Disaster Risk Reduction and WASH

**Disaster risk** is the potential loss expressed in lives, health status, livelihoods, assets and services, which could occur in a particular community or a society due to the impact of a natural hazard.

**Disaster risk reduction (DRR)** is a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing that risk. Specifically, the purpose of disaster risk reduction is to minimise vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society in order to avoid (prevent) or to limit (mitigate and prepare for) the adverse impacts of natural hazards, and facilitate sustainable development.

**UNICEF’s DRR goals:**
1. DRR for children and women is a national and local priority
2. Different risks faced by girls, boys, adolescents and women are identified and addressed
3. Safer and more resilient conditions for girls, boys and women
4. Strengthened humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery through capacity development

**Introduction to DRR and WASH**
- WASH services are critical to communities and save lives in both routine and emergency situations.
- Natural hazards can compromise WASH infrastructure and service delivery and this interruption of WASH services can increase the number of affected people beyond the area of direct impact.
- DRR interventions are necessary to protect WASH investments and should therefore be integrated into ‘regular’ development work, rather than viewed as a separate or additional task.
- It is essential that new vulnerabilities are not introduced, or reinforced, through new or existing WASH services.

**Child-centred DRR requires focusing on the specific risks faced by children, as well as involving children in efforts and initiatives to reduce disaster risk.**
Disasters negatively impact children's and women’s rights, disproportionately affect poor countries and poor communities, erode development gains and set back progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With its local and national presence before, during and after disasters, and working across all key programme sectors, UNICEF is ideally placed to address disaster risk and to undertake risk reduction measures.

**For further information, please refer to the DRR and WASH Technical Note or contact Andrew Colin Parker (acparker@unicef.org) and Antony Spalton (aspalton@unicef.org)**

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<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Examples of key DRR and WASH actions</th>
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| **Prevention/ Mitigation** | • Analyse disaster risks to WASH infrastructure, services and behaviours at institutional, community and individual levels, incorporating potential impacts of climate change.  
• Carry out vulnerability and capacity assessments of water and sanitation systems and practices to assess ability to meet essential needs in the event of a disaster.  
• Design, build, locate and maintain water and sanitation systems which include modifications to mitigate risks. |
| **Preparedness** | • Develop and communicate preventive messaging on water usage, sanitation and hygiene in disaster situations.  
• Prepare systems for “emergency mode” to re-establish – in the shortest time possible – a minimum of service to reduce impacts on communities.  
• Ensure WASH sector is linked to existing early warning systems at the national, sub-national and community level. |
| **Response/ Early Recovery** | • Analyse why infrastructure was damaged or interrupted and investigate suitable ways to modify existent/future systems against this damage.  
• Ensure that recovery efforts focus on ‘building back better’, including measures to prevent or mitigate future disaster risk, incorporate previous development and emergency hygiene programmes, and focusing on building the resilience of communities to potential future hazards.  
• Analyse why WASH-related behaviours failed and investigate suitable programmes to build community resilience. |