



UN WATER



# WATER AND DISASTERS



UNITED NATIONS

**When disaster strikes, it usually manifests itself through water. Floods, landslides, tsunamis, storms, heat waves, cold spells, droughts and waterborne disease outbreaks are all becoming more frequent and more intense.**

**The impacts and costs of these events are exacerbated by such factors as unplanned urbanization and degradation of ecosystem services. Reducing risk to, and improving the resilience of, water and sanitation services will be key to maintaining access during a climatically uncertain future.**

## Challenges

Water-related disasters pose both direct impacts (e.g. damage to buildings, crops and infrastructure, and loss of life and property) and indirect impacts (e.g. losses in productivity and livelihoods, increased investment risk, indebtedness and human health impacts).

The increasing economic cost and toll of disasters should be a significant incentive for governments and humanitarian organizations to focus more attention on preparedness, prevention and addressing the root causes of vulnerability.

## Opportunities

Meeting the challenges associated with water-related disasters requires investment in and implementation of good disaster risk-reduction. Despite improvements in preventive efforts, scaling these up to meet current and future needs remains a central challenge.



*Members of the Jordanian battalion of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) carry children through flood waters after a rescue from an orphanage destroyed by hurricane «Ike».*  
UN Photo/Marco Dormino

## Facts and figures

- 90% of all natural disasters are water-related. ([UNISDR](#))
- Since 1900, more than 11 million people have died as a consequence of drought and more than 2 billion have been affected by drought, more than any other physical hazard. ([FAO](#))
- By 2050, rising populations in floodprone lands, climate change, deforestation, loss of wetlands and rising sea levels are expected to increase the number of people vulnerable to flood disaster to 2 billion. ([UNESCO, 2012](#))
- Overall, annual economic losses from weather-related disasters are estimated at between US\$ 250 billion and US\$ 300 billion. ([UNISDR](#))
- Between 1900 and 2007, water-related disasters outnumbered all other types of disasters combined. ([UNESCO, 2009](#))
- Asia is the region most vulnerable to water-related disasters, accounting for more than 45% of fatalities and more than 90% of the people affected by disasters between 1980 and 2006. ([UNESCO, 2009](#))

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**Find out more:**

Global Framework for Climate Services Office: [Associated Programme on Flood Management](#)

Global Framework for Climate Services Office: [International Drought Management Programme](#)

UN Environment: [Water-related disasters](#)

UNESCO: [Water-related disasters](#)

WMO: [Disaster Risk Reduction Programme](#)

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