

## ANNEX 23

### Glossary of Disaster Risk Reduction Terms

**Source: United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction 2009 Terminology**  
(<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/terminology>)

**Adaptation** – the adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.

**Capacity** – the combination of all strengths, attributes and resources available within a community, society or organization that can be used to achieve agreed goals. Capacity may include infrastructure and physical means, institutions, societal coping abilities, as well as human knowledge, skills and collective attributes such as social relationships, leadership and management. Capacity may also be described as capability.

**Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)** – non-state actors whose aims are neither to generate profits nor to seek governing power. CSOs unite people to advance shared goals and interests. They have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, and are based on ethical, cultural, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. CSOs include nongovernment organizations (NGOs), professional associations, foundations, independent research institutes, community based organizations (CBOs), faith-based organizations, people's organizations, social movements, and labor unions.

**Climate Change** – a change in the state of climate that can be identified by changes in the mean and/or variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forcings, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use.

**Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM)** – activities, projects and programs to reduce disaster risks which are primarily designed and implemented by the people living in high-risk localities based on their needs and capacities, in close coordination with their respective Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils.

**Complex Emergency** – a form of human-induced emergency in which the cause of the emergency as well as the assistance to the afflicted is complicated by intense level of political considerations.

**Contingency Planning** – a management process that analyses specific potential events or emerging situations that might threaten society or the environment and establishes arrangements in advance to enable timely, effective and appropriate responses to such events and situations.

**Disaster** – a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. Disasters are often described as a

result of the combination of: the exposure to a hazard; the conditions of vulnerability that are present; and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce or cope with the potential negative consequences. Disaster impacts may include loss of life, injury, disease and other negative effects on human, physical, mental and social well-being, together with damage to property, destruction of assets, loss of services, social and economic disruption and environmental degradation.

**Disaster Risk** – the potential disaster losses in lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and services, which could occur to a particular community or a society over some specified future time period.

**Disaster Risk Management** – the systematic process of using administrative directives, organizations, and operational skills and capacities to implement strategies, policies and improved coping capacities in order to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster.

**Disaster Risk Reduction** – the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events.

**Emergency** – unforeseen or sudden occurrence, especially danger, demanding immediate action.

**Emergency Management** – the organization and management of resources and responsibilities for addressing all aspects of emergencies, in particular preparedness, response and initial recovery steps.

**Emergency services** – the set of specialized agencies that have specific responsibilities and objectives in serving and protecting people and property in emergency situations. Emergency services include agencies such as civil protection authorities, police, fire, ambulance, paramedic and emergency medicine services, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and specialised emergency units of electricity, transportation, communications and other related services organizations.

**Exposure** – people, property, systems or other elements present in hazard zones that are thereby subject to potential losses.

**Forecast** – Definite statement or statistical estimate of the likely occurrence of a future event or conditions for a specific area. In meteorology, a forecast refers to a future condition, whereas a warning refers to a potentially dangerous future condition.

**Hazard** – a dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity or condition that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage.

**Land Use Planning** – the process undertaken by public authorities to identify, evaluate and decide on different options for the use of land, including consideration of long-term economic, social and environmental objectives and the implications for different communities and interest groups, and the subsequent formulation and promulgation of plans that describe the permitted or acceptable uses.

**Mitigation** – the lessening or limitation of the adverse impacts of hazards and related disasters. Mitigation measures encompass engineering techniques and hazard-resistant construction as well as improved environmental policies and public awareness. It should be noted that in climate change policy, “mitigation” is defined differently, being the term used for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions that are the source of climate change.

**Natural hazard** – Natural process or phenomenon that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage. Natural hazards are a sub-set of all hazards.

**Preparedness** – the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions. Preparedness action is carried out within the context of disaster risk management and aims to build the capacities needed to efficiently manage all types of emergencies and achieve orderly transitions from response to sustained recovery. Preparedness is based on a sound analysis of disaster risks and good linkages with early warning systems, and includes such activities as contingency planning, stockpiling of equipment and supplies, the development of arrangements for coordination, evacuation and public information, and associated training and field exercises. These must be supported by formal institutional, legal and budgetary capacities.

