ŞHRMUN'24

WHO

STUDY GUIDE

Strengthening global readiness for health emergencies including natural disasters and pandemics

USG; EDANUR ALTIN

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LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

Esteemed Participants and Respected Advisors,

Welcome to the Eskişehir Şehir Schools Model United Nations (ŞHRMUN) conference, happening this April at Eskişehir Şehir Schools. As Secretary-General, I'm honored to address you.

ŞHRMUN'24 is our second annual gathering, where students from around the world come together to explore diplomacy, international relations, and how the United Nations works. This year's theme, "For a Better World," aims to spark insightful discussions and find real solutions to global challenges.

Our committee sessions offer workshops led by experts in different fields, providing valuable insights and skills. We'll also delve into various global issues to enrich your understanding.

As we look forward to ŞHRMUN'24, I encourage you to prepare by researching your assigned countries and topics, learning the rules of procedure, and honing your speaking and negotiation skills. Your active participation is key to our success.

I'm excited for the lively discussions, meaningful connections, and memorable experiences that await us at ŞHRMUN'24. Let's seize this chance to inspire positive change and make a difference in our global community.

Warm regards,

Zeynep Turkurkor

Secretary-General

Eskişehir Şehir Schools Model United Nations

1. LETTER FROM UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL

Esteemed participants,

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to our conference ŞHRMUN'24. I am Edanur ALTUN, currently studying English Language Teaching at Hacettepe University as a 4th grader. It is my honor to serve as the Under Secretary General of the World Health Organization, WHO. Our topic for this conference is strengthening global readiness for health emergencies, including natural disasters and pandemics. You should bear in mind that this study guide is for giving you superficial and general information about the agenda item. I highly encourage you to read the whole study guide, do further information about the agenda item and especially your country's points of view on these issues.

I hope this conference will give you lifelong memories and incredible experiences. I wish you fruitful, fulfilling and efficient debates. Hope to see you all in the conference. ☺

For any kinds of questions, please do not hesitate to get contact me on:
edaltun2002@hotmail.com

♥

Sincerely,

Edanur ALTUN, Under Secretary General

2. LETTER FROM ACADEMIC ASSISTANT

Most Distinguished Participants,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you all to the ŞHRMUN'24. My name is Damlanur Kılıç, and I am a freshman at Hacettepe University English Language Department. It is my honor to serve as the Academic Assistant of the World Health Organization committee in this edition of ŞHRMUN.

The agenda item you all will discuss upon is "Strengthening global readiness for health emergencies, including natural disasters and pandemics". This is a topic that I personally believe is of great significance considering the recent global COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters our country has faced. Hence, the delegates of the WHO committee are tasked with debating to come up with realistic and sustainable solutions to tackle the issue at hand.

Please keep in mind that this study guide is to provide you with general background and information on the agenda item. Therefore, it is advised that delegates deepen their research on both the topic and their allocated countries regardless of their previous experiences.

I wish you all that this conference brings you success and unforgettable memories. My dearest Under-Secretary General, Edanur Altun and I will do our utmost best to provide you with a fruitful and productive experience. If you have any questions, have no hesitations to contact me on: damlanurkilic26@gmail.com

Sincerely ツ,
Damlanur Kılıç
Academic Assistant of WHO
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3. INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMITTEE

A. Introduction to the World Health Organization

The World Health Organization, in short WHO, is a specialized agency of the United Nations. Upon the first meetings of the United Nations, diplomats and representatives have talked about the establishment of a global health organization. Discussions then led up to the entry of force of the Constitution of the WHO on 7 April 1948 which is now celebrated as World Health Day.

The World Health Organization deals with any kind of public health related issues. The functions of WHO include establishing collaboration with United Nations, its other specialized agencies, governments and other appropriate organizations; assisting governments in emergencies and technically when needed; advancing work and research eliminate epidemic and other diseases; promoting and conducting research; proposing conventions, agreements, and regulations, and make recommendations; and generally, take all necessary measures to attain the objective of the Organization (Constitution of World Health Organization, 2020).

B. Introduction to the Agenda Item

Our agenda item for ŞHRMUN'24 is "Strengthening global readiness for health emergencies, including natural disasters and pandemics". The delegates of the WHO committee are expected to come up tangible and sustainable solutions, especially considering Sustainable Developments Goals as a whole and SDG Number 3 Good Health and Wellbeing Target 3.d which aims to strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks (Goal 3 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

I.   Background

The history of the Earth is full of disasters with devastating consequences some of which still affect us. The most recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown that we are still lacking and have not reached where we desire to be in terms of readiness. Combined with the pandemic, aftermaths of natural disasters have also added to the already complex response methods.

The World Health Organization plays an important role as a global organization focusing on all kind of aspects of health emergencies. Working with like-minded organizations like World Food Programme, has enhanced the response and readiness to tackle with emergencies and disasters.

