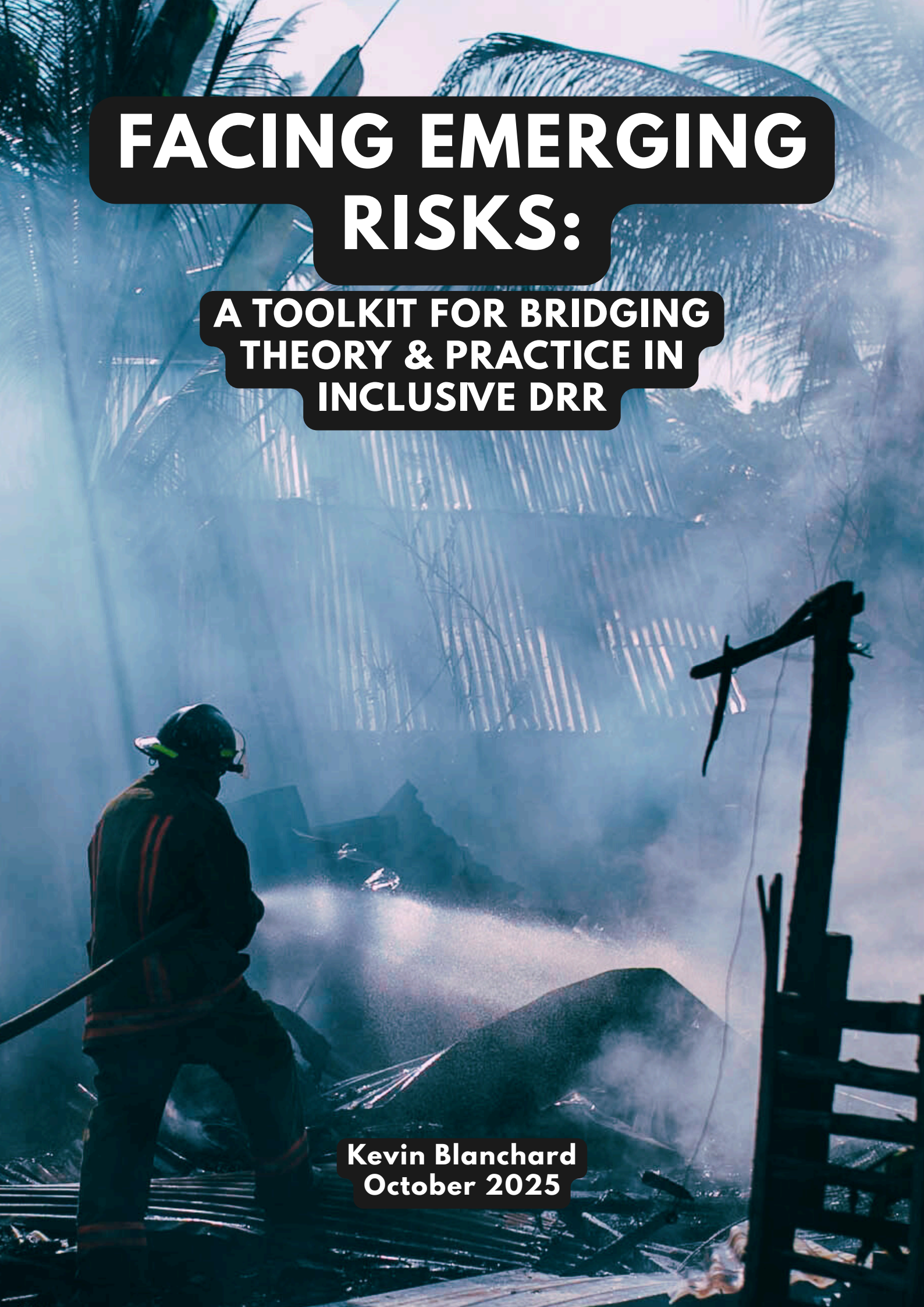

FACING EMERGING RISKS:

A TOOLKIT FOR BRIDGING THEORY & PRACTICE IN INCLUSIVE DRR

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Introduction

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is entering a period of rapid and complex change [1,2,3]. The combined influence of political polarisation, misinformation, digital transformation, displacement, and human rights erosion is reshaping how risks are created, understood, and managed [1,2]. Populism and post-truth politics have undermined public trust in science and weakened evidence-based decision-making and digital technologies (while offering major opportunities) have introduced new layers of exclusion for communities without access to connectivity or representation in data systems [3].

Shrinking civic space and discriminatory laws are also reducing the ability of civil society and at-risk groups to participate in disaster governance [2]. This toolkit has been developed in response to these trends. It brings together insights from recent research on digital exclusion, political dynamics, and rights-based approaches, and translates them into practical actions for use in disaster risk management and preparedness. The aim is to help professionals navigate emerging risks in a way that strengthens inclusion, fairness, and accountability.

