

GLOBAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (GAR)

SPECIAL REPORT ON DROUGHT 2021

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Global Assessment Report (GAR) Special Report on Drought 2021 explores the systemic nature of drought and its impacts on achievement of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the SDGs and human and ecosystems health and wellbeing.

Droughts have deep, widespread and underestimated impacts on societies, ecosystems and economies. They incur costs that are borne disproportionately by the most vulnerable people. The extensive impacts of drought are consistently underreported, even though they span large areas, cascade through systems and scales and linger through time. They affect millions of people and many sectors and domains such as agricultural production, public water supply, energy production, waterborne transportation, tourism, human health and biodiversity, contributing to food insecurity, poverty and inequality.

Climate change is increasing temperatures and disrupting rainfall patterns, thus increasing the frequency, severity and duration of droughts in many regions. As the world moves towards being 2°C warmer, urgent action is required to better understand and more effectively manage drought risk to reduce the devastating toll on human lives and livelihoods.

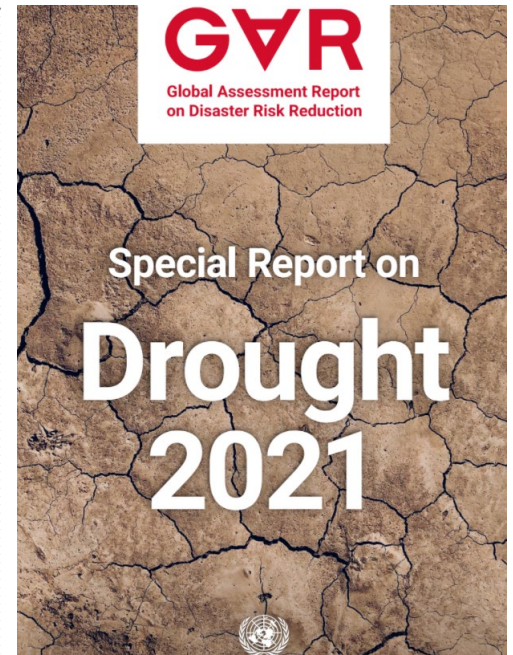
The GAR Special Report on Drought 2021 emphasises that while drought poses a significant threat to achieving the goals of the Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030 (Sendai Framework), this threat can be substantially reduced by applying prospective, proactive and

innovative approaches to drought risk management. Drawing on lessons learned from case studies around the world, the report argues that with what we now know about drought and its risk to societies, economies and ecosystems, we can and must do better at managing it.

It calls for a sharper focus on prevention: shifting from reactive approaches to getting ahead of the curve by addressing the root drivers of drought and socioecological vulnerability, avoiding and minimising risks. It shows that increasing greenhouse gas emissions, together with the vulnerability of populations and ecosystems exposed to drought, are important drivers of drought risk. Addressing these facets are central to reducing drought risk. At the same time, the report stresses that it is crucial to address the human activities that intensify and propagate the impacts of drought.

Prevention and mitigation of drought risk have a far lower cost than reaction and response. The report offers recommendations on how to achieve drought resilience by promoting holistic systemic approaches based on the lived experience. It calls for a transformation in drought risk governance and the actions, processes, traditions and institutions (formal and informal) by which collective decisions are reached and implemented. This would help society to be more able

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to cope with uncertainty, surprises and changes in systems over time.