The task of strengthening readiness is one with challenges. The major challenges to consider, which will be detailly explained in Section 10, are limited financial resources, lack of diversity and access, misinformation, and climate change.

4. KEY TERMS

★   CRPD: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This Convention is important to consider in order not to leave out Persons with Disabilities when planning disaster and risk management.

★   DRR: Disaster Risk Reduction. DRR is a comprehensive approach to identify, assess, and lessen the devastating consequences that come with disasters.

★   Diversity: The term "diversity" means togetherness of different types of things and people. In our committee's case, this term will be mainly used for including all kind of people from different backgrounds in emergency response and readiness plans so that our agenda item is fulfilled and comprehensive.

★   Emergency Response: As the name declares, it is, in its most basic form, response to any event that is need of emergent and immediate help. Specifically, this term is of great importance to the committee as it is main object of our agenda item.

★   Epidemic: An epidemic is an outbreak of a disease that is actively spreading in a limited region.

★   Pandemic: As we have experienced multiple times throughout history, pandemic is a disease outbreak that reaches several places and regions around the globe. The difference between epidemic and pandemic is that epidemic is limited to a region while pandemic is spread over multiple areas.

★   Persons with Disabilities: Though the term is self-explanatory, as defined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Article 1 – Purpose | United Nations Enable, n.d.).

★   PRET: Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats. An initiative by the World Health Organization to have an innovative approach to enhance pandemic preparedness which will be further explained in Section 9.

★   Readiness: This is another term that is of significance to our agenda item. Readiness means, in the context of our committee, the state of being ready in order to tackle any disaster or outbreak with achievable measures, and minimum loss.

★   Resilience: In short, the ability to be strong and durable. In the context of natural disasters, building and infrastructure should be resilient in order to minimize loss and damage.

★   SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals. These 17 Goals indicate the United Nations' and the international community's goals and targets to be achieved in the upcoming years.

5. KEY CONCEPTS

A. Emergency Preparedness

The concept of emergency preparedness explains the proactive measures taken by governments, organizations and even on a personal basis to respond to and lessen the impact of any kind of emergencies and disasters.

The major aspects of emergency preparedness include:

★ Importance of planning: Having a plan of what to do in case of an emergency is one of the most effective ways of handling panic and disorganization. Evacuation routes, designated meeting places, pre-organized emergency and first aid kits, etc. may be parts of the plan prepared.

★ Staying informed: Misinformation is an obstacle that prevents communities' and governments' ability to tackle with the outcomes of disasters and public effected by them. Especially this aspect carries importance as staying informed helps people to act calmy and organized.

★ Practice drills: Evacuation drills and other emergency protocols should be practiced on a regular basis so that when emergency strikes there is no chaos.

★ Early warning and response systems: These systems help to detect and assess the type of public health risk or natural disaster before they happen. They also provide monitoring and collection of data regularly which enhances response capabilities.

★ Resilient infrastructure: One of the most controlling factors to the aftermath of disasters is insufficient infrastructure. This is a key component to consider for getting ahead of outcomes, though it is the hardest and most complex to achieve.

Following and taking these steps will enhance the capacity of efforts and ultimately save lives, get losses to a minimum level, and create more resilient infrastructure. To highlight, these are only some of the steps of emergency preparedness and they can always be improved.

B. Risk Management

The concept of risk management is a continuous one. It includes aspects such as identification, assessment, control, and monitoring. Risk management stars with identifying threats and vulnerabilities. This also helps governments and local authorities to make improvements on infrastructure, as previously mention insufficient infrastructure carries significance in responding health emergencies.

From there on, assessment follows. Based on the assessment, authorities take the necessary measures and implement strategies to control the risks, minimize loss, or eliminate them entirely. With the addition of monitoring, the effectiveness of control measured is ensured constantly.

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) is a specialized agency that promotes global efforts in disaster risk reduction to achieve inclusive sustainable development (*Our Work*, 2023). UNDRR works effectively to prevent new disaster risks through multi-hazard disaster risk management. UNDRR is a key agency to consider collaboration with in the case of health emergencies and risk management.

