

## Hazard, Climate & Environment Terminology

A *natural hazard* is a geophysical, atmospheric or hydrological event (e.g. earthquake, landslide, tsunami, windstorm, wave or surge, flood or drought) that has the potential to cause harm or loss.

A *human-induced hazard* includes non-point source pollution, biological and chemical weapons, warfare and crises, among others.

*Vulnerability* is the potential to suffer harm or loss, related to the capacity to anticipate a hazard, cope with it, resist it and recover from its impact. Both vulnerability and its antithesis, *resilience*, are determined by physical, environmental, social, economic, political, cultural and institutional factors.

A *disaster* is the occurrence of an extreme hazard event that impacts on vulnerable communities, causing substantial damage, disruption and possible casualties, and leaving the affected communities unable to function normally without outside assistance.

*Disaster risk* is a function of the characteristics and frequency of hazards experienced in a specified location, the nature of the elements at risk and their inherent degree of vulnerability or resilience.

*Mitigation* is any structural (physical) or non-structural (e.g., land-use planning, public education) measure undertaken to minimise the adverse impact of potential natural hazard events.

*Preparedness* means activities and measures taken before hazard events occur to forecast and warn against them, evacuate people and property when they threaten and ensure effective response (e.g., stockpiling food supplies).

*Relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction* are any measures undertaken in the aftermath of a disaster to, respectively, save lives and address immediate humanitarian needs; restore normal activities; and restore physical infrastructure and services.

*Climate change* is a statistically significant change in measurements of either the mean state or the variability of the climate for a place or region over an extended period, either directly or indirectly due to the impact of human activity on the composition of the global atmosphere or due to natural variability.

## [Additional Hazard Mitigation, Preparedness, Response & Recovery Terminology](#)

\*\*Charlotte Benson and John Twigg, *Tools for Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction: Guidance Notes for Development Organisations* (Geneva: ProVention Consortium, 2007)