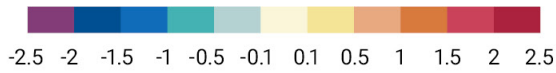
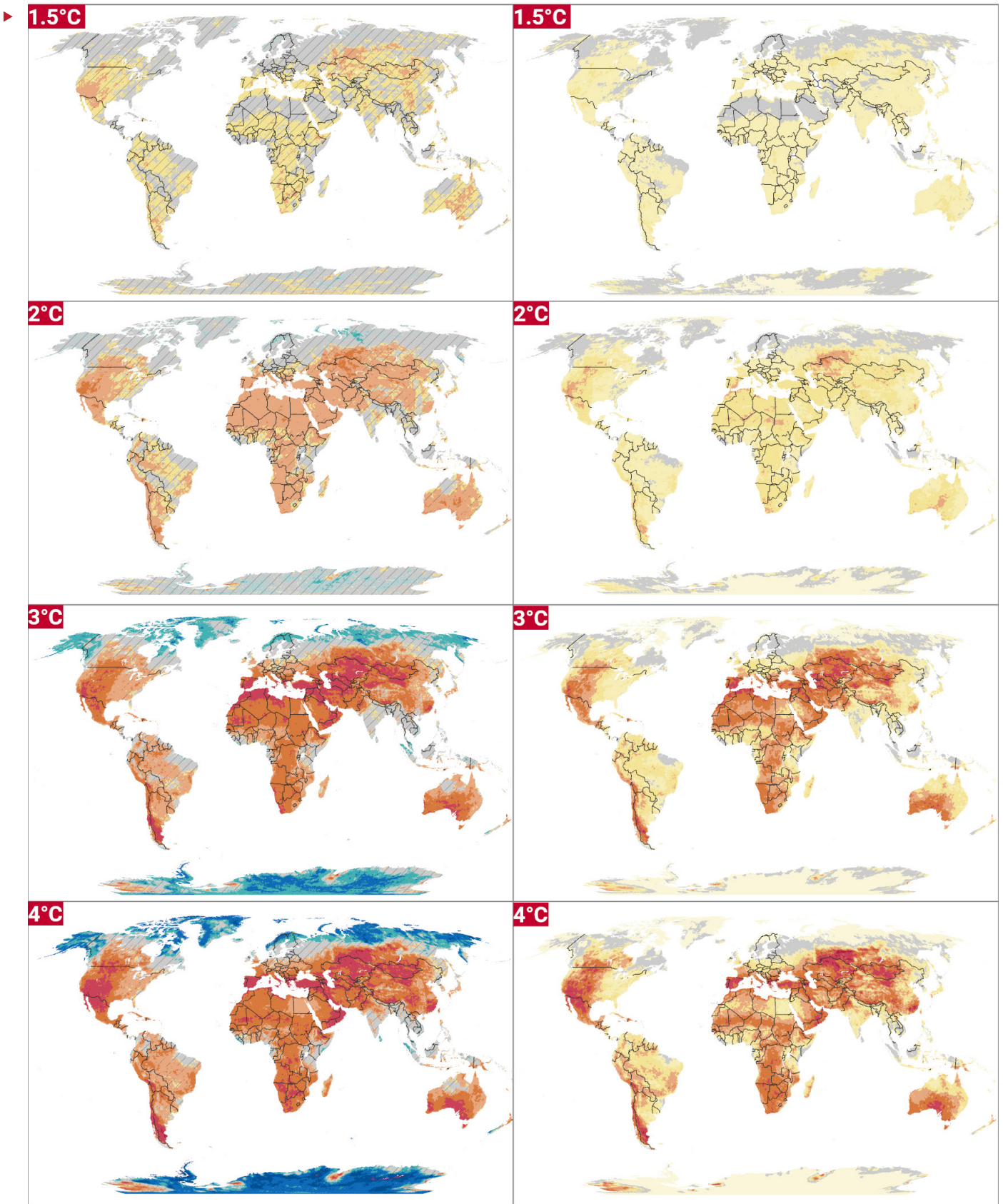
The report recommends the establishment of new coordination and collaboration mechanisms to rapidly advance the understanding and management of drought risk. It calls for a new global mechanism that could support countries to address the cascading and transboundary nature of drought risk; broaden collaborative partnerships; promote innovation, iterative learning and adaptive governance; share capacities and learning and connect through communities, across scales and boundaries and among existing regional entities and initiatives.

It focuses on addressing the systemic aspects of drought risk creation while enhancing a better understanding of drought impacts.