When it comes to risk management another factor to consider is the concept of standardization. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is an independent non-governmental organization that assists organizations to be prepared in case of risks by providing a framework of fundamental concept and principles of risk management (*Effective Risk Management,* 2021). Adhering to standards on
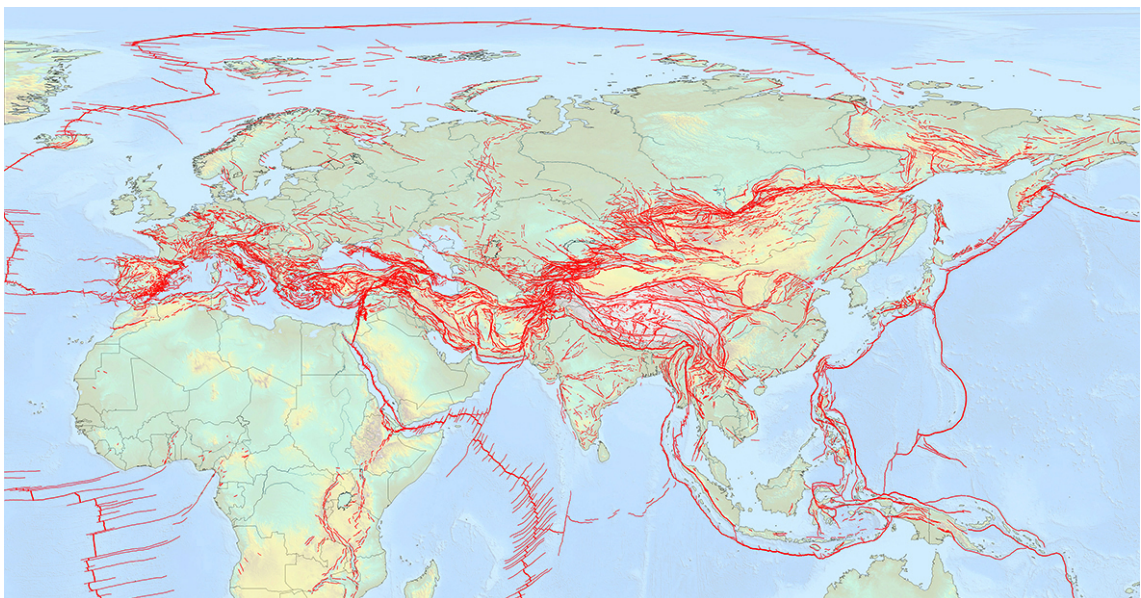
matters like health and disaster emergencies helps governmental authorities to tackle risks with ease because what to do in case of a disease outbreak or a natural disaster is set and there is no chaos.

6. NATURAL DISASTERS

In this section, background information on some selected natural disasters is given. However, the delegates are kindly reminded to conduct extensive research on their country.
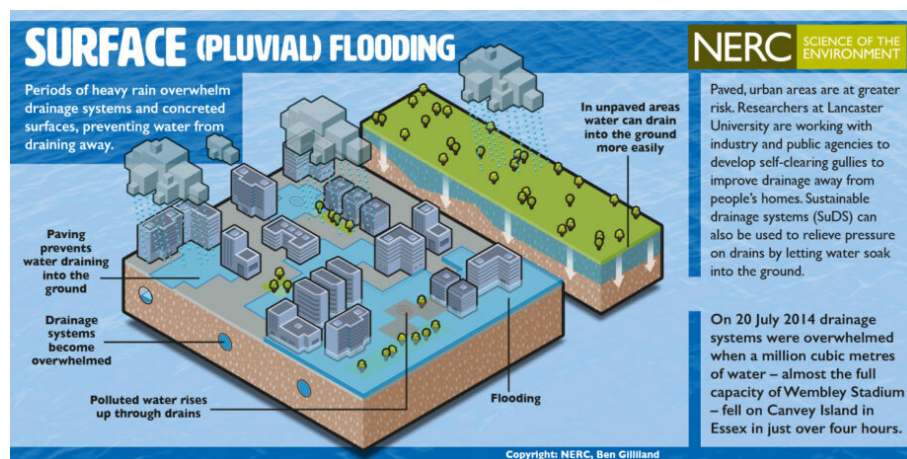
A. Earthquakes

As recently experienced in Türkiye and Syria, earthquakes are one of the natural disasters that can have devastating consequences if not prepared effectively. Due to the fact that we cannot predict or prevent the movements of the Earth's crust, preparedness is more significant than ever. The map below shows active faults all over the world, meaning, these faults are essentially cracks in Earth's crust and have energy and potential to move which may trigger earthquakes. Though there are numerous active faults, the severity of earthquakes is not the same. It depends on a number of factors such as magnitude, depth, geology, and infrastructure etc. To measure the magnitude of earthquakes, Richter scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest) is used.

Figure 1 Overview Map of Active Faults

B. Floods

Floods are another type of natural disaster that happen when water overflows rapidly or slowly. Depending on the cause they can have as devastating consequences as any other natural disaster. Some causes include heavy rainfall, storms, dams breaches, etc. Also, indirectly, human activities trigger floods by deforestation and urbanization; poorly managed dams and drainage systems. While human activities do not directly create flood, they certainly are a major factor to making them more frequent and destructive.

