THE 2016 UNDERSTANDING RISK FORUM - POST-FORUM DETAILED REPORT

The 2016 Understanding Risk (UR) Forum was the most global forum yet, convening +650 participants from +100 countries and representing nearly 350 institutions. Organizations represented included government agencies, the private sector, NGOs, research institutions, academia and civil society. In total, there were 6 plenary events, 19 technical sessions, 32 side workshops and trainings, 3 on-site visits, and numerous side meetings and events.

Key numbers

- 659 attendees
- Representatives from 100+ countries
- 350 organizations participated
- 41% female participation
- 50+ sessions offered over 5 days
- ~2,000 bilateral meetings held
- 80+ international media mentions
- 85% increase in visitors to GFDRR.org the week of UR
- 30+ communications products showcased

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I. **DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Overview**
- 659 participants
- 101 countries represented
- 346 organizations represented
- 41% female participation / 59% male participation (of those self-identified)
- 31% from developing countries (WB client countries)

**Sectors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International organization, multilaterals</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Countries**

- **Participant country demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>659 total participants</th>
<th>% of total participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendees from WB client countries</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendees from non-WB client countries</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Countries represented**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>101 total countries</th>
<th>% of total countries Represented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDA countries</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blend countries</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBRD countries</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal WB client countries</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-WB client countries</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. **SELECTED PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

**High-level speakers:**
- Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer, Facebook (via audio)
- Laura Tuck, Vice President, Sustainable Development, World Bank Group
- Fabrizio Curcio, Head of the National Civil Protection Department, Italy
- John Roome, Senior Director, Climate Change Group, World Bank Group
- Laura Frigenti, Director, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
- Esther Baur, Director, Global Partnerships, Swiss Re
• Marcus du Sautoy, Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science and Professor of Mathematics, Oxford University
• Dr. Kerri-Ann Jones, Former United States Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs
• John Schneider, Secretary General, Global Earthquake Model (GEM)
• Marianne Fay, Chief Economist, Sustainable Development Vice-Presidency, World Bank Group
• Claus Haugaard Sørensen, Senior Advisor for Resilience, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, European Political Strategy Center (EPSC)
• Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, Under Secretary General, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
• Professor Stephen Briggs, Senior Adviser, Earth Observation, European Space Agency

Government & Multilateral Organizations:
• Over 70 representatives from Small Island States
• European Union - Joint Research Centre
• Food and Agriculture Organization
• German Aerospace Center
• National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
• Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
• UN Development Programme
• UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
• UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
• United States Agency for International Development
• World Meteorological Organization

Non-Governmental Organizations, Research & Academia:
• BBC Media Action
• CIMA Foundation
• Global Earthquake Model Foundation
• Humanitarian OpenStreetMap
• International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Columbia University
• International Water Management Institute
• Kathmandu Living Labs
• Red Cross / Red Crescent Climate Centre
• Rockefeller Foundation
• Oxford University
• University of Tokyo
• VU University Amsterdam

Private Sector:
• Allianz
• AIR Worldwide
• ARUP
• Facebook
• Floodtags
• FM Global
• Fraunhofer
• Geneva Association
• Google
• IBM
• KPMG
• ImageCat
• Intel
• Mapbox
• Munich Re
• Nephila Capital
• Oyo Corporation
• Perkins + Will
• Swiss Re
• Taylor Maritime
• Willis
• Zurich Insurance Group
III. Feedback

To continue improving the quality and impact of Understanding Risk Forums, a survey is sent to attendees to provide comments and insights into successes and areas of improvement. The feedback received after the conference and through the survey responses is documented below.

**KEYWORDS ASSOCIATED WITH UR2016:**

UR2016 was brilliant; Great conference/event; Productive and informative; Fantastic conference; Excellent conference; Gave lots of ideas and a new buzz of energy; Difficult to beat UR2016; Well organized; Ran smoothly.

**FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS:**

- “UR has helped expand the space of possibility in how we design and facilitate sessions and context for meetings. I would recommend this conference to others, as UR cares for the importance of informal interactions - fun, cool, vibrant events enable new friendships and trusted relationships.”

- “Through the UR community, I have met over a dozen people and organizations that I have collaborated with. We have bid projects together, developed new ideas for evolution for risk management tools, created geographic partnerships and replicated and scaled projects. UR events have made me more efficient because it is an effective meeting place for a broad network of users and practitioners.”

- “Thank you so much to you and the UR team for such a fantastic conference – it’s the first really useful event I’ve been to in a long while and produced with such panache.”

- “UR allows for learning from different sectors and professionals, from different viewpoints, and different analysis from the various sub-sectors in risk. Scientist, social enterprises, engineers all meeting in one place for one reason!”

