

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

James Lewis

Summary
No 825
C. 1975

For ten countries over a 10 year period (1966-1975), the annual average loss per country represented 11.5% of the average GNP at market prices for 1973. To these assessments of primary loss must be added assessments for secondary losses. As development increases so does vulnerability to losses from disaster.

Without people there cannot be a disaster. If people are a necessary constituent for disaster then their socio-economic environment is as significant, when we come to assess disaster potential as is the natural phenomenon itself. Extreme natural phenomena are the disaster agent. Disaster occurs where the agent meets a vulnerable human settlement.

Natural events which lead to disaster are an extreme manifestation of a day-to-day situation. Vulnerability to disaster is the degree by which a community is at risk to extreme natural phenomena which it has not the capacity to absorb.

The taking of precautions against disaster occurs between the disasters. Precautionary planning is the policy of implementation over time which sets as its objective the mitigation of the effects of disaster by a comprehensive co-ordination of indigenous resources and infrastructure.

As the disaster potential is conditioned by the socio-economic condition of a settlement so also is the capacity for taking precautions.

annual average loss per country represented 11.5% of the average GNP at market prices for 1973. To these assessments of primary loss must be added assessments for secondary losses. As development increases so does vulnerability to losses from disaster.

Without people there cannot be a disaster. If people are a necessary constituent for disaster then their socio-economic environment is as significant, when we come to assess disaster potential as is the natural phenomenon itself. Extreme natural phenomena are the disaster agent. Disaster occurs where the agent meets a vulnerable human settlement.

Natural events which lead to disaster are an extreme manifestation of a day-to-day situation. Vulnerability to disaster is the degree by which a community is at risk to extreme natural phenomena which it has not the capacity to absorb.

The taking of precautions against disaster occurs between the disasters. Precautionary planning is the policy of implementation over time which sets as its objective the mitigation of the effects of disaster by a comprehensive co-ordination of indigenous resources and infrastructure.

As the disaster potential is conditioned by the socio-economic condition of a settlement so also is the capacity for taking precautions.

There are now two simultaneous approaches to precautionary planning; to attend to the needs of settlements as they exist now; to take steps to reduce the vulnerability of

future settlements or the vulnerability of development that has not already taken place.

The capacity to reduce vulnerability in the long term is a principal part of what has been called "disaster prevention." Disaster prevention may be described as measures designed to prevent natural phenomena from causing or resulting in disaster.

Disaster preparedness may be described as action designed to minimise loss of life and damage, and to organise and facilitate timely and effective rescue, relief and rehabilitation in cases of disaster which cannot be avoided.

The phases of disaster occurrences are Prevention, Warning, Strike, Emergency, Relief, Rehabilitation and Re-construction. Prevention and Preparedness or the taking of precautions beforehand can be classified as follows:

Physical precautions

Social precautions

Contingency planning

Relief is the execution of activities, pre-identified within the precautionary planning process, to restore bodily needs to disaster victims. These bodily needs are:

Treatment of wounds)	
Potable water)	Emergency
Edible food)	period
Simple shelter)	
Warmth)	Rehabilitation
Sanitation)	period

In any location there will be indigenous resources of

a principal part of what has been called "disaster prevention." Disaster prevention may be described as measures designed to prevent natural phenomena from causing or resulting in disaster.

Disaster preparedness may be described as action designed to minimise loss of life and damage, and to organise and facilitate timely and effective rescue, relief and rehabilitation in cases of disaster which cannot be avoided.

The phases of disaster occurrences are Prevention, Warning, Strike, Emergency, Relief, Rehabilitation and Re-construction. Prevention and Preparedness or the taking of precautions beforehand can be classified as follows:

Physical precautions

Social precautions

Contingency planning

Relief is the execution of activities, pre-identified within the precautionary planning process, to restore bodily needs to disaster victims. These bodily needs are:

Treatment of wounds)	
Potable water)	Emergency
Edible food)	period
Simple shelter)	
Warmth)	Rehabilitation
Sanitation)	period

In any location there will be indigenous resources of supplies and materials for use in normal times by Governments and the private sector, which when scheduled

and pre-coordinated will be a most important and immediately effective local relief source. It is unlikely that all would be lost in the disaster occurrence. This principle becomes particularly valuable in a regional or sub-regional grouping of islands or island groups.