The toolkit is intended for a wide range of practitioners. Emergency managers, DRR professionals, and policymakers will find guidance on integrating inclusive approaches into planning and response. Civil society organisations can use the tools to advocate for the participation and protection of marginalised groups. Technologists and data specialists will find frameworks for ensuring that digital systems support, rather than undermine, equitable disaster governance.

Each chapter combines theory with practice. The early sections explain the underlying issues, drawing on recent examples and analysis. The practical sections provide step-by-step guidance, checklists, and templates that can be adapted to different contexts. The toolkit is not a single model but a flexible framework that can be tailored to national, local, or organisational needs.

Ultimately, the purpose of this toolkit is to bridge the gap between knowledge and action. By grounding decision-making in evidence and human rights, and by ensuring that technologies and governance systems are inclusive by design, DRR professionals can build resilience that benefits everyone, not only those with the greatest visibility or access to power.

Step 1. Ground Actions in Evidence and Rights

DRR relies on trust, transparency, and the consistent use of evidence [4]. In recent years, these foundations have come under pressure [2,4]. The rise of populism and post-truth politics has made it harder for science and technical expertise to inform public policy [1]. Evidence is often challenged or selectively used to support political agendas, while misinformation spreads quickly through social and digital platforms [1,3,5]. When the link between evidence and decision-making weakens, the most at-risk communities are often the first to feel the consequences [3].

At the same time, the erosion of human rights in many parts of the world is shaping who can access protection and who is left out of preparedness and response systems [2]. When laws or policies restrict freedom of expression, limit civic participation, or discriminate against certain groups, they create structural barriers that increase disaster risk [2,3]. Rights are not abstract principles in this context; they determine whether people can access early warnings, receive assistance, and participate in the decisions that affect their safety and recovery [6,7].

Embedding evidence and rights into disaster risk governance helps counter these trends. It ensures that actions and policies are guided by reliable data, transparent reasoning, and a commitment to equity. This approach not only strengthens technical outcomes but also helps to rebuild public confidence in institutions.

In practice, this begins with three measures. First, establish or strengthen independent advisory groups that can review data, evaluate methodologies, and advise on policy decisions. Independence protects evidence from political influence and ensures decisions are based on verifiable information. These groups should be diverse, drawing on scientific, social, and community knowledge.

Second, apply a human rights lens to all risk assessments and planning processes. This involves asking who might be excluded by a given policy, who lacks access to protection, and whether any laws or administrative systems reinforce that exclusion. Integrating rights questions into design and review stages helps identify blind spots early and prevents unintended inequality.

Third, provide regular training for staff on rights-based approaches. Many practitioners are confident in technical procedures for risk assessment but less familiar with applying rights principles in operational contexts. Training should cover how rights and risk interact, how to recognise discrimination, and how to ensure that engagement with communities is participatory and safe.

Together, these steps create a culture of accountability and informed decision-making. They also establish clear standards for evidence use and rights protection that can guide institutions through politically complex or fast-changing environments.

Check list

- ☐ Does this plan reference credible and verifiable evidence?
- ☐ Are data sources transparent and peer-reviewed where possible?
- ☐ Have rights implications been assessed?
- ☐ Does the plan safeguard participation and non-discrimination?
- ☐ Are there mechanisms for independent review or appeal if evidence is disputed?

Step 2. Identify and Map Vulnerabilities

Understanding vulnerability is a cornerstone of DRR [8]. Conventional assessments often treat communities as uniform groups, overlooking how identity, status, and social position influence exposure and resilience [9]. Intersectionality provides a framework for addressing this limitation. It recognises that risks are shaped by overlapping factors such as gender, age, migration status, disability, sexuality, ethnicity, and income [10]. When these factors combine, they can create distinct vulnerabilities that standard data collection may miss [1,10].

An intersectional approach moves beyond counting who is affected to understanding how and why people are affected differently. Two individuals in the same flood-prone area may face very different risks. A woman working informally without social protection will have fewer recovery options than a salaried employee. A refugee or stateless person may be excluded from aid distribution because of documentation requirements. A person with a disability might not receive timely warnings because alerts are not accessible.

Traditional disaster assessments often rely on national averages or aggregated statistics that obscure such differences. Disaggregating data by gender, age, disability, income, and other identity factors helps reveal inequalities that influence who is most at risk. Yet numbers alone rarely tell the full story. To understand lived

realities, communities must be directly involved in mapping exercises. Participatory methods allow people to identify hazards, resources, and barriers based on their own experiences. This not only produces more accurate information but also builds trust and ownership.

