Step-by-Step Guide in the 3-6 months before the Review Team visit, the Host City and Review Team are recommended to agree an agenda for the visit. This will include a range of activities to enable the Review Team to understand how the city is safeguarding natural buffers and enhancing ecosystems' protective functions.

The types of activities could include some or all of those listed below, or any other relevant actions. It is anticipated that the review of this Module will take a day. For all interviews, the Host City should ensure translators are available if they are required.

At the start of the Review Team's assessment of Module 5, the Host City is **highly recommended** to make a summary **presentation** to the Review Team which sets out its approach to safeguarding natural buffers to enhance ecosystems' protective functions. This could include information about:

- The governance arrangements, including transboundary mechanisms, in the Host City to oversee and ensure an effective and coordinated safeguarding of natural buffers and enhancement of the city's ecosystems' protective functions
- The stakeholders in the Host City that are involved in identifying and safeguarding natural buffers together with the protective functions ecosystems provide
- The arrangements in the Host City to share information about and to plan for climate change both with its communities and with adjacent municipalities.

Who should the Review Team interview?

When considering who is important for the Review Team to interview and / or receive a presentation from, it is **highly recommended** that **the Mayor** and / or other key local political

leaders who give leadership in safeguarding natural buffers and a mandate to strengthening environmental protection arrangements across the Host City are included and available. The Host City and Review Team should consider all Modules being assessed during the peer review and combine relevant questions with each senior politician or officer into one appointment.

The Host City and Review Team may also wish to consider who would be most appropriate in light of their initial exchange of pre-visit information and also given the most probable and most severe disaster scenarios for the Host City, especially where ecosystems might offer a role in mitigation or risk reduction. Suggestions include:

- Officials who are responsible for implementing or managing green and blue infrastructure and the upkeep of natural buffers
- Officials responsible for increasing the awareness of climate change effects amongst residents and business within the Host City
- Scientists and researchers who monitor ecosystems and their role in protecting the Host City from disaster risk
- Representatives from other municipalities who have been working with officials from the Host City in safeguarding natural buffers to enhance ecosystems' protective functions for DRR
- Representatives from national government who have a role in climate change adaptation and the protection of ecosystems to reduce disaster risk
- Residents of the Host City who have been involved in risk reduction work through safeguarding and enhancing protective ecosystems

- Senior managers who are responsible for the built environment and infrastructure developments
- Practitioners and technical experts who have been involved in climate change data collection, analysis and sharing.

How can the Host City multi-agency capacity be demonstrated?

In addition to interviews and presentations, suggestions for activities within the programme for the visit include, but are not limited to:

- Visiting one of the scientific teams which are researching and assembling data in relation to safeguarding natural buffers, enhancing ecosystems' services protective functions and understanding the impacts of climate change
- Visiting a team working on climate change mitigation to explore the work they are doing to reduce the effects of climate change on the Host City
- Site visit to a project to adapt to climate change and to mitigate or reduce the impacts of climate change on disaster risk
- Site visit to an infrastructure project or new urban development that has incorporated blue and green infrastructure or nature based solutions to reduce and mitigate disaster risk
- Visit to a community project to safeguard or enhance a protective ecosystem
- Visit to a community science project that is monitoring and assessing a protective ecosystem
- Site visits to observe work to safeguard and enhance ecosystems, including transboundary projects
- Observing demonstrations of specialist capabilities available to protect the natural buffers in the Host City in the event of a disaster with adverse impacts for the environment.

Exercises

Observing an example of a table top or live exercise to rehearse the response of the Host City's institutions to a disaster scenario that threatens the city's natural buffers and protective ecosystems would be helpful. However, given the limited time available, if this is not feasible, the Host City may wish to include video or other evidence from these activities.



PHASE 2, STEP 9: REVIEW TEAM: GATHERING EVIDENCE

The Review Team will gather evidence from the pre-review information submitted before the peer review visit, together with information from interviews and activities undertaken during the visit, to gain a view of the effectiveness of the Host City's approach to safeguarding natural buffers to enhance ecosystems' protective functions. This will include:

- How the Host City identifies and understands the functions and services provided by ecosystems impacting upon the Host City
- How the Host City engages all relevant agencies and organisations to support climate change adaptation and to safeguard and enhance green and blue infrastructure that can reduce the Host City's disaster risk
- How the Host City promotes consideration of nature based solutions to strengthen the city's resilience when major urban development or infrastructure projects are being planned and delivered
- How the Host City works with neighbouring administrations on transboundary environmental issues, especially those with an impact on DRR.
- What skills and experience are evidenced? Are there deficits?
- What activities currently support performance in this area, are these activities effective?
- What, if any, additional activities would the Host City like to undertake in future? What are the barriers to extending activities?
- How are resources / information / training shared? Are there exclusions or barriers to access?
- How is the Host City accessing local / national / international sources of expertise to improve DRR in this area? Which networks is the Host City part of to support this activity?

The Review Team will structure their evidence gathering and interviews to enable the Host City to describe and demonstrate their approach against each of the indicators included in the Disaster Resilience Scorecard Preliminary Level Assessment. Overall, the Review Team should determine:

- Who leads / contributes / coordinates / assesses performance in this area? Is this effective? Is shared ownership of DRR evident?
- Who is missing / underperforming or underrepresented?

Although the Review Team should design their own detailed questions in order to explore issues they consider relevant in the context of the Host City, the following questions are offered as suggestions that may be helpful in stakeholder interviews for Module 5. They are example questions and it is wholly acceptable to tailor them or, equally, not to use them, according to the individual peer review. The Review Team could choose to select just the relevant questions as well as asking additional questions that have not been listed below.