The report also promotes the establishment of national drought resilience partnerships that would mobilise public, private and civil society partners and work to ensure a seamless link between national and local levels. These

Drought frequency

Unprecedented droughts



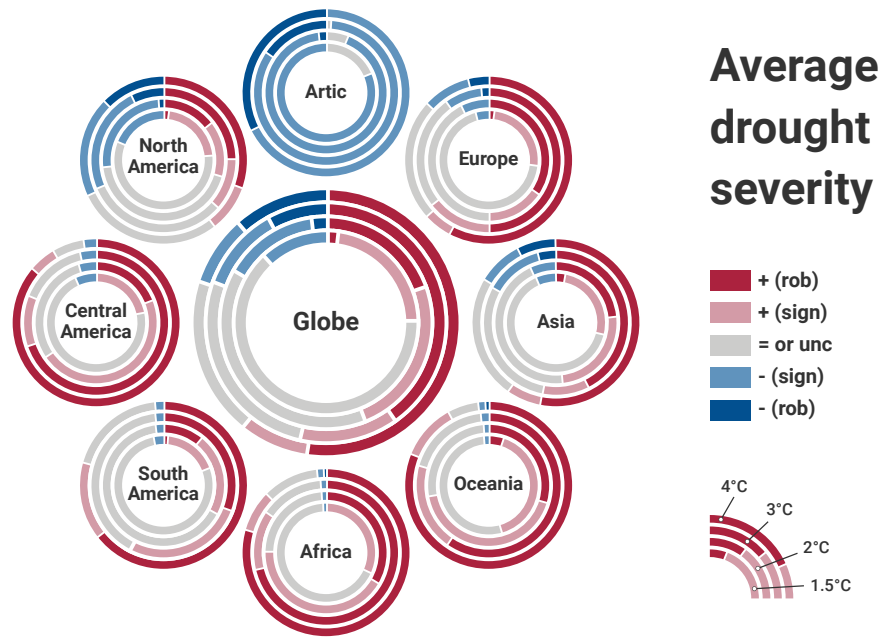
partnerships would serve to help eliminate the institutional silos that prevent a holistic approach to drought risk management, thus engaging a wide range of sectors and stakeholders to accelerate collective preventative action.

Key recommendations

Drought has extensive and pervasive costs to communities, economies and ecosystems. In many parts of the world and where vulnerability persists or grows, these costs continue to rise. Prevention has far lower human, financial and environmental costs than reaction and response.

Complex risks like drought are daunting in their inherent uncertainty and unpredictability. In the past, this has limited the ability to reduce risk and prepare for impacts. But now the increased understanding of complex systemic risks and of forms of adaptive governance allows for effective action. With what we know, we must do better and with what we learn, we must improve.

Enabling conditions must be built for the transition to drought-related systemic risk governance. Drought resilience partnerships at the national and local levels can help create an enabling environment for more systemic risk governance that prioritises iterative learning and innovation, bringing forth plans designed to be flexible and adapting to a changing context.



A mechanism for drought management at the international and national levels could help address the complex and cascading nature of drought risk, and its impacts when realised. This can be based on shared values and responsibilities of stakeholders to mobilise and coordinate the needed financial resources and direct them to build systemic drought resilience.

An effective global drought mechanism will develop international collaboration and dialogue on drivers of globally networked risks, promote shared learning and deployment of capabilities, develop thematic

working groups including industry and civil society actors, focused on feasibility, capacity and accountability and develop processes for reducing systemic drought risk through adaptive governance that puts people first.

Financial systems and services need to evolve to encourage cooperative approaches, to promote social protection mechanisms and to encourage risk transfer and contingent financing, so as to provide diversified adaptive support to drought risk management.

New pathways are needed to encourage inclusion of indigenous and local knowledge, sharing of values and opportunities for realising the benefits of effective adaptive governance and effective sharing of drought risk management experiences across boundaries in their multiple forms.

As no two droughts are the same, no simple formula to manage them is sufficient. Continuous learning and adaptation to the variety of drought events and drivers, impacts, warnings and ongoing responses is essential.

Download the GAR Drought report: www.undrr.org/publication/gar-special-report-drought-2021