- “UR has helped me understand different perspectives of things including the technical and political. It is a place to go to get different viewpoints, and to share ideas and new proposals. It is a fun, informative, safe environment to share ideas and perspectives”

- “This was an exceptional event, one of the best events I ever attended (and I have attended a lot!)”

- “Thanks so much for making it a great event! I came home with lots of ideas and a new buzz of energy – as I’m sure many others did.”

- “We were very pleased to have the opportunity to participate in so many fantastic sessions and connect with so many of our operational colleagues and TA clients, as well as bring our DRM Hub Knowledge Program activities into these important global and regional conversations. Thank you for your unfailing efforts to make this UR2016 so relevant, inspiring, and engaging!”
• “I’ve been to many [conferences], and usually the best outcomes are the networks developed and people met. Not true with UR2016. I did of course have the opportunity to talk with many people (both Bank and client) but I also learned some very interesting technical details. Was a very useful use of time on my part.”

• “It’s given me more knowledge on areas of risk that I didn’t have before. It’s given me more contacts I can call for input and consultation on future work. It’s invigorated me to keep my work focused on the area of risk and resources I can use to continue to build the case for focusing on risk.”

SURVEY RESULTS

Based on the survey, the UR team has identified 5 things done particularly well and 5 areas of improvement:

Five areas of excellence:

1. The conference was seen as a great place to develop new partnerships and reconnect with colleagues and partners. Participants recognized the value of the conference as a tool to share new developments in the area of DRM. UR provided a space for networking, building partnerships and learning.
2. Participants appreciated the originality of UR2016 and the amazing venue and the variety of speakers from a variety of backgrounds.
3. The technical learning was valuable, and participants valued the opportunity to meet with practitioners and DRM experts and share and learn.
4. The Focus Days were very interactive and a great platform to share knowledge, ideas and technical skills. Participants appreciated the presence of a number of country representatives interacting during the sessions.
5. The UR Organizing Team was seen to have provided great support and communicated well throughout the conference.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS

The following provides an overview of communications coverage. For more detailed information, please refer to the UR2016 communications report.

Strong messaging was developed on UR2016 and around The Making of a Riskier Future publication, in particular. A set of core messages framed all UR communications. Media training was provided for GFDRR and WB participants, and the messaging informed speeches and talking points for Senior Management and VIPs for key sessions and media interviews.

Highlights include:

• More than 80 international media mentions (e.g. The Guardian, Reuters, BBC News), including Huffington Post blog by John Roome and Huffington Post interview with Francis Ghesquiere
• Twitter: tweets from @GFDRR and @UnderstandRisk generated over 160,000 total impressions
• **Facebook:** Achieved “trending” status on Facebook; Resilience Dialogue post on World Bank Facebook page received 73,000+ “likes”

• **Websites:** 28,000 visitors to GFDRR & UR websites: **85% increase** in visitors to GFDRR.org the week of UR; GFDRR publication site viewed **1000 times, an increase of 87%; 6,249 total views** of GFDRR/UR content on WBG sites, including external feature story, press release, internal Today story, blog posts from John Roome and Alanna Simpson, and Tokyo DRM Hub pages promoting UR

• **ThinkHazard! website:** 42,000 page views, 6,700 sessions since May 17.

• **Blogs:** **11 blogs:** 2 on World Bank sites with **529 total views,** 8 from external partners on the UR site & 1 from John Roome on Huffington Post

• **Videos:** **5 videos with 1771 total views** on GFDRR’s Youtube channel, including special Resilience Dialogue opening address video from **Sheryl Sandberg**

• **GFDRR Booth:** Estimated **400-500 visitors;** 35+ GFDRR and WB DRM publications featured; Innovation Lab team provided comprehensive overview of GFDRR’s programs, initiatives & publications; Interactive ThinkHazard! demo & an array of new videos were on display (highlighting Code for Resilience, OpenDRI, *The Making of a Riskier Future*)

• **Over 30 communications products showcased,** including World Bank and HuffPost blogs, top story headlining WB external and intranet homepages on May 16, 5 new videos, 16 new & updated publications, program factsheets and Stories of Impact, infographics, UR newsletter, and more

**V. Bilateral Meetings**

UR2016 was an effective forum for WBG staff, clients and attendees to schedule bilateral meetings, as was indicated in the post-conference survey. It should be noted that these numbers are derived from a question that specifically asked about scheduled meetings, and doesn’t not necessarily reflect the impromptu and more informal meetings that are commonly seen at UR Forums.

Eighty percent of attendees used UR2016 as a way to set up meetings with clients or partners, with a third of those scheduling **more than 5 meetings.** On average, survey respondents indicated they held an average of 3 meetings throughout the forum; nearly 2,000 bilateral meetings were scheduled over the course of the forum.

