



## Week 10

### **Considering Emergency Settings, Risks & Layers of Vulnerability**

*Week 10 considers **emergency settings (1), risks (2) & layers of vulnerability (3)** in humanitarianism & development. An ‘emergency’ generally refers to a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation that requires immediate action. Considered through the humanitarian and developmental lenses, it is an event or a series of events which constitutes a critical threat to a community or a larger group of people over a wide area. A ‘risk’ is a situation involving exposure to danger, harm, or loss, and lies at the core of most humanitarian assistance and development aid. ‘Vulnerability’ is the quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally. The layered approach to vulnerability in humanitarianism & development allows for a dynamic way of understanding its structure.*

#### **1. HUMANITARIANISM & DEVELOPMENT: EMERGENCIES**



- A humanitarian emergency is an event or series of events that represents a critical threat to the health, safety, security as well as wellbeing of a community or another large group of people over a wide area.
- A humanitarian emergency arises when such an event affects fragile populations unable to resist the negative consequences by themselves.
- The term vulnerability means a reduced capacity of individuals or communities to withstand as well as recuperate from life-threatening hazards and is

most often connected to poverty.

- Poor populations are more likely than others to be vulnerable to man-made or natural disasters of different kinds.
- Within affected communities, typically vulnerable groups include children, pregnant and nursing women, migrants, as well as forcibly displaced people.
- Armed conflicts, epidemics, famine, natural disasters, and other major emergencies all involve or lead to a humanitarian disaster that extends beyond the humanitarian or developmental mandate of any single agency or institution.
- Regardless of the type of disaster, survivors are left in one urgent need of life-saving assistance such as shelter, food, water, and health care.
- Humanitarian crises can be grouped within the following categories:
  - ~ Natural disasters, which can be either geophysical (earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions), hydrological (floods, avalanches), climatological (droughts), meteorological (storms, cyclones), or biological (epidemics, plagues).

- ~ Emergencies caused by human agency, such as conflicts, crashes, fires and industrial accidents.
- ~ Complex emergencies, which combine natural and human components, and different causes of vulnerability, and lead to a humanitarian and developmental crisis (including food insecurity and population displacements).
  - Emergencies said to be 'complex' are typically characterised by:
    - ~ Widespread violence and loss of life.
    - ~ Forced displacements of populations.
    - ~ Extensive damage to societies and economies.
  - There is in such cases a need for large-scale and multi-faceted humanitarian assistance.
  - Hindrance or prevention of aid occur because of political and military constraints in general.
  - ~ Significant security risks for humanitarian and developmental workers in areas.
  - Each humanitarian and developmental disaster has its own set of specificities and challenges and must be addressed accordingly.



► **For more information, please consult the ProQuest eBook and additional readings.**

## 2. HUMANITARIANISM & DEVELOPMENT: RISKS

- Risk-layering approaches have been used as a concept.



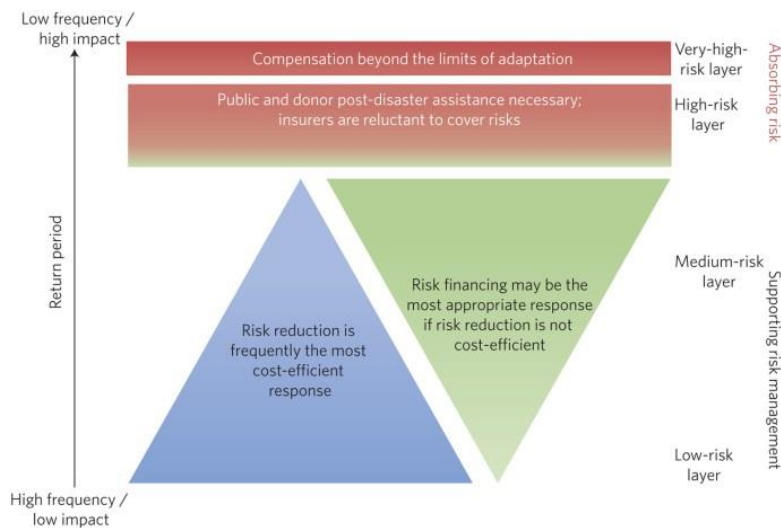
- One also speaks of 'layers of risk' in this case.
- Risk-layering approaches offer original usage, in how it has been expanded to humanitarian & developmental action and how it is realised.
- The concept of layers of risk, or risk-layering, has its origins in the insurance industry as well as risk management.
- It is a type of non-proportional reinsurance, a risk transfer procedure based on loss retention.
- Risk is split into several parts, or layers, where each layer is covered up to a certain limit.
- Layers of risk represent the level of possible losses and the probability at which risks are likely to occur.

- 'Bottom' layers of risk encompass low loss levels with high probability of occurrence, while 'top' layers of risk cover high but rare loss levels.
- The concept of risk-layering now finds wide applications in humanitarian & development activities.
- Indeed, risk-layering is especially useful for managing major emergency settings.
- For example, the concept lends itself quite well in the context of natural disasters.
- It has therefore been incorporated in large areas of humanitarianism and development.
- Risk-layering offers a form of reinsurance cover against catastrophe events (flood risks, droughts, winters, earthquakes, eruptions, or nuclear accidents).

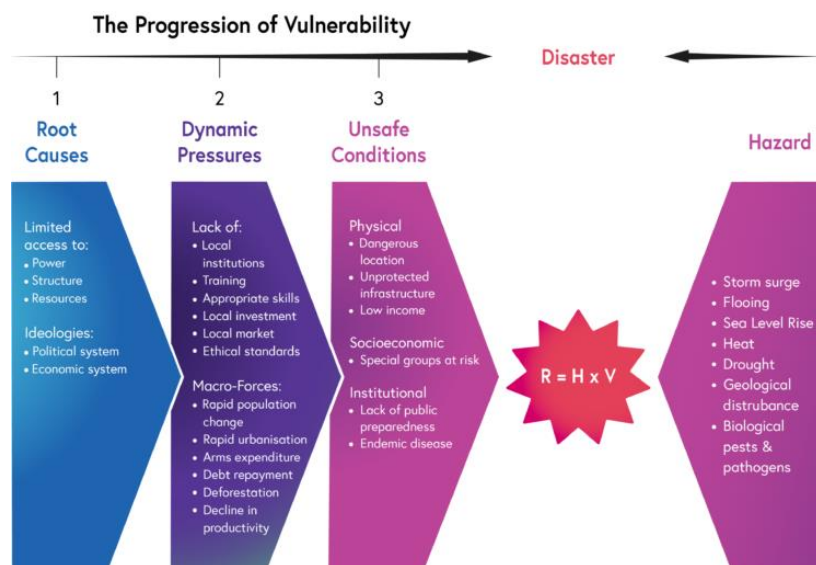


▪ Overall, risk-layering organises risks into layers along probabilities/return periods, as well as loss levels.

► **For more information, please consult the ProQuest eBook and additional readings.**



### 3. HUMANITARIANISM & DEVELOPMENT: VULNERABILITIES



### BIBLIOGRAPHY

The below-reading materials can be found on ProQuest through your VLE platform (Online Library).

#### ProQuest eBook

▪ Kevin M. Cahill, *History and Hope: The International Humanitarian Reader* (Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 192-207.

#### Additional readings

▪ Jose Miguel Albala-Bertrand, What is a “Complex Humanitarian Emergency”? An Analytical Essay (SSRN Electronic Journal, 2000).  
 ▪ Michał Futyra, *Risks Involved in International Humanitarian Projects* (Managing Projects Tomorrow. Challenges in International Projects, 2015).