Engagement should ensure the participation of groups that are frequently overlooked or marginalised. This may require specific outreach, translation into local languages, or separate sessions to create safe spaces for women, youth, or minority groups. Visual tools such as maps and drawings can make participation accessible to those with limited literacy or formal education.

Capturing lived experience means exploring how people access information, what limits their mobility, and how social norms shape their ability to act. Combining these qualitative insights with quantitative data gives a fuller picture of risk and capacity.

The result should be a clear and inclusive representation of vulnerability across population groups. This evidence can then guide planning, resource allocation, and early warning design in a way that reflects real-world diversity rather than assumptions of uniformity.

Worksheet: Intersectional Risk Mapping

Suggested columns

- ☐ Hazard exposure
- ☐ Livelihood type
- ☐ Legal status or documentation
- ☐ Access to digital tools and communication
- ☐ Gender and age group
- ☐ Disability and health status
- ☐ Other identity factors relevant to the context

Tip: Always ask, “Who might be missing from this data?” Absence from datasets does not mean less risk; it often means greater risk.

Step 3. Address Digital Inequalities

Access to digital systems increasingly determines who receives early warnings, who can register for assistance, and who is included in recovery planning [3,11]. Yet digital access remains uneven within and between countries. Many communities still face barriers linked to connectivity, affordability, and digital literacy [3, 11]. These inequalities shape how people experience disasters and whether they can benefit from new technologies [12].

Digital divides are not only about infrastructure. They are also about who has the means, knowledge, and freedom to use technology safely and effectively [12]. For instance, women in rural areas may be less likely to own mobile phones, while refugees and displaced people may be unable to access government platforms that require identification or stable internet connections [3,11]. People with disabilities may find that online warnings or registration systems are not accessible. When these gaps are ignored, digital innovation can deepen inequality instead of reducing it [3].

Artificial intelligence (AI) and data-driven systems offer new possibilities for disaster forecasting and response [3]. However, these tools rely on data that may be incomplete or biased. If certain groups are under-represented in datasets, they may be overlooked in risk assessments or excluded from automated decision-making processes [13]. This makes digital exclusion a direct contributor to disaster vulnerability.
Addressing these risks requires a balanced approach that combines digital inclusion with reliable alternatives [3,13]. Technology can play a vital role in improving preparedness and coordination, but it should never be the sole channel for communication or support. Analogue and hybrid systems remain essential, especially in low-connectivity environments.

In practice, this means investing in systems that work across multiple formats and levels of access. Where internet coverage is limited, radio, community notice boards, and local messengers can provide effective alternatives. Public alert systems should also include offline or low-bandwidth options such as text messages, voice-based communication, or local loudspeakers. Content should be translated into local languages and adapted to different literacy levels to ensure everyone understands what to do in an emergency.

Digital literacy programmes can also help reduce inequality. These initiatives should go beyond technical training to include awareness of online safety, privacy, and misinformation. Working with schools, local leaders, and civil society

organisations can increase reach and sustainability. In parallel, partnerships with telecommunications providers can improve affordability and extend coverage to remote or marginalised areas.

The aim is not to choose between digital and traditional methods but to combine them effectively. Hybrid systems can ensure that warnings and information reach everyone, regardless of income, education, or connectivity. This approach aligns with the broader principle of inclusive disaster governance, which values diversity in how information is shared and acted upon.

Check list

- ☐ Does the comms plan include both digital and non-digital channels?
- ☐ Can the system operate offline or in low-bandwidth environments?
- ☐ Have messages been tested for clarity, accessibility, and language?
- ☐ Are there procedures to reach those without phones or internet access?
- ☐ Have affordability, safety, and privacy been considered for all users?

Case Example

Voice-based early warning systems used by Adivasi communities in India allow residents with basic mobile phones to receive recorded messages in local languages. This approach has improved access to warnings in areas with low literacy and unreliable internet, showing that inclusive design does not require advanced technology but rather an understanding of local realities.

Ensuring access to both digital and non-digital communication is therefore not only a technical choice but a question of equity. When information reaches everyone, preparedness and response efforts become stronger, more inclusive, and more effective.

Step 4. Ensure Inclusive Communication

Clear, inclusive, and trustworthy communication is essential for effective disaster preparedness and response [14]. When people do not understand or trust the information they receive, warnings are ignored, and protective actions are delayed [10]. In recent years, the rise of misinformation and divisive rhetoric has made this challenge even more pressing [1]. Misleading narratives can spread rapidly, particularly online, and often reinforce distrust in authorities or deepen existing social divisions [1]. These dynamics undermine not only emergency response but also long-term efforts to build resilience.

