Its all about governance
Most of the planet changed its view this year about the meaning of disaster. Not only because of the health crisis posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but because as the emergency unfolded, other risks had to be addressed and managed as well. COVID-19 has become a very clear example of what is meant by systemic risk, and an illustration of the cascading impacts of both the disaster event and the responses adopted by States.

In the face of the cascading effects future risks might represent, good governance, this year’s theme of the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (October 13th), appears as a key to a door that holds a more prosperous, resilient and secure future. Many disasters can be avoided or prevented if there are disaster risk reduction strategies in place to manage and reduce existing levels of risk and to avoid the creation of new risk.

In the last months it has been clear that without appropriate institutions, policies and collaborative frameworks, the best plans and strategies might not be enough. They must reflect the multidimensional, systemic nature of risk and must include not only government sectors but also the different levels of government, where the empowering and resourcing of local authorities as well as other stakeholders become critical. We are all responsible for disaster risk reduction, and the success of the Sustainable Development Goals depends on it.

In this magazine, dedicated to good governance, we advocate for greater awareness of the importance of governance and political commitment to managing and reducing disaster risk. We must implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) that enables the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into national plans. Good governance is the way to a better future.

#ItsAllAboutGovernance #IDDRR

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The times call for governance

Disaster risk governance is entering a critical period. Not only has it been suddenly and overwhelmingly put to the test by the COVID-19 pandemic, but this is also the cutoff year for Target E of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), the first target to complete its action plan, which calls for a “substantial increase in the number of national and local strategies for disaster risk reduction by 2020.”

Author: Luis Burón B.
UNDRR the Americas and the Caribbean
RISKS IN THE MEDIA
Modelling systems in order to fathom how they might react to changed circumstances is not new. But businesses and large organisations are increasingly using computer models to inform their contingency planning and decision-making. It helps them to strategise and come up with the best plan for what to do when the worst does happen.

Author: Chris Baraniuk
BBC FUTURES
Before the COVID-19 crisis erupted, several signals warning of a possible pandemic had been emitted. Certain scientific studies, some of them published in prestigious journals, reported the risk of zoonotic disease outbreaks and propagation, notably linked to SARS type viruses, as well as their potential origins. Examples of such articles include this one published in Nature in 2008, this one in Nature Medicine in 2015, and this one that appeared in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2016.
When the Covid-19 virus began spreading around the globe, mitigation strategies varied from mandatory shutdowns of all but essential businesses (California, New York and several other U.S. states) to hopes for herd immunity (Sweden) to Big Brother-style tracking of citizens’ movements (China) via mobile phone.
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“The COVID-19 crisis is going to change how we work forever,” stressed Rodney Martínez, World Meteorological Organization representative for North America, Central America and the Caribbean. “We cannot keep reflecting on the problems that continue to drag on for decades. One of the main challenges in the region is the dispersion and fragmentation of efforts. We need to establish collaborative and sustainable actions through unified platforms. We must urgently move from words to action,” he said.
Following the news these days, we could get the false impression that climate emergency is no longer of great concern to the world. COVID-19 is dominating the headlines. This is understandable given the scale of death, infection and economic loss that coronavirus has inflicted, and continues to inflict, particularly on the most vulnerable countries, and the poor and the marginalized people.
Investing more in technology is essential to better forecast the impact of environmental, technological and biological hazards and help prevent disasters, said regional experts. More funding needs to be poured into technology projects which have a focus on areas such as climate change in order to help communities prepare for major events and reduce disaster risk, they said.