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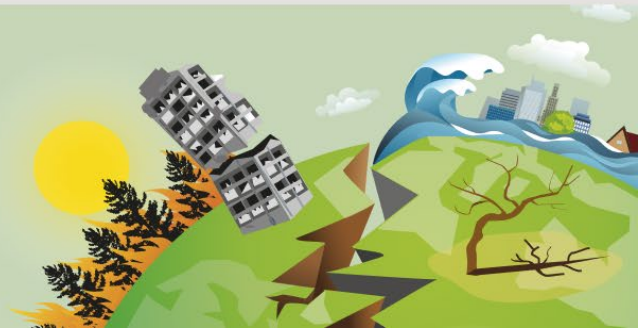
GFDRR Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery

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TAFF

Technical Assistance Financing Facility
for Disaster Prevention and Preparedness

Component 1: Country-specific technical assistance



Last updated: September 2026

Iceland:

Towards an Integrated Wildfire Risk Management

Overview

Grant Size	€300,000
Duration	September 2024 – December 2025
Key hazard(s)	Wildfires
Key word(s)	Integrated wildfire risk management, governance, coordination, prioritisation of measures

Context

The risk of wildfires in Iceland is rising significantly. Although volcanic eruptions remain Iceland's predominant hazard, recent years have seen occasional wildfires in the southern, eastern, and western regions due to dry summer conditions. This risk is linked to climate change, evolving land use patterns, and expanding vegetation. Afforestation areas, recreational zones, and areas near vegetation are particularly vulnerable. For example, in 2021, a wildfire in the Heiðmörk conservation area near Reykjavík--critical for the capital's water supply--burned 56.5 ha, prompting authorities to issue Iceland's first-ever wildfire danger alert. In 2023–2024, moss fields in the Grindavík area caught fire, triggered by volcanic activity in the Reykjanes Peninsula.

At the national level, Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management (DCPEM) is in charge of daily activities related to prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery from emergencies. The DCPEM coordinates the civil protection system and provides support and coordination when local levels are overwhelmed, in line with Iceland's decentralized governance system. There is strong interest and momentum among various stakeholders in Iceland to strengthen Iceland's capacity across the wildfire risk management. Authorities, institutions, scientists, and the public are starting to recognize wildfire risk as a significant threat at both national and local levels, particularly in areas that have experienced fires already.

Objective

The project objective was to provide support to the DCPEM in Iceland by providing analytics and recommendations for adopting an integrated wildfire risk management (IWFRM) approach in Iceland. Analytics focused on reviewing current arrangements, achievements, and initiatives, identification of key gaps and challenges, as well as short-, medium-, and long-term opportunities to improve the framework for IWFRM and to inform a future strategic framework and possible stakeholder-led actions. The technical assistance comprised desk research, expert diagnostic review, two rounds of in-country stakeholder consultations and site visits, as well as facilitating knowledge-exchange within and outside of Iceland.

Key Activities, Outputs, and Expected Results

The project comprised two activities: (1) a diagnostic analysis and identification of recommendations roadmap with short/medium-long term priorities for stakeholders to consider, and (2) knowledge-exchange and dissemination of findings.

First, a team of experts from the World Bank Group, Prepared International, and the European Forestry Institute / FoRISK team, working with Icelandic counterparts, conducted desk research, a diagnostic review, and two rounds of in-country stakeholder consultations. The review assessed the current state of wildfire risk management in Iceland and identified key gaps and opportunities for future action. The review was conducted in line with the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) Wildfire Peer Review Assessment Framework (PRAF), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR), as well as international practice on IWFRM including various initiatives and examples in Europe and beyond. A set of recommendations was included in a roadmap with short, medium, and long-term priorities.

Second, a series of knowledge-transfer activities were conducted including facilitated participation of several fire chiefs at the Fire Camp in Poland in May 2025, and in country training with support from experts from the European Forestry Institute/ FoRISK team to deliver technical training in Iceland in October 2025.

Outputs: Technical report, a knowledge note, technical trainings/presentations, a summary brief, a feature article, and a blogpost with videos.

- World Bank. 2025. *Towards an Integrated Wildfire Risk Management in Iceland - Diagnostic and Recommendations*. Link.
- World Bank. 2026. *Knowledge note on Integrated Wildfire Risk Management in Europe: Understanding the Approach and Examples*. Link.
- UCPM Knowledge Network article (March 3, 2026): 'Advancing integrated wildfire risk management in Iceland'. Link.
- FoRISK blog (October 21, 2025) 'When Fire Meets Ice: Iceland's Unexpected Wildfire Challenge', Link.

In terms of results, outputs are intended to inform policy dialogue and planning in Iceland and showcase to other countries practical way to diagnose and identify key areas for future actions. The analysis and dissemination activities conducted equipped key stakeholders with knowledge, new ideas, as well as new connections relevant for wildfire risk management and emergency preparedness in general. Some of the recommendations are being taken on board by relevant actors, and there is renewed focus on inter-institutional cooperation through a dedicated working group, on the importance of capacity-building, as well as adequate capabilities for firefighters and emergency management actors.

Sustainability and Coordination

This project was aligned with priorities and ongoing disaster risk management related initiatives in Iceland, including Host Nation-related projects. The approach was aligned with the methodological approach of the UCPM Wildfire PRAF, as well as higher-level EU Disaster Resilience Goals, and the SFDRR. The project considered knowledge generated under previous wildfire PRAF and existing country wildfire risk management practice assessments, as well as EU/country-funded projects and initiatives such as FIRE-RES for fire resilient territories in Europe, and the SAFERS PROJECT. The findings of the project can contribute to the broader knowledge base on IWFRM to further inform and refine its strategies and facilitate the uptake of such practices across UCPM countries. Overall, the activities benefited from the knowledge generated through collaborations between government actors, the World Bank, and the UCPM.

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