

# Disaster cycle

**A humanitarian disaster is a single event or series of events that threaten the health, safety or wellbeing of a community or large group of people, usually over a wide area.**

The first responders are normally local communities and organisations and the international community may be called to assist when national government lacks the capacity to respond or there is no functioning government.

## The disaster cycle



## Links between disaster stages

- Link short-term humanitarian activity with longer-term recovery needs.
- Consider disaster risks and climate change impact at every stage.
- Preparedness, response and recovery needs will vary from one location or affected group to another.
- Complex emergencies can involve multiple crises, each at different stages.

## Stages after a disaster

### RESPONSE

- Immediate **RELIEF** to save lives and prevent immediate loss of life e.g. search and rescue, medical care, food, safe drinking water.
- Local first responders.
- High risk of mortality.
- Short-term emergency services following a rapid-onset disaster or during a slow-onset emergency.
- Ongoing **RESPONSE** to reduce vulnerability and meet basic needs e.g. family tracing, food, nutrition, health care, WASH, shelter.

### RECOVERY

- Longer term support in restoring 'normal life'.
- Local ownership and participation is critical to recovery.
- Link humanitarian activity with longer term development plans.
- **REHABILITATION** focuses on public and social services, livelihoods, education and changes due to the disaster impact e.g. protection.
- **RECONSTRUCTION** to re-establish infrastructure, housing and pre-disaster services and social conditions.

## Stages before a disaster

### MITIGATION

- Important in disaster prone settings.
- Reduce hazards and disaster impact.
- **MITIGATION** includes public awareness, training, environmental and land use controls.
- **PREVENTION** includes reinforced structures, restrictions, regulations.

### PREPAREDNESS

- To reduce vulnerability and increase local response and recovery capacity.
- **EARLY WARNING** through warning systems, risk assessments, etc.
- **CONTINGENCY PLANNING**, public information /communication systems, stockpiling, designated shelters.

## Types of disaster

### Natural disasters

- May be rapid-onset such as earthquakes, floods or cyclones, or slow-onset such as drought.
- Secondary impacts such as fires or landslides can cause further destruction and suffering.

### Complex emergencies

- Internal or external conflict leads to a breakdown in authority.
- Requires an international response.
- Characterised by periods of peace and violence.
- Must consider conflict sensitivities, vulnerabilities and civil military liaison.

### Man-made disasters

- Include industrial or technological accidents and large forest fires.

### Pandemics

- Involves rapid-onset of contagious disease affecting public health and disrupting services.

### Additional resource on the All In Diary web site

Emergency Handbook © UNHCR 2016 (online and mobile app);  
Emergency Pocket Guide © CARE 2009 - also French, Spanish, Arabic

### Web links for further information:

Disaster Management tools: <http://www.adpc.net>  
[http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/pillars/preparing\\_for\\_disaster/](http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/pillars/preparing_for_disaster/)