COVID-19: A RISK CONTEXT
The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the fragility of our global networks. A health crisis has shocked economies, policies, governance, trade, infrastructure. In short, it has changed today’s society and may well leave a significant mark on the shaping of tomorrow’s society.

The clearest lesson from the pandemic has been the necessity to be prepared for disasters. This is pointed out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), which explicitly calls for work to prevent or mitigate the effects of “small and large scale, frequent and infrequent, sudden and slow onset disasters, whether caused by natural or man-made hazards, as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks”.

Several partners and communities are developing a variety of concepts that contribute significantly to building preparedness for this type of complex and interlinked threat. It is vital to understand the risks and vulnerabilities in everything that surrounds us. This is the objective of this newsletter: understanding better these risks means approaching them from different perspectives and different points of view, absorbing the information and reflecting on it. This will help to address effective preparedness from a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder perspective, as required by the complexity of the threats we face and we will face.

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The coronavirus pandemic has put nearly 14 million people in the Caribbean and Latin America at risk of missing meals, according to a report released Wednesday from the U.N.’s World Food Programme. The virus has spread quickly in the region in recent weeks, with Latin America surpassing Europe and the United States in its daily numbers of new coronavirus cases reported. The WFP estimates that the number of people experiencing severe food insecurity in the region will increase from 3.4 million to 13.7 million over the course of 2020.
Discussions about the world that will emerge from the coronavirus pandemic have already started apace. Many commentators are wondering whether the crisis offers the opportunity to set the world on a more sustainable and equal path. The Covid-19 recovery offers an opportunity to create a different type of ‘normal’ – one that can help restore trust in the state and reaffirm crucial economic and social rights.

The crisis is set to generate a loss of at least 1.5% or $1 trillion worldwide, which would technically mean a global recession with all major regions affected and a devastating impact on the poorest countries.
Inequality doesn’t just make pandemics worse – it could cause them

A lot has been written about how this pandemic is exacerbating social inequalities. But what if it’s because our societies are so unequal that this pandemic happened? There is a school of thought that, historically, pandemics have been more likely to occur at times of social inequality and discord. As the poor get poorer, the thinking goes, their baseline health suffers, making them more prone to infection.

At the same time they are forced to move more, in search of work, and to gravitate to cities. The rich, meanwhile, have more to spend on luxuries, including products that hail from far-flung places.
Leaders across business and government are reevaluating the status quo and evaluating lessons learned as we emerge from the initial Covid-19 lockdown phase. They will make strategic decisions that will have long-term impacts and outlive the pandemic. What have we learned and what should they consider when reevaluating preparedness overall and supply chain decisions in particular? Leaders must employ a multi-hazard strategy when planning for the future. That strategic planning process needs to include risk management as well as address risk holistically.
The pandemic has turned the world outside our doorsteps into a newly formed wilderness. Public spaces are now areas to be ventured into sparingly, except by essential workers, so for most of us our worlds have shrunk to the size of our homes.

The 21st Century has so far seen Sars, Mers, Ebola, bird flu, swine flu and now Covid-19. If we have indeed entered an era of pandemics, how might we design the cities of tomorrow so that the outdoors doesn’t become a no-go zone, but remains a safe and habitable space?
OUR CONTRIBUTION
The chance of a deadly Caribbean hurricane clashing with the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic remains slim but many countries are bracing for a two-tier crisis as they grapple with complicated logistics, limited resources and scant supplies. Training rescuers, increasing medical capacity and sourcing protective equipment are among the major challenges for the Caribbean, where a sharp drop-off in tourism and trade has dealt a heavy blow to many cash-strapped countries.
Bridging the gender divide in early warnings access across the Caribbean

The Caribbean is the second most hazard-prone region in the world, and has experienced repeated losses from hurricanes and associated wind, rain and storm surge damage. Climate change is now causing an increase in the frequency and force of severe weather events, creating more dangerous threats to the lives and livelihoods of the region’s more than 43 million inhabitants. In 2017, an unprecedented series of no less than five major hurricanes devastated the region. This has been followed by at least one Category 5 hurricane every year since, including Hurricane Dorian in September 2019, which hit with sustained winds of 285 kilometres per hour.
Vinicio Cerezo, secretary general of the Central American Integration System (SICA) was emphatic about how nations should handle the post-COVID-19 pandemic scenario. “We must re-emerge with a new concept of humanity. We must review the collective attitude of all sectors and collectively face a challenge for all humanity.”
OP ED: ‘Pandemics do not recognise borders, so a united international response is vital under the guidance of WHO’

UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) head Mami Mizutori has been an advocate of a comprehensive approach to deal with disasters, backed by international collaboration.

She explains this approach to Pradeep Thakur in the context of the Covid-19 outbreak.
The greatest single driver of disaster risk is weak governance and lack of political commitment to invest in prevention. This is clear from the various runaway disaster risks we keep ignoring: greenhouse gas emissions, unplanned urbanisation, population growth in disaster prone settings, failure to invest in public health infrastructure, and the list goes on.
Battling stigma and discrimination against older persons

There is concern in the world’s most disaster-affected about the risk of discrimination and stigma against older persons and any dilution of their needs in response plans as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to accelerate. “We are already seeing a lot of discrimination and stigma building up against older people with certain myths, doubts, biases,” said HelpAge expert, Dr. Prakash Tyagi who pointed out that they are also the group most affected by the pandemic.

