

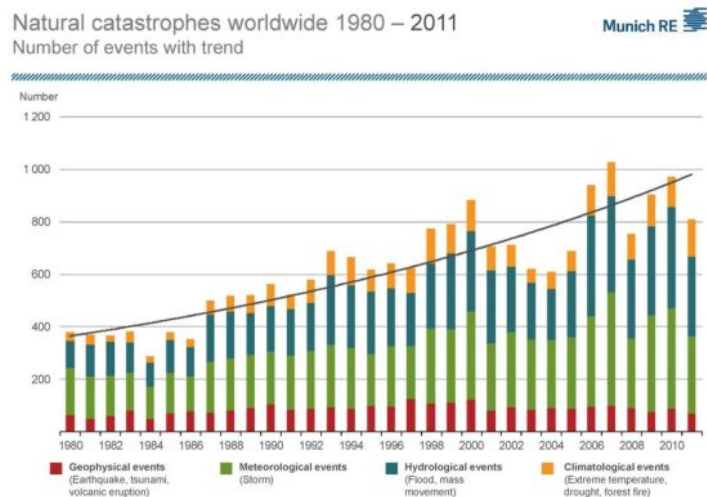
31st AGUASAN Workshop (2015) - Briefing Note

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN WASH

Towards Resilience and Adaptive Management in the Water Sector

Topic

Today **more than half of the world's population is under threat from the forces of nature** – one fifth of the earth's surface is regularly affected by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, drought, landslides and storms. The incidence and severity of such natural disasters, as well as their impact in terms of economic losses, have increased markedly in the last decades; in contrast, human losses could be reduced over the past years due to improved preparedness measures. Water-related disasters are the most economically and socially destructive of all natural disasters: over the period 1992-2013, floods, droughts and storms alone have affected 4.2 billion people (95% of all people affected by natural disasters) and caused USD 1.3 trillion of damage (63% of all damage)¹, while the number of people at risk from floods only is projected to rise from 1.2 billion in 2013 to 1.6 billion in 2050².



Many factors related to **increased exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards** of people and assets account for this situation: population pressure, increased land use of hazardous areas associated with high-cost investments, urbanisation, environmental degradation and climate change. Poor and densely populated areas are particularly vulnerable to the forces of nature, as the existing structures in such settings can barely cope with minor events and are completely overwhelmed during major events. The death toll among the people affected by disasters over the past 20 years occurred to 95% in developing countries.

Ever since 1990³, the concept of **disaster risk reduction (DRR)** has evolved to a widely adopted framework to reduce risks of natural hazards with a significant shift in the understanding of disaster management: towards a more comprehensive perception of hazards generating processes and the underlying causes of vulnerability, and towards the development of a forward looking and longer term strategy for anticipating and managing risks in an integrated manner (proactive measures). At the international level, the cornerstone of DRR is the new *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*⁴ which was negotiated at the World Conference on DRR in March 2015 (Sendai, Japan) and signed by 187 countries.

¹ UNISDR (2012), *Impacts of Disasters since the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit*

² OECD (2012), *OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050: the consequences of inaction*

³ *International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990s)*, *Yokohama World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction (1994)* and the *Kobe (Hyogo) Conference on Disaster Reduction (2005)*

⁴ <http://www.wcdrr.org/wconference/outcomes>

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