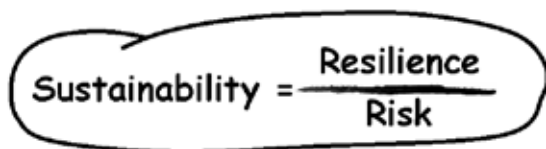


# Resilient Communities & Cities Initiative

## What is it?

ICLEI's Resilient Communities & Cities Initiative is aimed at **mainstreaming disaster resilience in the planning and decision-making processes of local governments**. For almost 15 years ICLEI has initiated and supported the Local Agenda 21 global movement, and it is with this background that it is promoting participatory municipal resilience planning and management.


$$\text{Sustainability} = \frac{\text{Resilience}}{\text{Risk}}$$

ICLEI's goal is for local governments (including ICLEI's over 500 municipal Members) to work with their local communities and stakeholders to develop and implement **Local Resilience Agendas**. In this way, communities will be able to reduce their vulnerability to extreme events and anticipate and respond creatively to economic, social, and environmental change in order to increase their long-term sustainability.

## Why is it Important?

Because of global environmental and socio-economic processes such as rapid urban growth, climate change, and the expansion of industrial production, cities and communities around the world are increasingly at risk of experiencing natural, industrial or social disasters. Due to global climate change, areas that were previously

considered at relatively low risk of natural disasters may now and in the future face previously unknown disaster risks, such as extreme temperatures, droughts or floods. Often, natural disasters incur secondary industrial disasters. This continuously changing nature of disaster risk challenges not only emergency response managers and their teams at the local level, but also has the potential to threaten sustainable urban development.

### **Action at the Local Level...**

...is the most effective method of reducing, mitigating, and preventing disasters. Local governments can reduce the impact of disasters on their communities by increasing their community's resilience. **Resilience** is the capacity of a community to respond creatively, preventatively, and proactively to change or extreme events, thus mitigating crisis or disaster.

While the changing nature of disaster risk is well analyzed and increasingly addressed at international and national levels of debate and decision-making, efforts to provide **direct and practical guidance to local government policy-makers and planners** on how to reduce exposure and increase resilience to disasters have been few. Through ongoing dialogue with international disaster management experts and local government actors, ICLEI has recognized the need for supporting local governments in disaster risk management and believes that building resilience to disasters is a crucial element in **creating sustainable communities and cities**.

## Assessing the Usability of Disaster Risk Management Instruments by Local Governments

In January 2007 a group of ICLEI Members and international disaster risk management experts gathered in Freiburg, Germany, for a workshop to assess the usability of 21 selected disaster risk management (DRM) instruments.



Participants discussing their experiences with DRM instruments.

Mainstreaming resilience-building into local government processes includes the use of various instruments such as tools, policies, and procedures. Given the wide range of existing instruments available, ICLEI's goal was to gather a selection of existing instruments that are geared to supporting DRM efforts at the local government level and assess them at the workshop in terms of their usability by local governments.

***“Local governments have been neglected in global disaster risk management efforts”***

Workshop participant

Led by the ICLEI World Secretariat and funded by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ),

the workshop was an important initial step in ICLEI's Resilient Communities & Cities Initiative. Department heads and disaster and emergency managers from ICLEI Members

- Blue Mountains (Australia),
- Cape Town (South Africa),
- Makati City (the Philippines), and
- São Paulo (Brazil)

participated in the workshop along with disaster management experts from

- Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative (EMI),
- ProVention Consortium,
- UNDP,
- UN-HABITAT, and
- the UN Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR).



Group work: Assessing the usability of DRM instruments.

## What Makes a DRM Instrument Usable for Local Governments?

The workshop identified a number of characteristics of DRM instruments that were particularly relevant for local government users. Technical experts and local government participants agreed that instruments need to be written clearly

and concisely, have a clear purpose and target audience, and contain relevant and practical information in order to make them usable to local government actors. As well, participants noted that instruments need to be tailored to different audiences within local governments, such as mayors, policy-makers, implementers, etc. Also, local government experts found that organizations creating DRM instruments should provide or at least address training and capacity-building.

