

Briefing | Target 2

Number of people affected by disasters

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This note provides information relevant to the agreement of target (ii) of the draft Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which reads: *[Substantially] reduce the number of affected people per capita [by 20%] by 2030* and its two variants.

Between 2005 and 2014, ‘natural’ disasters affected an annual average of 168.5 million people.¹

Different definitions of ‘affected’:

1. ‘People requiring immediate assistance during a period of emergency, i.e. requiring basic survival needs such as food, water, shelter, sanitation and immediate medical assistance’ (CRED)²
2. ‘The number of persons who suffer indirect or secondary effects related to a disaster. This refers to the number of people, distinct from victims, who suffer the impact of secondary effects of disasters for such reasons as deficiencies in public services, commerce, work, or because of isolation’ (UNISDR)³
3. People affected by disasters may experience ‘unequal access to assistance; discrimination in aid provision; enforced relocation; sexual and gender-based violence; loss of documentation; recruitment of children into fighting forces; unsafe or involuntary return or resettlement; and issues of property restitution. The affected populations [...] [may be] forced to leave their homes or places of residence [...] [thereby becoming] internally displaced’ (IASC)⁴

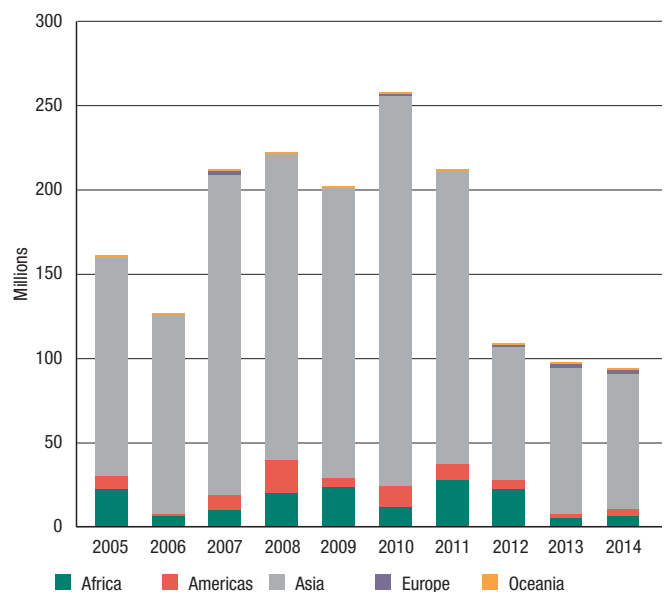
Context ⁵

- Disasters happen when natural or technological hazards affect a population and the environment. The extent of the impact and of people’s vulnerability to hazards or their capacity to cope and respond depends on different social, economic, cultural and political processes.⁶

- People may be affected directly (as a result of destruction of business equipment or livestock, loss of housing, etc.) or indirectly (through impacts on labour markets and wages, malnutrition and child stunting, children missing out on education, gender-based violence, disease, etc.).⁷
- It is important to make a distinction between sudden-onset disasters (such as earthquakes) and slow onset-disasters (such as droughts), as the latter often goes unrecorded, meaning the myriad ways people are affected and are unable to resist, cope and recover from disasters over a long period of time are not acknowledged appropriately and they may be left ‘without proper protection’.⁸

The figure below shows the number of people affected by disasters between 2005 and 2014.

Total affected by disasters, 2005–2014⁹



The need to include vulnerable/at-risk groups¹⁰

- People may be more vulnerable to, or at risk of, disasters on the basis of their gender, age, income, disability, ethnicity, culture, religion and so on, and in this way are often geographically, socially, economically, culturally and politically marginalised.
- These groups are more likely to be disproportionately affected and suffer the effects of disasters, as they often face poor living conditions, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of income diversification and limited access to basic services.
- These groups 'are often forced or are inclined to migrate to and settle in areas that will provide them with better access to life-sustaining livelihoods, but which are also often prone to hazards';¹¹ they are consequently more likely to be affected during a disaster.