Figure 2 Surface (Pluvial) Flooding

C. Tornadoes

Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air, extending from a thunderstorm, which are in contact with the ground (*About Tornadoes, n.d.*). They develop within thunderstorms and they are strong enough to damage buildings and infrastructure, uproot trees, and toss vehicles around which creates extremely dangerous situations. Tornadoes most often occur during the spring and summer in the mid-latitudes of the both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres (Snow, 2024). For tornadoes, weather forecasting and shelters carry a great amount of importance.
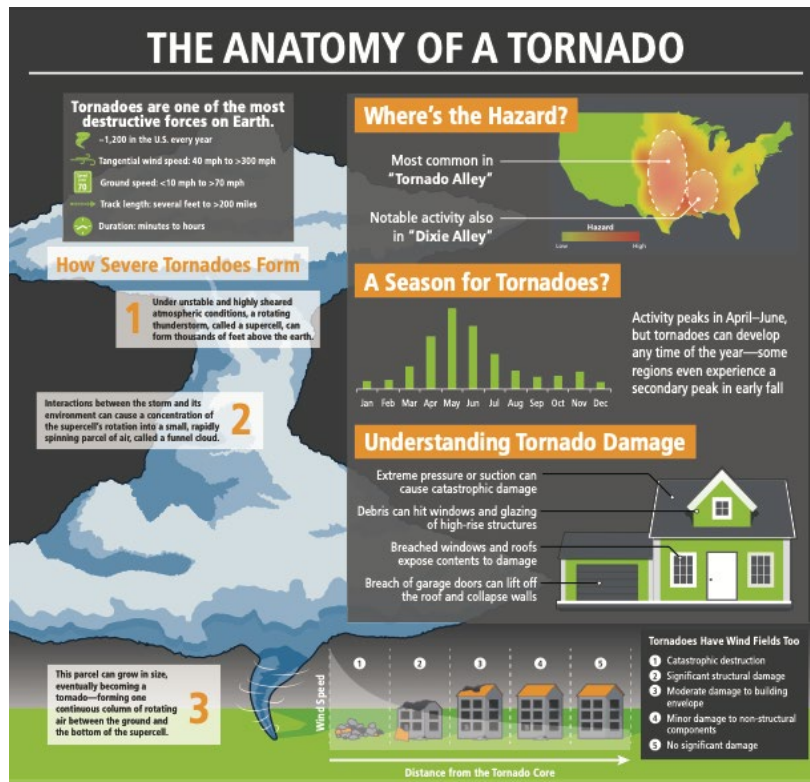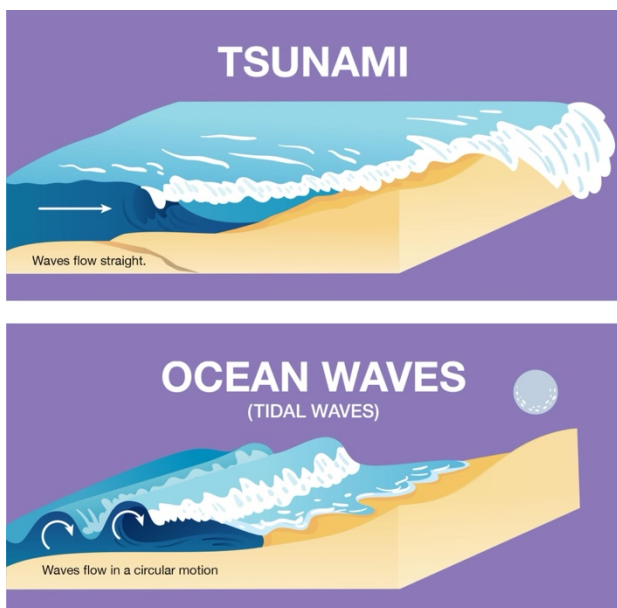
Figure 3 The Anatomy of a Tornado

D. Tsunamis

Tsunamis are giant waves caused by movement underwater. The movement underwater may have several causes such as underwater earthquakes, the most common cause, underwater volcanic eruptions, and landslides. Tsunamis, as well as being caused by other natural disasters, can be the cause of flooding and other disasters as well. Other hazards include contamination of drinking water, and fires from gas lines or ruptured tanks (*About Tsunamis - International Tsunami Information Center*, n.d.).

Figure 4 Comparison of Tsunami waves and Ocean waves

7. PANDEMICS AND EPIDEMICS

A. COVID-19

The global COVID-19 pandemic has shown many inadequacies and inequalities in public health. Especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), access to vaccination was not fulfilled. In access to vaccines against COVID-19, in December 2022, 22 per cent of people in low-income countries were fully vaccinated compared with 75 per cent in high-income countries (*Adopting Landmark Declaration, General Assembly Calls for Strengthening High-level International Coordination to Improve Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, Response | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*, 2023). The World Health Organization still actively reports cases all around to world to overcome the outbreak completely.

B. HIV/AIDS

The disease AIDS, and the cause of it, HIV virus, has been a threat to public health for several years now. More than 600 000 people still die every year from the virus because they don't know they have HIV and are not on treatment, or they start treatment too late (*Why The HIV Epidemic Is Not Over*, n.d.). Considering 9.2 million people living with HIV did not have access to antiretroviral treatment in 2022, testing and treatment shall be made available and accessible to everyone (*Global HIV & AIDS Statistics — Fact Sheet*, n.d.). the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has also set AIDS Targets to be achieved by

2025 which aims to address the inequalities on HIV, COVID-19 and other pandemics.