Survey responses highlighted the importance of UR Forums as a way to connect with clients or partners:

“I especially liked the in-between networking/ getting to know each other part. It was the combination of the content (concise presentations what people are doing) and connecting to them in between activities... [I’ve] never been at an event where the threshold to link with people was so low.”

“Opened up opportunities within the community on sustainable development and introduced me to various new stakeholders”

**VI. Post-event Follow up**

**Material from the conference:** Conference material including the highlights video, photographs, video coverage, presentations etc. are being uploaded to the UR website (www.understandrisk.org)
The post-conference proceedings publication: The proceedings publication captures the knowledge and information exchanged at the event. These articles provide a handbook of practical information for disaster risk management practitioners interested in disaster risk assessment. The proceedings are also of use to those who were unable to attend the conference and would like to learn more about the latest innovations and best practice in the field. This publication is developed in partnership with the organizations that led technical sessions during the Forum. The publication can be accessed here: https://understandrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/UR-venice-proceedings.pdf

VII. BACKGROUND - UR COMMUNITY AND UR FORUMS

UR is an open and global community of 6,000+ experts and practitioners in disaster risk assessment from more than 125 countries representing government agencies, the private sector, multilateral organizations, NGOs, research institutions, academia and civil society. The UR community convenes every two years at UR Forums - five-day events that provide a space for collaboration among non-traditional partners, showcase best practices and share knowledge in disaster risk assessment. Forums provide organizations and individuals with the opportunity to highlight new activities and initiatives, build new partnerships, and foster advances in the field. Previous global events have been held in Washington DC (UR2010), Cape Town (UR2012), London (UR2014), with smaller events also being held in Austria (URAT 2016); the Sub-Saharan African region (Understanding Risk & Finance Conference, 2015); Boulder, Colorado, USA (UR Boulder 2015); Haiti (URHT 2014); and Brazil (URBR 2012).

UR2016

UR2016 was held in Venice, Italy from May 16 – 20, 2016. The Forum was convened by GFDRR and organized in partnership with the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the National Civil Protection Department of Italy, and the World Bank Group. Under the theme Building Evidence for Action, over 50 sessions and workshops led by various international organizations were held, covering topics such as: the connection of poverty and risk, multi-hazard risk assessments, compounding events, behavioral challenges, and risk communication, among others.

Schedule of Events

UR2016 was held over five days: the Focus Days began Monday, May 16 and concluded the afternoon of Wednesday, May 18 in the NH Laguna Palace hotel in Mestre, Venice, Italy. The Focus Days provided the opportunity for institutions to independently organize their own events, whether they be an hour or two days in length. The main conference, held in the Arsenale, Old Venice, Italy, began the afternoon of Wednesday, May 18 and concluded Friday, May 20. In summary, there were:

- **6 plenary events:**
  - *Opening ceremony* with remarks from Fabrizio Curcio (Head of the National Civil Protection Department, Italy) and John Roome (Senior Director, Climate Change Group, World Bank Group)
  - *Ignite talks*: all technical session leads ‘pitched’ their session in 5 minute lightning talks
  - *Resilience Dialogue: Technology, disaster risk and the gender divide*
  - *Asking the hard questions: The impact of climate change on our decisions*, moderated by John Roome
  - *5x15* – a speaking event including Charles Simonyi Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University and a Venetian TV presenter, among others
• Closing ceremony with remarks from Laura Frigenti (Director, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation) and Laura Tuck (Vice President, Sustainable Development, World Bank Group)

- 19 technical sessions: organized by leading experts and practitioners in the field held over two days
- 32 side workshops and trainings held over 2.5 days
- 3 onsite visits to the MOSE project
- Numerous side meetings and events