Inclusive communication recognises that people receive and interpret information differently. It takes into account language, literacy levels, cultural norms, and access to technology. In many communities, official messages are delivered in national languages that may not be widely spoken or understood [15]. Written warnings may be inaccessible to people with limited literacy or to those with visual impairments. Social media messages may not reach rural or low-connectivity areas. Addressing these barriers ensures that communication serves all sections of society rather than reinforcing exclusion [15].

Partnerships with local actors play an important role in bridging these gaps. Local media outlets, grassroots organisations, and community leaders are often more trusted than national institutions, especially in contexts where government communication is viewed with scepticism [10]. Collaborating with these partners can improve both the reach and credibility of disaster-related messages. Trusted messengers can include faith leaders, health workers, teachers, or community volunteers who have established relationships within their communities [10]. Their involvement helps ensure that messages are culturally relevant and more likely to be acted upon.

Communication should also be adapted to local contexts through a mix of oral, visual, and written methods. Audio and pictorial materials can reach audiences who may not engage with text-heavy formats. Recorded voice messages, community theatre, and illustrated posters can convey important information to people of different literacy levels. In multilingual communities, messages should be translated into all relevant local languages and, where possible, co-developed with community representatives to reflect local expressions and priorities.

Fact-checking initiatives are another critical element of inclusive communication. Disasters often create environments where rumours spread quickly, and misinformation can cause real harm. Establishing rapid verification mechanisms,

such as partnerships with media or civil society organisations, helps counter false information before it becomes widespread. These initiatives can also build public understanding of how to identify credible sources and verify information independently.

Effective communication is not only about what is said but also about how it is tested and received. Before messages are rolled out widely, they should be reviewed through community focus groups or pilot sessions. Feedback from different groups, including persons with disabilities, youth, older adults, and linguistic minorities, can highlight potential misunderstandings or accessibility barriers. This process helps ensure that communication strategies are practical, inclusive, and responsive to real needs.

Check list

- ☐ Are messages available in local and minority languages?
- ☐ Are visual and audio formats used to complement written materials?
- ☐ Are comms accessible to people with low literacy or disabilities?
- ☐ Have trusted local messengers been identified and engaged?
- ☐ Can you monitor & address misinformation during emergencies?

Tip: Test all messages with community focus groups before launch. Ask participants what they understand, what feels unclear, and how the information could be better presented. This step ensures that messages are not only accurate but also trusted and actionable.

Step 5. Safeguard Civic Space and Participation

An open and active civic space is a foundation for inclusive DRR [2]. It allows individuals, community groups, and organisations to share knowledge, express concerns, and hold authorities accountable for their decisions [2]. When civic freedoms such as the rights to organise, speak, or participate are restricted, disaster governance becomes less transparent and less responsive to the needs of those most at risk [2]. Shrinking civic space weakens collaboration, reduces trust,

and narrows the diversity of voices that shape preparedness and recovery efforts [2,16].

In many parts of the world, civil society organisations and community-based groups face barriers that limit their participation in disaster-related work [16]. These can include restrictions on funding, excessive registration requirements, or the criminalisation of advocacy activities [17]. In some contexts, local leaders and activists are discouraged from speaking out about inequitable recovery efforts or poor preparedness planning, with resulting critical local knowledge, which could help reduce risk and improve planning, is lost [17].

Safeguarding civic space involves recognising civil society as an essential partner rather than an external actor. Local organisations often have deep community connections and can reach groups that government systems may overlook. Their participation ensures that DRR strategies are grounded in real experience and can adapt to changing circumstances. Civil society can also act as a bridge between communities and authorities, translating policies into locally relevant action and communicating community concerns back to decision-makers.

In practice, strengthening participation requires deliberate effort and policy commitment. Government agencies and humanitarian partners should include civil society in all stages of DRR planning, implementation, and review. Representation on disaster committees and task forces helps ensure that decisions reflect a range of perspectives, particularly those of marginalised communities. Participation should be meaningful rather than symbolic, with civil society actors having a defined role in decision-making processes and access to the same information as institutional partners.

Creating safe spaces for engagement is equally important. In some environments, community members or organisations may fear retaliation for raising concerns about preparedness or response efforts. Establishing confidential and anonymous feedback mechanisms allows people to report risks, discrimination, or policy failures without fear. These mechanisms can take various forms, such as hotlines, online forms, or liaison officers embedded within communities. What matters most is that they are trusted, easy to access, and linked to a process for response and accountability.

International partners and donors also have a role to play in protecting civic space. Funding mechanisms should support local organisations directly, reducing dependency on intermediary agencies and ensuring that community-led initiatives are adequately resourced. Training, networking, and capacity-building can help strengthen the collective voice of civil society and ensure consistent engagement in DRR policy discussions.

Developing a participation matrix
This matrix can help identify whether participation in DRR processes is balanced and inclusive:

Stage	Who was consulted?	Who decides?	Who implements?
Risk assessment			
Planning			
Implementation			
M&E			

Use the matrix to assess whether participation is equitable and whether marginalised or community-based organisations have real influence at each stage.

