UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM STAFF COLLEGE

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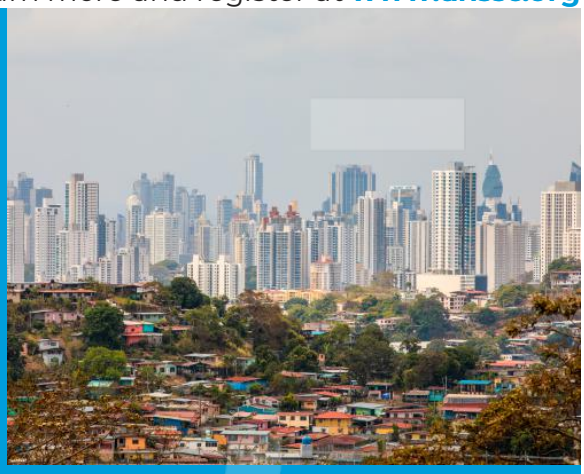
ONLINE

12 MAY 2026 - 31 DEC 2026

Learning journey on Securing Resilient Urban Futures: From Vision to Action



Climate and Environment

Sustainable development and the SDGs

LANGUAGE
English

DURATION
1 year

ENROLL BY
31 Dec 2026

PRICE
Free

LOCATION
ONLINE

TARGET
Everyone

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The **Securing Resilient Urban Futures: From Vision to Action** learning journey is a self-paced online course designed to strengthen practitioners' capacity to address the increasingly complex risks facing urban areas. Developed by the United Nations Development Programme's Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery for Building Resilience Team (UNDP-DRT), in collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), the course offers five modules designed to strengthen knowledge and understanding of urban resilience and advance an integrated urban resilience-building approach that addresses different dimensions of resilience and all risk typologies.

Introduction

Urban resilience has emerged as a critical pillar in the global pursuit of sustainable development, especially as cities become epicentres of population growth, socio-economic activity, and converging risks. Recognising the complexity and systemic nature of urban vulnerabilities—from climate-induced hazards to infrastructural fragilities – has become an essential task for government and sectoral agencies as well as for practitioners from the United Nations (UN) and other stakeholder groups working at the local level.

This course aims to guide learners through the foundations of urban resilience, the dynamics of urban systems, risk assessment approaches, resilience diagnoses, and practical strategies to manage urban risks. Through an integrated, risk-informed perspective, the course equips learners with the knowledge and tools needed to support more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban development.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, learners should:

1. Explain the interlinkages and complexities of urban challenges in relation to resilience building.
2. Explain the foundational principles of urban resilience and its role in sustainable development.
3. Understand the interdisciplinary nature of urban resilience by connecting urban-peri-urban-rural planning and resilience building.
4. Analyse the role of urban governance and systems thinking in resilience building.
5. Identify and assess urban risks using diagnostic tools and resilience planning.
6. Explore better strategies to advocate for risk-informed resilience planning in ongoing and future programmes.
7. Evaluate key urban challenges and apply innovative solutions to manage risks.

Course methodology

UNSSC online courses are designed to deliver maximum learning outcomes through carefully chosen high-quality learning materials.

This online course combines five self-paced study modules with applied learning components, such as case studies, quizzes, and additional reading resources. Each module requires 1-2 hours to complete. Modules 1-3 focus on the fundamental concepts and frameworks related to urban resilience, while modules 4 and 5 provide a practical case-study approach to urban resilience by exploring the drivers of risks in urban contexts and the potential solutions, including how these solutions can be scaled beyond urban boundaries.

This online course allows learners to complete activities at times that best fit their schedules. Learners are largely free to determine their own weekly study plan.

On successful completion of each module, the learners will receive a badge of accomplishment.

The learners successfully completing the entire course with five modules will receive a certificate of completion

Course contents

Module 1: Fundamentals of urban resilience

This module provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding resilience in urban contexts. It will introduce the core concepts of urban resilience and highlight their importance in today's rapidly urbanising world.

Learners will explore the distinction between urban risk reduction and resilience, understand why resilience is central to sustainable development, explore the principles of urban resilience, and examine how global frameworks like the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework, and the New Urban Agenda shape urban resilience strategies.

Module 2: Unlocking resilience in urban systems

Urban resilience is built on the understanding that cities are complex, interconnected systems where social, economic, ecological, and governance factors constantly interact. This module will explore how essential a systems approach, effective urban governance, and partnerships are to building resilient cities. It will cover the roles of institutions, sectors, and stakeholders, as well as inclusive decision-making, while emphasising the need for integrated planning. Learners will discover how viewing cities as interconnected systems helps address complex risks and fosters adaptive, participatory urban resilience strategies.

Module 3: Understanding and diagnosing urban risks and resilience planning

This module will focus on the risk-development nexus, reinforcing the importance of risk assessment in informing resilience strategies and planning. It will introduce learners to diagnostic methods and resilience-planning tools to help them identify and assess converging urban risks. Learners will explore how to integrate risk-informed approaches into urban development and examine real-world examples of resilience-building in diverse city contexts.

Module 4: How urbanism shapes risk outcomes

This module introduces learners to the key factors, quite a few of which are peculiar to an urban environment, that shape how and why risks impact cities differently. Learners will explore urban dynamics that turn hazards into disasters and the diverse ways cities experience and respond to crises. Through real-world case examples across Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3 cities, learners will examine how urban characteristics can amplify risks and produce cascading failures. The module also guides learners in analysing disaster events using a structured approach that considers urban features, systemic risks, and socio-economic impacts.

Module 5: Reducing disaster impacts and building resilience in cities

This module will introduce learners to the key solution pathways that help cities anticipate, withstand, and recover from shocks. It will explore how improved risk data, strengthened governance, innovative financing, social protection systems, partnerships, nature-based solutions, and risk-sensitive urban planning contribute to urban resilience. Learners will examine how these strategies are applied across different city typologies and analyse real-world examples to understand what makes solutions effective. The module will also highlight what it takes to scale resilience approaches beyond individual cities, including the enabling conditions and barriers to wider implementation.

Target audience

This course is designed for national/city-level counterparts from administrative and sectoral agencies, UN/UNDP practitioners at the global, regional, national, and city levels, and practitioners from socio-economic development sectors, the private sector, and stakeholders wishing to enhance their understanding and practical orientation on issues related to urban resilience.

Other officials and stakeholders who can contribute to advancing disaster risk reduction and resilience planning can also benefit from the course.