### **Characteristics of Usable DRM Instruments for Local Governments**

- Address the question: “Why should one be concerned about disaster risk reduction?”
- Include guidance on engaging the community
- Include monitoring and evaluation steps to help institutionalize the process
- Provide different sections or different components for different audiences
- Contain annotated lists of weblinks and refer readers to specific webpages, not just organizations’ home pages
- Provide references in the text to the content of the annexes
- Include checklists as “aide-memoires”
- Include a training component
- Contain up-to-date information and reflect current realities and knowledge
- Clearly indicate the purpose of the tool and its target group
- Use language that is clear, concise, and appropriate for the target group
- Minimize the number of pages and amount of text

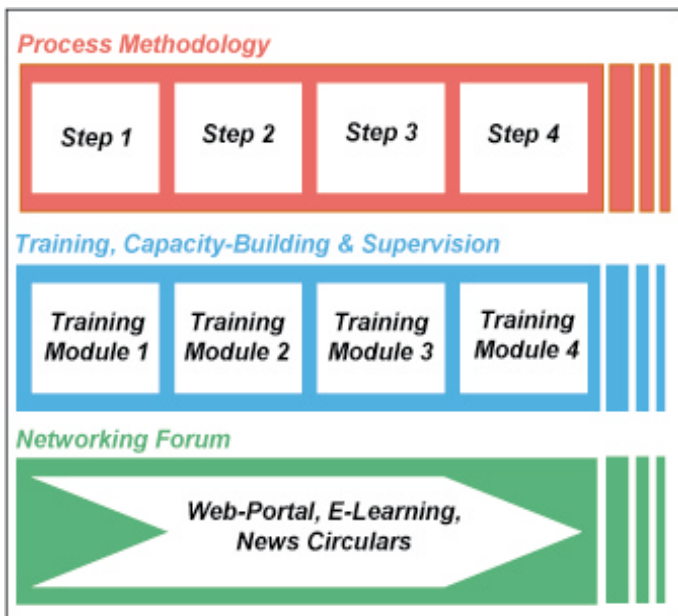
## **A Program to Build Resilience Among Local Governments**

Over the next five years ICLEI plans to build the Resilient Communities & Cities (RC&C) Initiative as a program that provides value to its municipal membership. Building on previous consultations as well as the recent workshop, ICLEI plans to provide cities and communities with a holistic approach to DRM that extends beyond the provision of a methodological “toolbox” and incorporates DRM into a broader strategy to build resilience at the local government level through the development and implementation of Local Resilience Agendas.

Currently ICLEI envisages a three-tiered RC&C program strategy (see graph below) that involves the provision of:

- a step-by-step **process methodology** for DRM and resilience-building specifically geared to local governments’ needs, which will be provided as a hardcopy document;
- **training and capacity-building** of local government staff as an integrated process and based on individual training modules in accordance with the steps of the process methodology;
- an actively maintained and expanding **networking forum** for sharing and exchanging expertise and experiences among local governments and DRM professionals with regard to the RC&C Initiative.

The **process methodology** will draw heavily on existing DRM instruments and synthesize their strengths into a comprehensive approach to DRM and resilience building (Local Resilience Agendas) specifically tailored for implementation by local government policy-makers and planners.



ICLEI envisages its RC&C strategy to be based on three tiers, where the provision of a resilience-building methodology is complemented by training, capacity-building and proactive networking and exchange.

The **training modules** will be designed by ICLEI's International Training Centre using an array of current approaches to professional capacity development, including distance-learning and remote supervision. For each process step, a specific training module will be available to local government staff.

The **networking forum** will be hosted and maintained by the ICLEI World Secretariat. It will be web-based and also issue regular news circulars, which will actively contribute to familiarizing local government staff with the aims, components,

outcomes and latest innovations surrounding the RC&C program, as well as link up program participants with relevant partner organizations.

ICLEI anticipates initiating the program with a small number of cities and communities selected from among its Members through a consultative process. During this pilot phase, the RC&C program approach will be verified and adapted to specific needs and different local contexts. This phase will also give ICLEI the opportunity to further develop its organizational knowledge and staff capacity with the aim of offering participation to all of its 500+ Member municipalities.

**For further information please contact:**

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ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, is an international membership organization of local governments and their associations. ICLEI is dedicated to building and supporting a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability with special focus on environmental conditions through cumulative local actions.