8. PAST EFFORTS

A. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is an key element to the topic of preparedness as it is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda and provides Member States with concrete actions to protect development gains from the risk of disaster (*What Is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction ?,* 2023). The framework was established after the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), a ten-year plan for disaster risk reduction. The expected outcome of the Sendai Framework is the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries (The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction , 2015). Building on the HFA, the Sendai Framework aims to achieve its objectives by 2030, along with the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, there is also Gender Action Plan to Support the Implementation of the Sendai Framework of Disaster Risk Reduction. The goal of the Sendai GAP is to achieve all objectives of the Framework with specific attention to the gender responsiveness of these efforts (*Gender Action Plan to Support Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*, 2024).

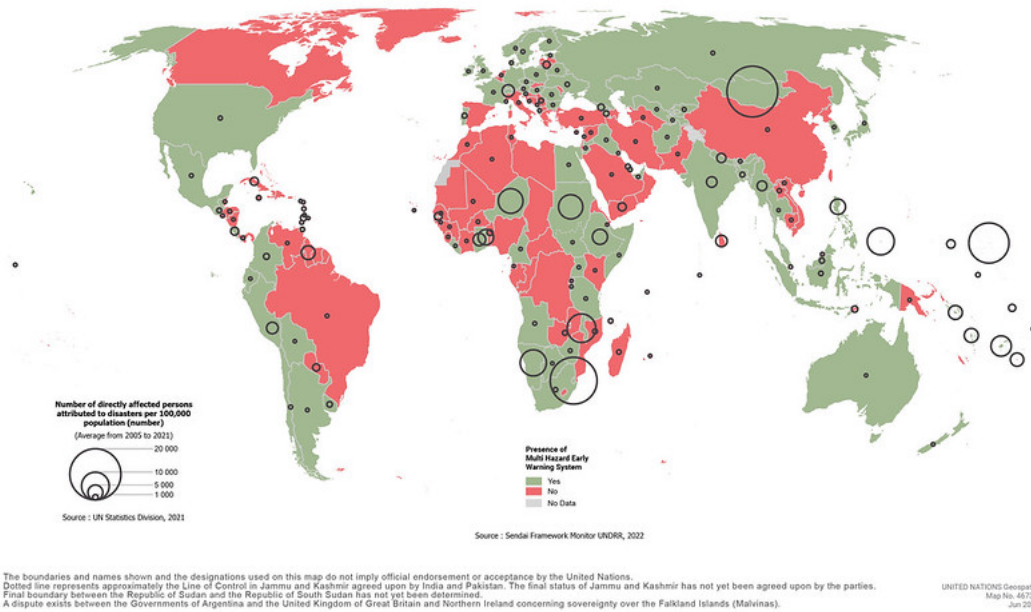## B. Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats (PRET)

Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats (PRET) is an initiative by the World Health Organization that is launched to improve pandemic preparedness after the COVID-19. The aim of PRET is to help countries better prepare for future pandemics, providing guidance on integrated planning for responding to any respiratory pathogen such as influenza or coronaviruses (*WHO Launches New Initiative to Improve Pandemic Preparedness*, 2023). After the COVID-19 pandemic, other disease outbreaks and health emergencies, it is evident that countries were not ready to respond to the threats and consequences. PRET offers practical tools and expert advice to help countries improve their integrated approach to preparing for and responding to emergencies.

C. Early Warnings for All (EW4All)

Early Warnings for All is another initiative by the UN to ensure multi-hazard early warning systems to everyone on Earth by 2027. EW4All initiative is co-led by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction(UNDRR) with support from various organizations such as International Telecommunication Union (UTI), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) . Though the need for early warning systems is more than ever, as seen in Figure 1 below, almost half of the world still does not have access to multi-hazard early warning systems. The initiative is built on four pillars to deliver effective and inclusive multi-hazard early warning systems (*Early Warnings for All | United Nations,* n.d.). Disaster risk knowledge and management led by the UNDRR; Detection, observation, monitoring, analysis, and forecasting led by the WMO; Warning dissemination and communication led by UTI, and Preparedness and response capabilities led by the IFRC.

Figure 5 People Affected by Disasters and Access to Early-Warning Systems

9. CHALLENGES

A. Finance

While natural and large-scale disasters like COVID-19 have an impact on the economy, economy also has an effect on preparedness and response capabilities. In the context of a changing climate and continued socio-economic development, and in light of the emergence (or re-emergence) of other types of large -scale risks such as cyber-attacks and infectious disease outbreaks, the frequency and impact of catastrophe events is expected to rise, exacerbating the challenges to ensuring that individuals, businesses, and governments have the capacity to manage the consequent financial impacts (OECD, 2024). It should be noted that in the cases of emergencies and risks the most effective and timely funding and finance is pre-arranged. Therefore, once again, the importance planning and preparedness is highlighted.

