



## INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

### Critical But Not Urgent: Seattle Prepares for the Big One

When scientists discovered that the city of Seattle faced far severer seismic hazards than previously known, municipal emergency managers teamed with public servants, the private sector, and community members both to mitigate the risks a massive earthquake posed and to plan for response and recovery. The uncertainties surrounding the timing and extent of such a disaster worked against the case for immediate, significant, and unified government action. Beset by more-pressing priorities, elected officials were reluctant to commit significant tax dollars, extensive amounts of time, and substantial political capital to the issue, but Seattle emergency manager Barb Graf, her colleagues, and an expanding network of community organizers took on much of the responsibility. This case study anchors a new series that profiles how governments are approaching interagency coordination, social mobilization, and other challenges associated with meeting [SDG 11](#) on disaster risk reduction.

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*Vashon Island residents work in their Emergency Operations Center to discuss how to respond should a major earthquake take place. Photo courtesy of Rick Wallace.*

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Reducing Inequality in Boa Vista, Brazil

## by Focusing on the Very Young

Narrowing the gap between rich and poor was a top priority for Teresa Surita, five-time mayor of Boa Vista, Brazil. Surita had long viewed early childhood development services as crucial for improving life chances and attaining that goal, and she had partnered with several programs to expand parent coaching and other opportunities. As her fifth term began in 2017, she turned to a program called Urban95, which called for making a top priority the needs of young children and their families in all of the city's planning and programs. Building on work the city had already done, Surita and her department heads undertook projects that included adapting a neighborhood to the needs of young children and their caregivers and building a cutting-edge data dashboard and alert system designed to ensure citizens would get help when they needed it. The city sought to keep those efforts on track while also extending assistance to refugee families from neighboring Venezuela. As the term of the initial phase drew to a close in September 2019, municipal officials began to take stock of progress and results. Despite some philosophical disagreements and some uncertainties about the future of vital federal funding, the city was on track to achieve its project goals.

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*Billboard boasting Boa Vista as the capital of early childhood. Photo credit Bill Steiden.*

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