VIII. CONTENT

List of events at the Focus Days

• Applied disaster risk assessment (DRA) – Improving the evaluation and quantification of natural hazards – Ambiental Technical Solutions Ltd.
• Build a mobile weather station in one day with open source hardware and software – Code for Resilience, International Water Management Institute & GFDRR
• Building a community of practice for resilience of small island states to climate and disaster risks – World Bank Group & GFDRR
• Building a global database of flood protection standards – VU University, Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM)
  Changing the course: Science and forecast-based financing make humanitarians act faster! – Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre
• Comprehensive climate risk management – Linking disaster and climate risk management concepts and implementation – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
• Dealing with coastal risks in small island states. Training session on simple assessments of coastal problems and solutions in small island developing states – Deltares, SimpleCoast, GFDRR & World Bank Group
• Designing robust projects in face of deep uncertainty – World Bank Group
• Developing evidence-based risk profiles for public policy and decision making – United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
• Disaster and climate risk-sensitive planning for public investment decisions: Learning from two public-sector experiences of Peru and Lao PDR – Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), Bangkok and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
• DRR in fragile settings – The case of Afghanistan – GFDRR & World Bank Group
• Earth observations, open data and climate services for climate risk management and humanitarian programming in developing countries – International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies; Columbia University, International Research Institute for Climate and Society; Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre; European Space Agency – ESRIN: Earth Observation Science & Applications
• Engage with INFORM – The index for risk management – UN OCHA, DG-ECHO – European Commission, Joint Research Centre – European Commission
• Flood risk management – Bringing needs and tools together – riocom
• Getting to safe: Understanding the nexus of disasters, conflict and fragility – Germany, GFDRR, UNDP, World Bank, WHS Secretariat
• Learning across communities of practice: Risk assessment for disaster risk reduction and climate risk management – Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM), Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC)
• Learning InaSAFE through open data for resilience serious game! – GFDRR, Open Data for Resilience Initiative (OpenDRI), InaSAFE, DM Innovation, Australian Aid & Kartoza
• Let’s shake your community – Earthquake hazard mapping approach for community resilience – Disaster Risk Management Hub Tokyo – GFDRR, World Bank Group
• Opportunity mapping for ecosystem based approaches to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation – United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
• Protecting the poor from natural disasters – Better data, faster response – World Bank Group
• RASOR global community of practice – Inaugural meeting – Rasor Project
• Responsible data use in understanding risk – UN OCHA, GovLab, Humanitarian Data Exchange & GFDRR
• Risk assessment, risk reduction and risk mitigation – What role do models, numbers, text and stories play? – EURAC Research
• Safe to smart: Risk as a milestone in ‘Smart City’ planning – ARUP
• Satellite data for enhanced risk management and reduction – Innovative technologies and future applications – The Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS)
• Second partnership council meeting, global resilience partnership – Global Resilience Partnership
• Solving the puzzle: Where to invest to understand risk – UK Department for International Development (DFID) & GFDRR
• Systems thinking: A new perspective on strategy – SecondMuse
• Training on concepts and terminology for analytics related to disaster risk finance and insurance – World Bank Group
• Turning adversity into opportunity: Moving towards resilient post-disaster recovery – UNDP, EU, World Bank & GFDRR
• Urban floods and last mile early warning: Serious gaming, partnership discussion for practitioners and more! – Sponsored by the Urban Flood Community of Practice (World Bank)
• Young scientists platform on DRR – Young Scientists Platform, UN Major Group of Children and Youth

List of Plenaries and Technical Sessions during the Conference

• Asking the hard questions: The impact of climate change on our decisions – European Space Agency, World Bank Group, Swiss Re, European Political Strategy Center (EPSC), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
• Breaking barriers for the common good: Open data and shared risk analysis in support of multilateral action – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) & GFDRR
• Bridging the divide: Digital humanitarians and the Nepal earthquake – Kathmandu Living Labs & GFDRR
• Building a less risky future: How today’s decisions shape disaster risk in the cities of tomorrow – GFDRR & Stanford University
• Challenges in developing multi-hazard risk models from local to global scale – National Civil Protection Department, Italy, GEM Foundation & CIMA Foundation
• Check the vitals: Making infrastructure more resilient – *FM Global*
• Climate extremes and economic derail: Impacts of extreme weather and climate related events on regional and national economies – *Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM) & Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC)*
  Communicating for action: What’s needed? – *BBC Media Action, King’s College London & Resurgence*
• Disruptors: Cutting edge technologies that are changing the way we understand risk – *Safehub & GFDRR*
• Global school safety: Reaching for scale through innovation – *World Bank Group*
• How risks and shocks impact poverty and why, when, and where can better financial protection help – *World Bank Group & GFDRR*
• “I understand risk, you misunderstand risk, s/he fails to act”: Learning to anticipate behavioral challenges in pre-disaster decision making – *University College London*
• Map Slam: Revealing the common misperceptions about El Niño and La Niña – *Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre & International Research Institute for Climate and Society, Columbia University*
• Putting people first: Practices, challenges and innovations in characterizing and mapping social groups – *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*
• Reading the tea leaves: When risk models fail to predict disaster impacts – *ImageCat & GFDRR*
• Reinforcing foundations: The role of the insurance industry in resilient infrastructure – *The Geneva Association & World Bank Group*
• Resilience Dialogue: Technology, disaster risk and the gender divide – *Facebook, Fundación Guatemala, World Bank Group, Swayam Shikshan Prayog, Former United States Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs*
• The domino effect: The future of quantifying compounding events in deltas – *Deltares, European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) & VU University, Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM)*
• The final mile: Connecting an impact-based warning service to decision making – *UK Met Office, Deltares & GFDRR*
• Understanding risk is essential for the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030: Targeting the future with science and technology – *United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) & European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC)*
• When uncertainty is certain: Tools for improved decision making for weather and climate – *United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*