Author:
Denis McClean
UNDRR

Read full note
COVID-19 makes domestic violence a disaster

COVID-19 has led to an explosion of domestic violence, a UNDRR-hosted webinar for 1,129 participants heard today. Domestic violence against women and children is now a major concern as lockdowns and isolation measures restrict freedom of movement and make it essential that disaster management plans include hotlines for victims.

Author: Denis McClean
UNDRR

Read full note
Critical asset management was hailed today as the “forgotten hero” of disaster management in a wide-ranging online discussion of urban resilience which reached an audience of 1,200 health specialists, policymakers and disaster managers from 124 countries and territories.
The COVID-19 pandemic is causing enormous hardship for millions of migrants and displaced who need to be included in both response and economic mitigation measures being put in place across Asia and the Pacific, the world’s most disaster-affected region.

Calls for inclusion of migrants and displaced in COVID-19 response

Author: Denis McClean
UNDRR
Some of the world’s most disaster-prone nations are gearing up for their greatest challenge in the coming months when cyclones and floods can be expected to force the evacuation of millions of people while COVID-19 remains a widespread menace.
The COVID-19 pandemic has tipped the world into recession and the world’s most disaster-prone region Asia and the Pacific is really feeling the economic pain. Tourism is a good barometer of that pain as small and medium sized enterprises make up 90% of the tourism industry in the region where 49 million jobs in the sector are now at risk as worldwide travel has ground to a halt.

Author: Denis McClean
UNDRR
Parliamentarians have strong role to play in COVID-19 struggle

The world’s parliamentarians were urged today to set their differences aside and act in unity at the national level to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. “We don’t need to use this virus to score political points against each other. Strong national unity will bring strong global solidarity,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) and a former Member of Parliament in his native Ethiopia.

Author:
Denis McClean
UNDRR

Read full note
The COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a harsh blow to businesses in Latin America and the Caribbean but the private sector has a vital role to play in helping people recover from the crisis and adapt to the new normality, said industry experts. Implementing disaster risk reduction plans will be top of the list for many companies as they look to rebuild their customer bases, supply chains and distribution networks in the wake of the crisis, which has forced many to shed staff and others into bankruptcy.

Author: Luis Burón B. UNDRR
“Trusted, timely, accurate, simple and widely shared risk information saves lives, particularly when it reaches the last mile and is used by vulnerable communities”. This how the Chief of UNDRR’s Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Loretta Hieber Girardet, described the importance of risk communication in regional and national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
The COVID-19 pandemic may be the final proof we needed to understand that we are living in a time when our actions and inactions have driven the planet beyond its boundaries. The interactions between disease outbreaks and other drivers of disaster risk including poverty, slum-like living conditions, lack of international solidarity and pandemic preparedness, the increasing number of extreme weather events... they all contribute to a world in which the human rights of millions of people are under great strain.

Author: Mami Mizutori UNDRR
COVID-19 is a global health crisis, a socio-economic crisis, and it is also a crisis of disaster risk management. Five years ago, while memories were still fresh of earlier virus outbreaks of Ebola, SARS, MERS and H1N1, governments and parliamentarians of U.N. member states pushed for the inclusion of such “biological hazards” in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the global blueprint for reducing disaster losses.

Resilient health systems can protect us from threats beyond COVID-19

Author:
Mami Mizutori
Thomson Reuters Foundation
Risk has become systemic. It cannot be divided into categories that are then assigned to health authorities, disaster management agencies or early warning centres. If governments continue to operate in this way, the bigger picture as a disaster unfolds will remain unseen and the solutions will not be fit for purpose. Risk reduction solutions are needed across sectors such as water, sanitation and hygiene; education; health and nutrition; livelihoods; child and social protection; shelter and housing; and public open spaces.

What COVID-19 tells us about the changing nature of disaster risk

Author: Mami Mizutori
World Economic Forum
Cities are on the front lines of COVID-19

Across the globe, COVID-19 is threatening cities and communities, endangering not only public health, but also the economy and the fabric of society. COVID-19 is already having a deep, multidimensional impact and is expected to create the worst economic contraction in decades, with job losses already at an all-time high.

Author: Sameh Wahba, Maimuna Mohd Sharif, Mami Mizutori & Lauren Sorkin UNDRR
Webinars

Thursday 9 April
2:00-3:00 PM Bangkok time

WEBINAR 2: REDUCING COVID-19 VULNERABILITY AMONGST DISPLACED POPULATIONS AND MIGRANTS

Thursday 16 April
14:00-1500 Bangkok time

WEBINAR 3: COMBATING THE DUAL CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE-RELATED DISASTERS AND COVID-19
Webinars

Thursday 23 April
14:00 Bangkok time

WEBINAR 4: BUSINESS RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

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**Preparing for the Hurricane Season in Light of the Impact of COVID-19 on our Caribbean Economy**

**Tuesday, May 19th, 2020 | 11:00 - 12:30 PM (AST)**

**Presenters**
- [Name], [Position] - [Organization]
- [Name], [Position] - [Organization]

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1. MULTIPLE-HAZARDS AND SYSTEMIC RISK:
   ADDRESSING CLIMATE-RELATED DISASTERS IN TIMES OF COVID-19

**MONDAY**

25TH MAY 2020 | 10:00 A.M. (PANAMA TIME)

(SPANISH-ENGLISH INTERPRETATION AVAILABLE).

**FOR MORE INFO, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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