Tip: Treat civic actors as co-leads, not add-ons. Their engagement should be built into the structure of DRR governance, not added as a final step once decisions are already made.

Step 6. Design Ethical and Inclusive Technology

Digital tools and AI are increasingly shaping how disaster risks are analysed, predicted, and managed [13]. These technologies offer the potential to make decision-making faster and more precise. However, without ethical safeguards and inclusive design, they can also reproduce or intensify social inequalities [3,13]. Systems that rely on incomplete or biased data may misrepresent the realities of vulnerable groups, leading to unfair outcomes or exclusion from support [13]. Surveillance and data collection technologies can also undermine privacy and trust if used without proper oversight [2,13].

Designing ethical and inclusive technology begins with transparency. People have the right to understand how data about them is collected, stored, and used [13]. This includes knowing who owns the data, how long it will be retained, and whether it may be shared with third parties [18]. In DRR, where technology is often deployed quickly, these safeguards are sometimes overlooked. Clear policies on consent, privacy, and accountability are essential to maintaining trust and ensuring that technology serves the public good [18].

Accountability mechanisms should be established to clarify who is responsible when systems fail or cause harm. This includes having procedures for individuals or communities to challenge inaccurate data, biased outputs, or unethical use of information. Public institutions and private partners should be transparent about the limitations of their tools and should share methodologies and data sources whenever possible. Independent review boards or advisory panels can also provide oversight, ensuring that technological innovations are assessed for both effectiveness and fairness.

Community participation is a crucial element of ethical design. Including affected populations in the development and testing of digital tools helps identify biases early and ensures that technologies are accessible to those they are meant to support. This might involve consulting local communities when setting up data collection systems or testing early warning applications with users in different languages and literacy levels. Co-designing solutions with end users builds ownership and reduces the likelihood that systems will exclude or disadvantage specific groups.

Regular auditing of algorithms and digital processes is another key step. Algorithms are only as fair as the data and assumptions that shape them. Biases can enter through data selection, model design, or the interpretation of results. Conducting audits at regular intervals helps identify where these biases may occur and provides opportunities for correction. These audits should involve technical experts alongside social scientists and representatives from affected communities, ensuring a broad understanding of both data integrity and social context.

Ethical design also includes evaluating how technology interacts with power structures. For example, surveillance systems introduced to improve public safety can easily be repurposed for control or discrimination if not governed carefully. Establishing legal and institutional safeguards against misuse is therefore essential. Transparency reports, community consultation mechanisms, and ethical approval processes all contribute to building accountability and maintaining public confidence.

Check list

- [ ] Who developed and trained the AI model, and their affiliations?
- [ ] What data sources were used, and which groups might be missing?
- [ ] Have potential biases been identified and tested in development?
- [ ] Can individuals or communities contest inaccurate or harmful outputs?
- [ ] Are privacy, consent, and data protection protocols clearly stated?

Template: AI Impact Assessment for DRR Programmes

This template can be used when planning or reviewing any digital or AI-supported activity within a DRR context.

- Purpose of the tool or system
- Intended users and affected communities
- Data sources and methods of collection
- Potential risks of exclusion or discrimination
- Oversight and accountability mechanisms
- Community consultation and feedback process
- Bias detection and audit schedule
- Procedures for redress or correction of errors
- Data protection and storage plan
- Transparency and reporting measures

Integrating this assessment into the design phase ensures that technology remains a tool for inclusion rather than exclusion, helping to align digital innovation with the broader goals of fairness and resilience.

Step 7. Protect and Strengthen Livelihoods

Livelihoods are a foundation of efficient and timely recovery from disaster [19]. The ability of individuals and communities to sustain income, rebuild assets, and access secure employment after a disaster strongly influences how quickly recovery takes place [19]. When people lose their means of earning a living, they also lose autonomy, stability, and the capacity to prepare for future risks. DRR therefore needs to treat livelihood protection as an integral part of preparedness and response, not as a separate economic issue [19].

Recent developments in automation and digital management systems have created both opportunities and challenges for post-disaster recovery [20]. Automated platforms can streamline logistics, speed up payments, and improve coordination [10]. However, they can also reduce the demand for local labour, particularly among those working informally. In many recovery contexts, informal workers such as builders, street vendors, or waste collectors play a crucial role in rebuilding communities [21]. If automation replaces these jobs without offering alternatives, it risks undermining recovery efforts and widening inequality [21].