**Prevention** – the outright avoidance of adverse impacts of hazards and related disasters. It expresses the concept and intention to completely avoid potential adverse impacts through action taken in advance such as construction of dams or embankments that eliminate flood risks, land-use regulations that do not permit any settlement in high-risk zones, and seismic engineering designs that ensure the survival and function of a critical building in any likely earthquake.

**Public Awareness** – The extent of common knowledge about disaster risks, the factors that lead to disasters and the actions that can be taken individually and collectively to reduce exposure and vulnerability to hazards. Public awareness is a key factor in effective disaster risk reduction.

**Recovery** – the restoration and improvement where appropriate, of facilities, livelihoods and living conditions of disaster-affected communities, including efforts to reduce disaster risk factors. Recovery programmes, coupled with the heightened public awareness and engagement after a disaster, afford a valuable opportunity to develop and implement disaster risk reduction measures and to apply the “build back better” principle.

**Rehabilitation** – measures that ensure the ability of affected communities/areas to restore their normal level of functioning by rebuilding livelihood and damaged infrastructures and increasing the communities’ organizational capacity.

**Resilience** – the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including

through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions. This is determined by the degree to which the community has the necessary resources and is capable of organizing itself both prior to and during times of need.

**Response** – the provision of emergency services and public assistance during or immediately after a disaster in order to save lives, reduce health impacts, ensure public safety and meet the basic subsistence needs of the people affected. Disaster response is predominantly focused on immediate and short-term needs and is sometimes called “disaster relief”. The division between this response stage and the subsequent recovery stage is not clear-cut. Some response actions, such as the supply of temporary housing and water supplies, may extend well into the recovery stage.

**Risk** – the combination of the probability of an event and its negative consequences.

**Risk Assessment** – a methodology to determine the nature and extent of risk by analysing potential hazards and evaluating existing conditions of vulnerability that together could potentially harm exposed people, property, services, livelihood and the environment on which they depend. Risk assessments with associated risk mapping include: a review of the technical characteristics of hazards such as their location, intensity, frequency and probability; the analysis of exposure and vulnerability including the physical, social, health, economic and environmental dimensions; and the evaluation of the effectiveness of prevailing and alternative coping capacities in respect to likely risk scenarios.

**Risk Management** – the systematic approach and practice of managing uncertainty to minimize potential harm and loss. It comprises risk assessment and analysis, and the implementation of strategies and specific actions to control, reduce and transfer risks. It is widely practiced by organizations to minimize risk in investment decisions and to address operational risks such as those of business disruption, production failure, environmental damage, social impacts and damage from fire and natural hazards.

**Risk Transfer** – the process of formally or informally shifting the financial consequences of particular risks from one party to another whereby a household, community, enterprise or state authority will obtain resources from the other party after a disaster occurs, in exchange for ongoing or compensatory social or financial benefits provided to that other party.

**State of Calamity** – a condition involving mass casualty and/or major damages to property, disruption of means of livelihoods, roads and normal way of life of people in the affected areas as a result of the occurrence of natural or human-induced hazard.

**Sustainable Development** – development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Disaster risk is associated with unsustainable elements of development such as environmental degradation, while conversely disaster risk reduction can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, through reduced losses and improved development practices.

**Vulnerability** – the characteristics and circumstances of a community, system or asset that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard. Vulnerability may arise from various physical, social, economic, and environmental factors, such as poor design and construction of buildings, inadequate protection of assets, lack of public information and awareness, limited official recognition of risks and preparedness measures, and disregard for wise environmental management.

**Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups** – those that face higher exposure to disaster risk and poverty including, but not limited to, women, children, elderly, differently-abled people, and ethnic minorities.