Ref	Subject / Issue	Suggested Questions
P 5.1	Awareness and understanding of ecosystem services / functions	<p>Beyond just an awareness of the natural assets, does the city understand the functions (or services) that this natural capital provides for the city?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the predicted effect of climate change on the Host City and what are the “most severe” and “most probable” risks faced? • How is the Host City addressing climate change adaptation and DRR given the predicted scenarios for the city due to climate change? • What are the barriers to the Host City strengthening its climate change adaptation and environmental DRR? How can these barriers be overcome? • How does the Host City ensure that decisions on climate change adaptation and DRR arrangements are informed and evidence based? How do they draw on scientific, technical or academic advice and knowledge? • What makes the Host City’s climate change adaptation and DRR activity effective? What are the particular strengths of current arrangements? • How does the Host City identify and monitor the ecosystems that provide protective functions to the city? • What is the Host City’s capacity to access the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to protect critical ecosystem services following a disaster? • How is climate change adaptation and the value of ecosystems that help to protect the Host City from disasters communicated to the community, including people speaking different languages?
P 5.2	Integration of green and blue infrastructure into city policy and projects	<p>Is green and blue infrastructure being promoted on major urban development and infrastructure projects through policy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategy is in place for climate change adaptation and for reducing the disaster risks due to the impacts of climate change in the Host City? • How does the Host City actively promote principles of equality and the reduction of vulnerability and exposure of populations to disaster risk when considering climate change adaptation and safeguarding of ecosystems?

Ref	Subject / Issue	Suggested Questions
P 5.2	Integration of green and blue infrastructure into city policy and projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have the institutions in the Host City developed capabilities to respond to risk scenarios predicted under climate change projections and does the city understand which institutions have a role in identifying and mitigating risks from climate change? • How does the Host City's masterplan / development strategy seek to safeguard and enhance blue and green infrastructure in major urban developments and infrastructure projects? • How does the Host City ensure new urban developments and infrastructure projects offer a net environmental gain to the city rather than a net environmental loss? • How well do the Host City's governance arrangements encourage engagement with all relevant institutions, the private sector and civil society in climate change adaptation and DRR? • How does the Host City assure itself of the effectiveness of its climate change adaptation and DRR activity? • How does the Host City coordinate with other stakeholders the protection of critical ecosystem during the response to a disaster? • How have institutions in the Host City planned to include climate change adaptation to build back better following a disaster?
P 5.3	Transboundary environmental issues	<p>Is the city aware of ecosystem services being provided to the city from natural capital beyond its administrative borders? Are agreements in place with neighbouring administrations to support the protection and management of these assets?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the Host City's climate change adaptation and DRR activities work in partnership / alongside the arrangements in neighbouring cities / areas? • How do regional and national governments work with the Host City government to strengthen climate change adaptation and DRR activity? • How does the Host City influence the regional and nationally identified climate change adaptation and DRR activity?

Ref	Subject / Issue	Suggested Questions
P 5.3	Transboundary environmental issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the responsibility and accountabilities at the regional and national level in relation to climate change adaptation and DRR? • What examples are available of the Host City working across administrative boundaries to take a 'whole ecosystem' approach to maintaining and enhancing environmental protection?

PHASE 3, STEP 11: RECORDING INFORMATION AND DRAFTING INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Step-by-Step Guide describes how the Review Team can record information during the peer review visit and includes a generic form that can be used to capture information during individual presentations, interviews and other activities.

At the end of each day, it is recommended that the Review Team assemble to consider all the information that it has heard during the day and summarise the evidence to understand:

- Areas of good practice and strengths on which the Host City can build
- Areas where further information may be needed before the peer review visit is finished
- Areas where possible recommendations for the future may be made.

This process will help to inform both the remainder of the visit and the drafting of the peer review outcome report.

The two tables below are offered as a way of recording the overall findings for Module 5 together with the initial recommendations arising from the activities experienced during the day.



SUMMARY OF INITIAL FINDINGS

	Comments	Justification for assessment	Good practice identified
P 5.1 Awareness and understanding of ecosystem services / functions Beyond just an awareness of the natural assets, does the city understand the functions (or services) that this natural capital provides for the city?			
P 5.2 Integration of green and blue infrastructure into city policy and projects Is green and blue infrastructure being promoted on major urban development and infrastructure projects through policy?			
P 5.3 Transboundary environmental issues a) Is the city aware of ecosystem services being provided to the city from natural capital beyond its administrative borders? b) Are agreements in place with neighbouring administrations to support the protection and management of these assets?			
Other			

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

	Description of areas for potential development	Justification	Time horizon
E.g. Extent to which data on the city's resilience context is shared with other organisations involved with the city's resilience.	E.g. Ensure a consistent flow of information between multi-agency partners.	E.g. A regular flow of information would improve understanding of risk and aid planning for partner agencies.	E.g. Short, medium, long term implementation.
P 5.1 Awareness and understanding of ecosystem services / functions Beyond just an awareness of the natural assets, the city understands the functions (or services) that this natural capital provides for the city.			
P 5.2 Integration of green and blue infrastructure into city policy and projects Green and blue infrastructure are promoted on major urban development and infrastructure projects through policy.			
P 5.3 Transboundary environmental issues a) The city is aware of ecosystem services being provided to the city from natural capital beyond its administrative borders.			

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS			
	Description of areas for potential development	Justification	Time horizon
P 5.3 Transboundary environmental issues b) Agreements are in place with neighbouring administrations to support the protection and management of these assets.			
Other Area / issue			

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