B. Diversity and Accessibility

When planning health emergency plans one important thing to consider is diversity and accessibility. In case of disasters and outbreaks, all kinds of people are affected such as; people with disabilities, elderly, minorities, people seeking constant healthcare etc.

With this in mind the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was created in 2006. The CRPD declares that every right of Persons with Disabilities shall be respected and protected in all areas of life. The specific perspectives and needs of people with disabilities are often not afforded adequate consideration in crisis prevention, adaptation, or response (Chapter 2.2). One example that made this tragically clear was the flood disaster in Germany's Ahr Valley in 2021, in which twelve people with disabilities drowned due to a lack of prevention measures and precautions such as flood-specific evacuation plans and sufficient care staff (Focus 2022).
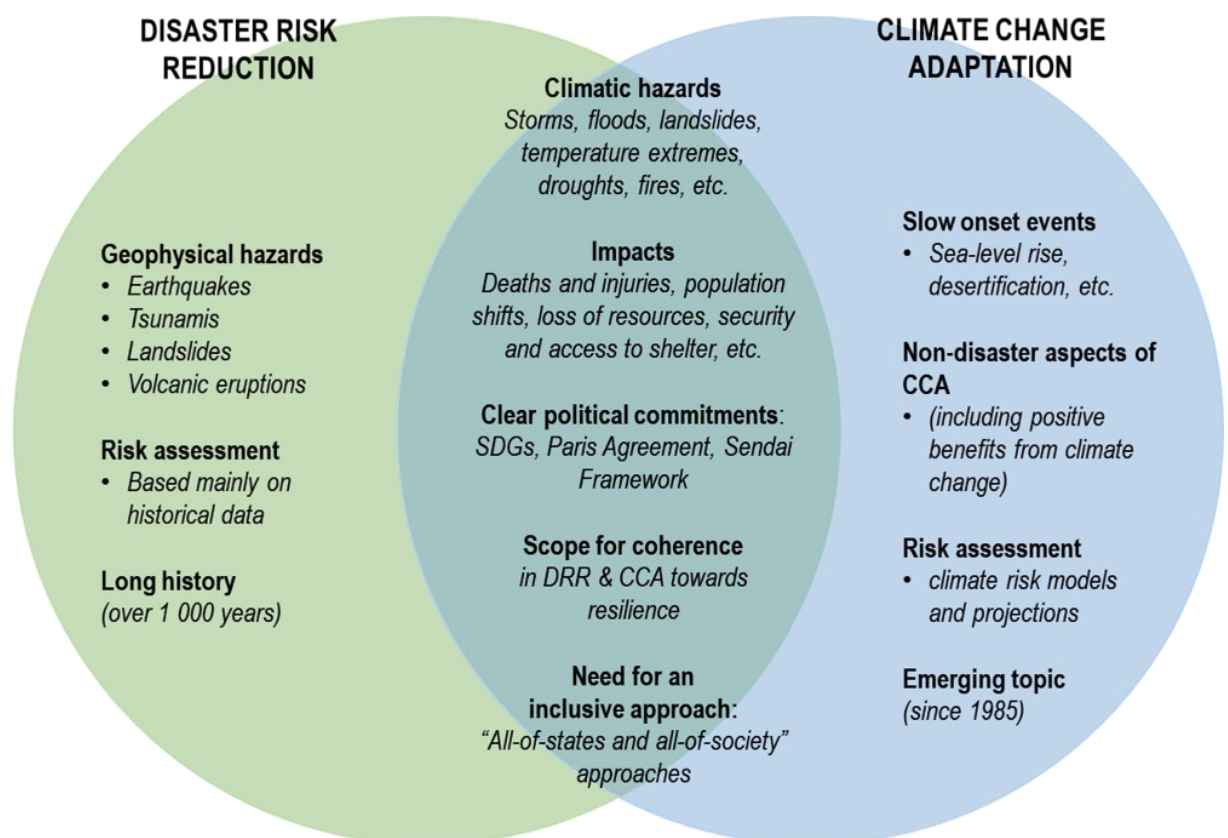
As also mentioned in the previous section, the Gender Action Plan to Support the Implementation of the Sendai Framework of Disaster Risk Reduction suggests that gender inequality does, in fact, exist in disaster risk as well. That being the case, the Sendai GAP is another effort on improving diversity on the basis of disaster risk reduction.

C. Misinformation

Another challenge to be overcome is misinformation. Misinformation can lead people to underestimate or ignore some risks while overestimating others (Richter, 2022). As also mentioned in section 6, staying informed is a key concept of risk management, however, the content and accuracy is just as significant. Especially when misinformation is coming from publicly trusted figures like government, politicians, celebrities, or religious leader; it creates a more complex situation to get out of. All in all, a system of a single and trustworthy source of information may be the ideal choice to get ahead of misinformation and anxiety among the public.