Protecting livelihoods requires balancing efficiency with social inclusion [21]. Recovery programmes should aim to restore and strengthen local economies rather than displace them. This involves linking livelihood recovery with broader strategies for climate adaptation and risk reduction. For example, investments in sustainable agriculture, water management, or renewable energy can create new forms of employment while reducing long-term exposure to hazards [21]. Supporting small enterprises and cooperatives in hazard-prone areas can also promote economic diversification and stability.

Informal and community-led labour should be recognised as a valuable asset rather than a challenge to be replaced by technology. Local workers often have practical knowledge of their environment, materials, and social networks. Involving them directly in rebuilding projects strengthens both physical and social resilience. Programmes that offer fair wages, training, and basic protections can help transition informal work into more secure and sustainable livelihoods while maintaining community ownership of recovery processes.

Care work is another form of labour that is frequently overlooked in post-disaster planning. Activities such as childcare, elder care, and community support are often unpaid but vital for maintaining wellbeing and enabling others to participate in recovery. Recognising and supporting care work through targeted assistance or flexible funding helps prevent additional burdens on women and caregivers and ensures that recovery is more equitable.

Digital tools can support livelihoods if designed inclusively. For instance, mobile payment systems can reduce barriers to accessing funds, and digital marketplaces can connect small producers to wider networks. However, these systems must remain accessible to people with limited digital skills or connectivity. Combining digital innovations with on-the-ground employment opportunities can create complementary systems that strengthen, rather than replace, local economies.

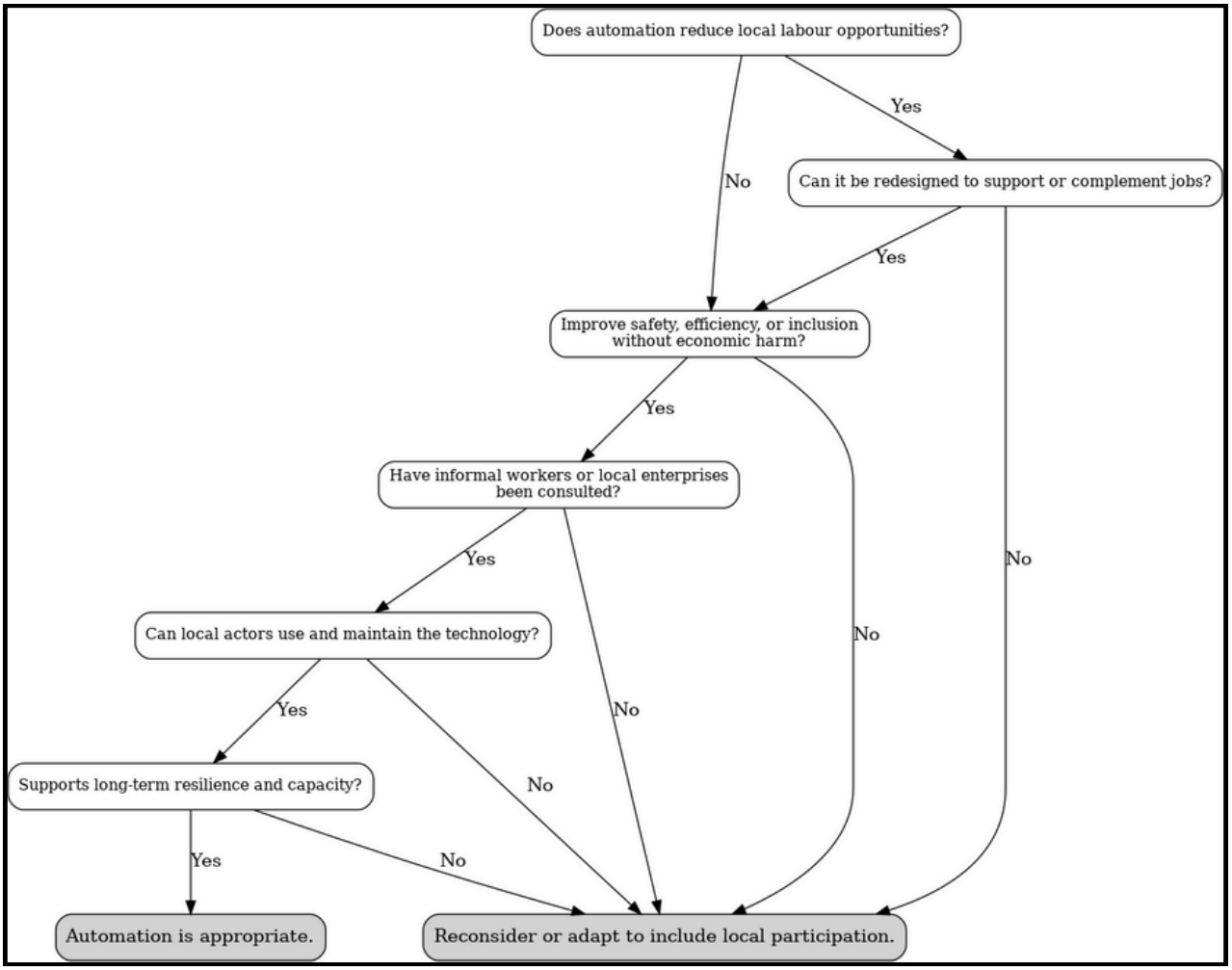

Diagram 1: The image shows a decision tree that helps determine whether automation is appropriate in a recovery activity, based on its impact on local labour, safety, inclusion, local capacity, and long-term resilience. If negative impacts cannot be avoided, the suggestion is to adapt or reconsider the approach.

