

## EM-DAT Documentation

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# About the EM-DAT Project

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## 1 - EM-DAT and the CRED

### The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED)

The [Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters \(CRED\)](#) is currently a research center that is part of the [Institute Health and Society \(IRSS\)](#) based at the [Université catholique de Louvain \(UCLouvain\)](#) in Brussels, Belgium. The CRED was established in 1973 and has since become one of the world's leading research centers working on the epidemiology of disasters.

The CRED's main focus is on studying the impact of disasters on populations and on ways to improve the effectiveness of disaster response and risk reduction. The CRED's research includes collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data on disasters caused by natural and technological hazards, within the EM-DAT project, as well as data on conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies.

The CRED's research findings are used to inform policy and practice in disaster management in Belgium and internationally. In addition to its research activities, the CRED provides training, consultancy, and technical support to governments, humanitarian organizations, and other stakeholders involved in disaster risk reduction and emergency response.

### The Joint History of CRED and the EM-DAT International Disaster Database

In the 1970s, the approach to disaster management was predominantly reactive, emphasizing immediate rescue and relief operations. Recognizing the imperative for a more proactive, informed, and systematic approach to disaster management, Professor Michel Lechat (UCLouvain) established the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) in 1973. One of the primary challenges faced by the emerging field of disaster epidemiology was the absence of comprehensive global data. A holistic perspective on disasters was essential not only to solidify the foundations of this nascent scientific domain but also to ensure evidence-based disaster management strategies.

## Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday, CRED

If you are interested in the joint history of CRED and EM-DAT, read our [CRED Crunch No.71 newsletter](#) to learn more. This special edition released for CRED's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday provides a comprehensive and contextual overview of the history of CRED and its flagship project EM-DAT.

In 1984, Debarati Guha-Sapir joined the UCLouvain CRED team and collaborated with Prof. Lechat to initiate the development of the EM-DAT database. This endeavor built upon the foundational efforts of a prior database project spearheaded by the United States Agency for International Development/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). The CRED then embarked on the meticulous task of data aggregation from diverse sources, including UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and media outlets. The CRED has been managing the EM-DAT database since 1988. After Lechat, Prof. Guha-Sapir assumed the directorship of CRED in 1992, a role she held until 2021 when Prof. Niko Speybroeck took on the role of director.

Thanks to the [support of USAID](#), EM-DAT has evolved into a public database and became an valuable unique resource for disaster research and management.

## 2 - EM-DAT Partners

### USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

The [Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance \(BHA\)](#) is part of the [US Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#). BHA is responsible for coordinating and providing humanitarian assistance to people affected by disasters and crises around the world. BHA was formerly known as the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) until it was rebranded in 2020.

BHA works in collaboration with other US government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners to deliver aid to those in need. The agency responds to a range of emergencies, including disasters, conflicts, and disease outbreaks, and provides various form of assistance, such as food, shelter, medical care, and water and sanitation services. BHA also works to build the capacity of communities and local organizations to better prepare for and respond to emergencies in the future. Since 1999, USAID/BHA has supported the EM-DAT project.

### Scientific & Technological Advisory Group (STAG)

Inaugurated in March 2023, the [first Scientific & Technological Advisory Group \(STAG\)](#) meeting took place in Brussels. The STAG takes over from other previously organized meetings called Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meetings. Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Meetings have been implemented every two years on average as part of the evaluation of the USAID-BHA/CRED initiative related to the EM-DAT international disaster database. The objective of the TAG meetings was to discuss and share with the TAG members different aspects related to the EM-DAT initiative and development. Those meetings produce a series of recommendations for the continuous improvement of the EM-DAT database and its related proposed services.

In 2023, the [first STAG meeting](#) also included experts from the scientific community. The STAG included participants from several national, international, and UN public agencies, humanitarian agencies, research centers, and universities. The group was composed in such a way as to bring together expertise on various types of disasters and profiles with different skills and interests, from research to field actors to public institutions.

For more details and documents on the TAG and STAG meeting, please visit our [dedicated web page](#).

# 3 - Ways to Contribute

## Contributing

CRED regularly collaborates with researchers and institutions to improve the quality and use of disaster impact data. You can help us in various ways:

- By reporting errors in the database (see [Issue Reporting](#)).
- By sending us the results of your work if it could improve the quality and completeness of the EM-DAT database.
- By answering calls for projects together for research or technological development.
- By doing an internship, a thesis, or a PhD with or in partnership with the CRED.

If you are considering a project that could directly benefit EM-DAT by improving global reporting of disaster-related impacts, we recommended that you contact the EM-DAT team to consider possible improvements of the database and thus add value to your results. For projects directly involving the CRED, however, we cannot accept all the opportunities for collaboration offered to us. We prioritize projects directly related to disaster epidemiology or that allow us to improve the coverage and quality of EM-DAT data substantially. If this applies to you, do not hesitate to contact us at the CRED.

## 4 - Contact

### Address

The CRED is part of the Institute of Public Health (IRSS) of the University of Louvain (UCLouvain). You can reach us by mail at:

#### Contact Address

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### Send Us an Email

[contact@cred.be](mailto:contact@cred.be)

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### Newsletter Subscription

You can [subscribe to our CRED Crunch newsletter](#) to receive quarterly news about the EM-DAT project and theme-specific analyses of the database contents.