D. Climate Change

Though not seeming related to one another, climate change and disaster risk reduction are relevant. The adoption in 2015 of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on climate change provides a clear mandate for increased coherence in countries' approaches to climate and disaster risk reduction (OECD, 2020). As seen in the Venn diagram below, Disaster Risk Reduction(DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) have both commonalities and differences. Considering the notable amount of differences such as climatic hazards, impacts, clear political commitments, scope for coherence, and need for an inclusive approach DRR and CCA should be reflected on together.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Climatic hazards
Storms, floods, landslides, temperature extremes, droughts, fires, etc.

Geophysical hazards
- *Earthquakes*
- *Tsunamis*
- *Landslides*
- *Volcanic eruptions*

Impacts
Deaths and injuries, population shifts, loss of resources, security and access to shelter, etc.

Slow onset events
- *Sea-level rise, desertification, etc.*

Risk assessment
- *Based mainly on historical data*

Clear political commitments:
SDGs, Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework

Non-disaster aspects of CCA
- *(including positive benefits from climate change)*

Long history
(over 1 000 years)

Scope for coherence
in DRR & CCA towards resilience

Risk assessment
- *climate risk models and projections*

Need for an inclusive approach:
"All-of-states and all-of-society" approaches

Emerging topic
(since 1985)

Figure 6 Terms and meanings in CCA and DRR: commonalities and differences

10. COUNTRY PROFILES

In this section of the study guide, four countries that has faced health emergencies are chosen to provide real life situations so that emergency response and risk management is further enhanced and improved.

A. Türkiye

Having suffered two earthquakes with the magnitude of 7.7 and 7.6 in the past year, Türkiye is still living the consequences. The buildings in affected provinces were damaged extensively. Aside from the recent earthquakes, the Turkish people are concerned about the awaited the big İstanbul earthquake. The municipality of Istanbul conducted its own study estimating that 14,500 people will die if a magnitude 7.5 earthquake happens at night (Gollom, 2023). Similar to other countries of the World, Türkiye was not exactly prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. The Pandemic Influenza National Preparedness plan was last updated in October 2019 which was right before the COVID-19 pandemic but still was unable to respond.

B. Japan

Being a country that is very vulnerable to natural disasters, Japan has developed many disaster risk reduction strategies. From 1960s Japan began actively implementing measures to shore up both the physical and institutional safeguards against disasters, with particular emphasis being placed on disaster prevention (*MOFA: Disasters and Disaster Prevention in Japan*, n.d.). The strongest ever recorded earthquake in Japan is the Great East Japan earthquake in 11 April 2011with a magnitude of 9.0. The Earthquake caused nearly 20 000 deaths and an estimated USD 210 billion in damages (OECD, n.d.). Though being a country of natural disasters, in its history Japan faced more destructive disasters as well. With the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan has successfully distributed over 435 million doses of vaccine as of 19 March, 2024 (*Ongoing Topics | Prime Minister's Office of Japan*, n.d.).

C. India

India is among the world's most disaster-prone countries with 27 of its 29 states and seven union territories exposed to recurrent natural hazards such as cyclones, earthquakes, landslides, floods and droughts (*Disaster Risk Reduction*, n.d.). Some of the major natural disasters that the country has one through are Kashmir, Uttarakhand, and Bihar floodings; the Indian Ocean Tsunami, Gujarat Earthquake with numerous lives lost and homes damaged (Singh, 2021). Just like other countries around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound effect on various aspects of life in India. With Over 44 million confirmed cases and over 2 billion doses of vaccination administered, India's healthcare system has gone through the pandemic (*India - COVID-19 Overview - Johns Hopkins*, n.d.).

D. China

China is another country that is very prone to natural disasters, which the changing climate and the rising population increase the risk of. The likelihood of super typhoons and intense rainfall is rising, making riverine and flash floods also more likely (Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) & World Bank, n.d.). China, more specifically Wuhan, is where the first ever case of COVID-19 was recorded in 2019 which then spread to other countries around the globe. This put the country in an extremely hard position. However, the Chinese managed to control the outbreak at the end.

11. FURTHER READING

Sustainable Developement Goals
https://sdgs.un.org

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030

Early Warnings for All Dashboard
https://wmo.int/activities/monitoring-and-evaluation-merp/early-warnings-all-dashboard

Early Warnings for All Executive Action Plan 2023-2027

https://library.wmo.int/viewer/58209/download?file=Executive_Action_Plan_en.pdf&type=pdf&navigator=1

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2022 *Our World at Risk: Transforming Governance for a Resilient Future*

https://www.undrr.org/media/79595/download?startDownload=true

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction (GAR) Special Report 2023 *Mapping Resilience for the Sustainable Development Goals*

https://www.undrr.org/gar/gar2023-special-report

The United nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS 2025 AIDS Targets

https://aidstargets2025.unaids.org/#section-targets

Global Status of Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems 2023

https://www.undrr.org/media/91954/download?startDownload=true

12. QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

☆ How can emergency response plans be more diverse?