If automation reduces employment opportunities without providing compensatory benefits, it should be reconsidered or adapted to integrate local participation.

Tip: Treat job recovery as disaster recovery. Restoring livelihoods is not a secondary step but a central part of rebuilding resilience and dignity after a crisis.

Step 8. Build Multi-Level Governance for Inclusion

Inclusive DRR depends on governance systems that recognise and protect the rights of all people [22]. However, in many contexts, laws and policies continue to reinforce exclusion rather than prevent it [22]. Discriminatory legislation, bureaucratic barriers, and fragmented institutional responsibilities can leave specific groups outside the scope of protection and assistance [23]. Strengthening governance for inclusion requires more than new technical measures; it calls for the alignment of legal, institutional, and policy frameworks so that all sectors contribute to reducing risk [22,23].

Discriminatory laws are among the most persistent obstacles to equitable risk governance [24,25]. These laws can criminalise or marginalise certain identities, restrict access to basic services, or make it difficult for some people to seek assistance during crises [25]. Examples include laws that penalise same-sex relationships, limit the rights of refugees and migrants, or exclude informal housing from official planning systems. When such laws remain in place, they create structural risks that cannot be solved through technical fixes alone [24,25].

Advocacy for legal reform is therefore a central part of inclusive disaster governance. Policymakers, legal professionals, and civil society organisations all have a role in identifying and addressing these barriers.
Siloed policies also weaken risk governance by fragmenting responsibility across government sectors.

Education, health, housing, and social protection all influence how people experience and recover from disasters, yet they often operate separately from disaster management institutions. To strengthen inclusion, DRR should be integrated into the core strategies of these sectors. For example, education policies can include disaster awareness and preparedness training in schools. Health systems can incorporate emergency preparedness and mental health support into their service planning.

Resettlement and housing policies can prioritise safe locations and access to basic services for displaced or marginalised populations.

At the national level, coordination mechanisms are essential for aligning these efforts. Inter-ministerial committees or working groups can help ensure that disaster-related considerations are embedded in sectoral policies. At the local level, inclusive governance requires meaningful participation from communities, including women’s groups, persons with disabilities, migrants, and others who are

often excluded from planning processes. This approach ensures that decisions are informed by lived experience and that local priorities guide national strategies.

Aligning DRR with rights protections further strengthens accountability. International human rights obligations already commit governments to safeguard the rights to life, health, housing, and participation. Embedding these principles within DRR frameworks provides a clear legal and moral foundation for inclusion. This alignment also creates mechanisms through which individuals and communities can challenge exclusion, discrimination, or neglect through recognised legal and institutional pathways.

Partnerships with legal aid organisations and human rights institutions can help translate these commitments into practice. Such organisations can provide guidance on inclusive law reform, train DRR practitioners in legal awareness, and support communities in accessing justice when their rights are violated. They can also play an important role in monitoring whether policies and programmes uphold rights in practice, not just in theory.

Check list

- ☐ Are national and local laws free from discrimination?
- ☐ Does the framework explicitly reference human rights commitments?
- ☐ Are DRR objectives integrated into social protection policies?
- ☐ Do coordination mechanisms link civil society in decision-making?
- ☐ Are accountability and oversight mechanisms in place?

Tip: Involve legal aid organisations as DRR partners. Their expertise can help identify discriminatory laws, promote legal literacy within communities, and ensure that rights-based principles are applied consistently across all levels of governance.

Step 9. Monitor, Evaluate, and Adapt

Monitoring and evaluation are often viewed as technical exercises, yet they are central to achieving inclusive and accountable DRR [26]. When programmes are not monitored through an inclusion lens, existing inequalities can remain hidden, and exclusion can persist unchecked [27]. Effective monitoring requires systems that capture not only whether activities were completed but also whether they reached and benefited those most at risk [26,27].

Traditional evaluation methods tend to focus on outputs such as the number of shelters built or training sessions delivered [26]. While these are important, they do not necessarily show who participated, who benefited, or who was left out. Measuring inclusion outcomes provides a more accurate picture of how equitable and effective an intervention has been [27]. This might involve tracking participation by gender (including beyond the binary definition), age, disability, or migration status, or identifying which groups continue to face barriers to access and protection [27].

