

# 10 things you should know about disaster risk reduction

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Hundreds of disasters happen every year. We can't always prevent them from happening, but we can limit the scale of devastation, which is where Disaster Risk Reduction, DRR for short, comes into play. So here are 10 things you should know about DRR.

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1. We'll start with a rundown of facts from 2001 to 2010. In that time span, disasters caused nearly a trillion dollars worth of damage. That's more than the value of Google, Walmart, and Toyota combined.

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A staggering number of people lost their homes, 28 million. That's the entire population of Australia. Disasters claimed 1.1 million lives over the course of the decade, an average of 300 deaths each day.

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2. Think you know what a natural disaster is? Surprise! There's really no such thing as a natural disaster, only natural hazards, like floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis, or man-made hazards, like riots and conflicts. Our vulnerability to these hazards determines their impact. Simply put, disaster risk equals hazard times vulnerability.

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3. Disasters expose inequalities. The more vulnerable the population, the worse a disaster's impact will be. When an earthquake strikes a poor country, more deaths and more economic losses will likely occur than when it hits a rich country.

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And in any country hit by a disaster, the most vulnerable and excluded suffer most. 4. DRR means managing disasters, which requires managing risks with different tools. Hard interventions include protecting buildings and infrastructure.

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Soft interventions include education and training. These tools are part of a broader initiative to make communities more resilient by ensuring they have more capacity to cope with a range of threats, from environmental to socioeconomic. 5. The approach taken to address one disaster may unexpectedly lead to further disasters.

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For example, you may grow more rice to alleviate malnutrition, but rice requires heavy irrigation and mosquitoes breed in standing water, which can lead to more malaria cases. 6. Disaster response needs to involve local people. Communities have a wealth of valuable skills and knowledge to offer.

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Working closely with local people helps them develop the skills needed to handle future disasters, like rebuilding homes or search and rescue. 7. DRR can help create positive change. It can make communities more safe and secure, making it easier to focus on long-term development aims, like building hospitals and training teachers.

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8. Caring about DRR also means caring about climate change. Increasingly unpredictable weather brings new challenges, like higher crop prices and conflict over natural resources. These challenges make it harder for communities to adapt, cope, and respond to risks.

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Helping people deal with climate change will support efforts to make disasters less destructive and disruptive. 9. DRR also needs to account for changes in how people live. For example, more people are living in cities, exposing them to a larger number of hazards, from diseases to gang violence to floods.

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10. Disaster risk is everyone's business. Anyone working on development or aid responses needs to think about disaster risk to make sure their efforts don't end up putting more people at risk.

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Collaboration is also key. Organisations can achieve more by working with one another and with civil society groups. Visit [www.goodpracticereview.org](http://www.goodpracticereview.org) to find out everything else you need to know about disaster risk reduction.