Future projections

- Exposure to disasters and the number of people and assets located in hazard-prone locations is increasing,¹² which means the number of people affected by disasters is likely to continue rising.
- This is often a result of 'population and economic pressure, more people living in coastal and exposed areas, and the degradation or loss of natural ecosystems'.¹³
- Up to 325 million extremely poor people will be living in the 49 most hazard-prone countries in 2030, the majority in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁴ The impact and the number of people affected by disasters in these countries will depend on the strength of hazards and the social, economic, cultural and political processes and support in place within these countries.

Challenges in setting baselines

- A universal definition of 'affected people' in the context of disasters needs to be agreed on, to include people directly and indirectly affected by both slow- and rapid-onset disasters.
- The lack of baseline information and a methodology to monitor the number of people exposed to natural hazards and those directly and indirectly affected by disasters restricts the collection and comparison of reliable data.
- Disaster risk reduction (DRR) monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tends to lack information based on the systematic collection of data disaggregated by gender, age and disability. In addition, those collecting official census data and disaster-related data often neglect ethnicity, caste and religious affiliations,¹⁵ making it even harder to assess the number of people affected.¹⁶
- There are a number of challenges in collecting data on extensive risk and slow-onset disasters, including technical deficiencies, lack of political incentives, the various definitions set by disaster loss databases and so on.¹⁷ This results in a neglect of these risks in the monitoring frameworks, and consequently a lack of resources, aid and support to people during these crises.
- Global trends need to be adjusted to take into consideration aspects such as population growth and labour market trends to be able to adequately measure the number of people affected.
- The context-specific and differential needs, vulnerabilities, expectations and existing capacities of all groups need to be considered within the 'categories of affected groups' (to be considered/elaborated/agreed in the process for post-Sendai work to be decided on by the Conference - 16 (ii) alt. bis: ***Footnote in the Post-2015 Framework for DRR), to effectively and equitably build resilience.
- Data collection, assessments and analyses should be disaggregated not only according to gender, but also to other aspects of social vulnerability, where appropriate, including age, disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

1. Data downloaded from Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) for the period: 2005 – 2014. Available from: <http://www.cred.be/>
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3. Desinventar (n.d.) Definition of basic effects. Available from: www.desinventar.net/effects.html
4. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). (2006) *Protecting Persons Affected By Natural Disasters. IASC Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters*. Washington DC: Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement.
5. Taken from Lovell, E. and le Masson, V. (2014) 'Equity and Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction: Building Resilience for All'. London: Climate and Development Knowledge Network and ODI.
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9. Data downloaded from Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) for the period: 2005 – 2014. Available from: <http://www.cred.be/>
10. Taken from Lovell, E. and le Masson, V. (2014) 'Equity and Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction: Building Resilience for All'. London: Climate and Development Knowledge Network and ODI.
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13. Mitchell et al. (2012); IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) (2012) 'Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation'. Special Report of Working Groups I and II of the IPCC. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press; Foresight (2012) 'Reducing Risks of Future Disasters: Priorities for Decision Makers'. Final project report. London: Government Office for Science, all in Lovell, E. and le Masson, V. (2014).
14. Shepherd, A., Mitchell, T., Lewis, K., Lenhardt, A., Jones, L., Scott, A. and Muir-Wood, R. (2013) *The Geography of Poverty, Disasters and Climate Extremes in 2030*. London: ODI.
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16. Taken from Lovell, E. and le Masson, V. (2014) 'Equity and Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction: Building Resilience for All'. London: Climate and Development Knowledge Network and ODI.
17. Mitchell, T., Guha-Sapir, D., Hall, J., Lovell, E., Muir-Wood, R., Norris, A., Scott, L. and Wallemacq, P. (2014) *Setting, Measuring and Monitoring Targets for Reducing Disaster Risk: Recommendations for Post-2015 International Policy Frameworks*. London: ODI.

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