Community-based monitoring is a practical way to ensure that feedback comes from those directly affected by policies and programmes. It allows communities to define what success looks like in their context and to highlight gaps that external evaluators may overlook. Local monitoring groups can collect information through meetings, mobile surveys, or observation, feeding this into formal reporting systems. In turn, institutions should provide channels for this information to influence decision-making and programme design.

Regular feedback loops are essential for adaptation. Risk environments and social dynamics change over time, and programmes must evolve accordingly. Creating opportunities to review and adjust plans based on new evidence or community input helps maintain relevance and trust. Reviews should not be limited to annual evaluations but should include shorter cycles of reflection after major activities, exercises, or disaster events.

Transparency also plays an important role in sustaining engagement. When people provide feedback, they need to see that their input has been heard and acted upon. Reporting back to communities on how decisions have changed, or why certain suggestions could not be implemented, demonstrates respect and strengthens accountability. This two-way communication helps build confidence in institutions and encourages continued participation.

Integrating monitoring and evaluation into all stages of DRR ensures that inclusion

is not treated as a separate issue but as a standard measure of quality and effectiveness. The goal is to make adaptive management a normal part of risk governance rather than a reactive process that occurs only when problems arise.

Tip: Report back to communities on how their feedback has influenced decisions. Even when changes are small, sharing these outcomes reinforces accountability and encourages continued participation in monitoring processes.

Step 10. Foster Solidarity and Counter Divisive Narratives

Disaster resilience depends not only on infrastructure and planning but also on social cohesion [1, 28]. When communities are divided or certain groups are blamed for problems beyond their control, collective preparedness and response weaken. Populism, polarisation, and scapegoating can erode the sense of shared responsibility that is essential for managing risk [1]. In these contexts, communication and engagement strategies must work actively to rebuild trust, promote solidarity, and counter harmful narratives [28].

Disasters often expose and intensify social tensions. Economic hardship, displacement, and unequal recovery can lead to resentment between groups [28]. Political or media narratives that assign blame to migrants, minorities, or marginalised communities can deepen these divisions [1]. Once established, such narratives can shape public attitudes for years, influencing who receives assistance, how policies are framed, and which groups are viewed as deserving of protection. Recognising these dynamics early allows practitioners to take steps that prevent exclusion and promote cooperation [28].

Storytelling and intercultural dialogue are powerful ways to strengthen solidarity. Stories can communicate complex ideas in relatable terms and can highlight how different groups experience risk and recovery.
When people share experiences across social or cultural boundaries, they often find common ground in their aspirations for safety, dignity, and stability. Facilitating spaces where these exchanges can happen helps to humanise public discussion and shift attention from blame to shared solutions. These spaces may take the form of community dialogues, local radio programmes, participatory theatre, or digital storytelling projects.

Highlighting shared risks is another effective way to counter division. Emphasising that hazards such as floods, earthquakes, or pandemics affect entire communities

encourages a collective response. However, this must be balanced with recognition that different groups have different capacities and vulnerabilities. Messages should frame risk as a shared challenge that requires mutual support, while also acknowledging and addressing the specific needs of those who face greater barriers to protection.

Training leaders and communicators in inclusive communication can help ensure that this framing is consistent. Local officials, journalists, educators, and civil society representatives all influence how people interpret disasters and who they see as part of the community. Training should focus on how to use inclusive language, avoid reinforcing stereotypes, and frame stories in ways that encourage cooperation rather than division. Such training can also help leaders identify and respond to misinformation before it escalates into social conflict.

Building solidarity is not a separate activity from disaster management; it is a critical component of resilience. When people trust one another and feel that their voices are respected, they are more likely to act collectively, share information, and support recovery efforts. By promoting narratives that connect rather than divide, practitioners help create the social conditions that make inclusive DRR possible.

Message Bank: Inclusive Framing vs Divisive Rhetoric

Using inclusive framing like included in these examples encourages collective ownership of risk and shared responsibility for solutions.

The situation	Divisive framing	Inclusive framing
Flood response	“Unprepared families caused chaos.”	“Many families were caught off guard; together we can strengthen early warning systems.”
Disaster-influence migration	“Migrants strain local resources.”	“New arrivals bring skills and knowledge that can support recovery.”
Inter-community conflict	“This neighbourhood refuses to cooperate.”	“Community leaders are discussing how to rebuild trust and improve communication.”

Tip: Show common risks while addressing specific needs. Remind audiences that disasters affect everyone but that some people face higher barriers to safety and recovery. This approach fosters empathy and reinforces the idea that resilience grows stronger when no one is left behind.

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