☆ What can be done to improve readiness on a national and international basis?

☆ How can loss after disasters and pandemics be minimized?

☆ How can past efforts be enhanced in order to strengthen readiness?

☆ How can early response systems be ensured for all?

☆ How can there be a comprehensive plan of action to tackle natural disasters?

☆ How can post-disaster or post-pandemic recovery plans be designed?

☆ How can the public be made aware of emergency response plans?

- ☆ What can the international community do for countries in need of immediate help?
- ☆ How can governments promote standardization in the case of response plans to pandemic and disasters?
- ☆ How can misinformation among the public be prevented?
- ☆ How can transition to routine life be smoother for those who experienced disasters and/or pandemics?
- ☆ How can we promote more resilient structure against natural disasters?

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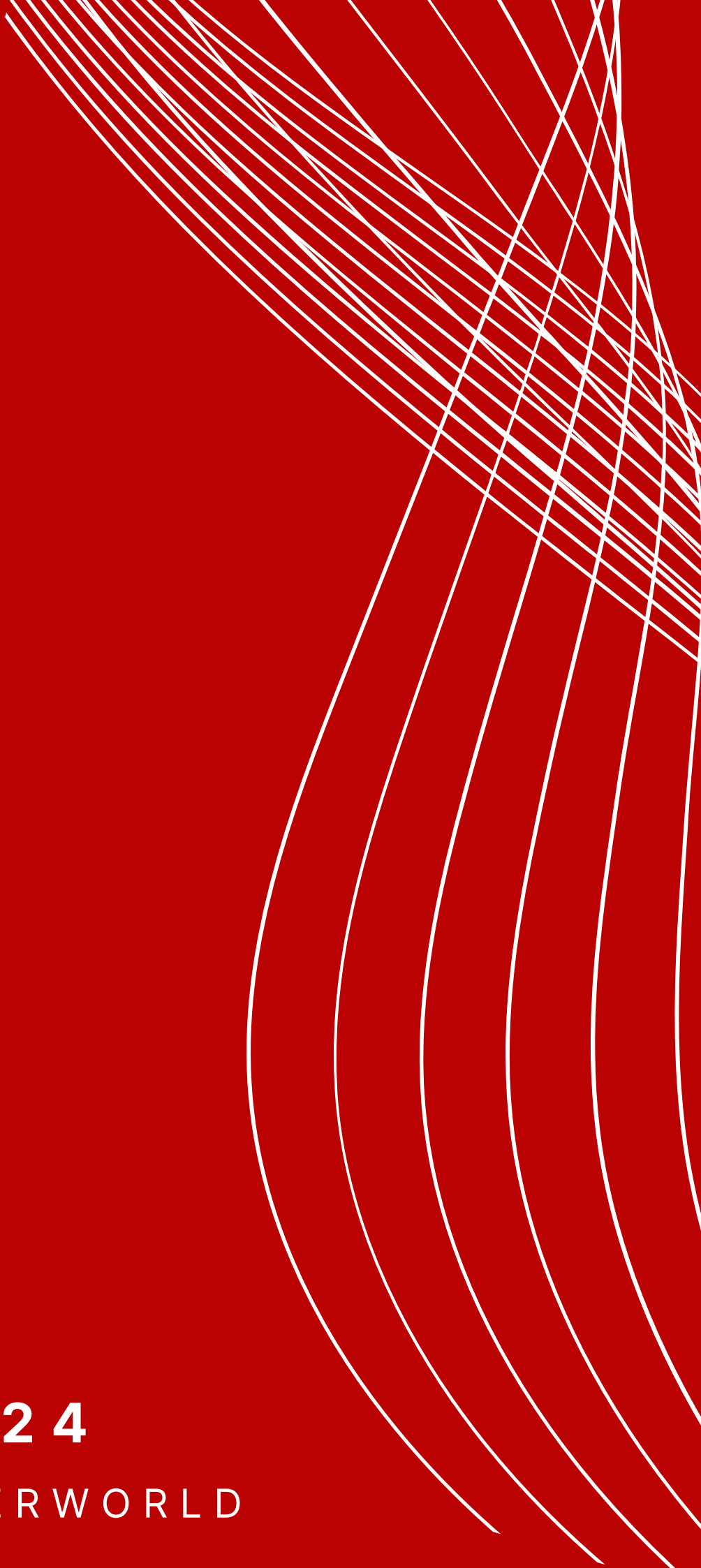*Surface (Pluvial) Flooding.* (n.d.). The Flood Hub. https://thefloodhub.co.uk/landscapes-to-lifescapes-2/

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