

Relief and Development Forum
Disasters - an integrated response, June 2012

DEFINITIONS and TERMS in Disaster Risk Reduction

Hazard. An extreme event which has the potential to cause injury to life and damage to property and the environment.

Vulnerability. A condition or set of conditions which reduces people's ability to prepare for, withstand or respond to a particular hazard.
(Consists of long-term weaknesses, present before the disaster, which contribute to its severity, impede response and delay recovery.)

Disaster. The result of a hazard impacting upon a vulnerable community, causing damage to life, property & livelihoods, in a way which exceeds the community's capacity to cope.

Capacity. Strengths or resources, present in individuals, households and communities, which increase ability to prepare for, cope with and recover from a disaster.

Risk. The probability of something negative happening in future, which will cause suffering, harm and loss.

Preparedness. Activities which increase people's ability to predict, prepare for, respond to and recover from the effects of a hazard.

Mitigation.¹ Measures taken in advance of a disaster, aimed at reducing the impact of the hazard upon people, property and the environment.

Emergency Response. Activities implemented soon after a disaster, designed to save lives, reduce suffering and promote speedy recovery, building upon remaining capacities in the community.

Rehabilitation. Rebuilding of housing, livelihoods and social structures damaged by a disaster, ideally to a standard which will resist the impact of a similar hazard in future.

¹ Note: Climate scientists use Mitigation to mean measures taken to reduce emissions of climate-changing gases.