

What is Risk?

Risk is the probability that a hazard will turn into a disaster. Vulnerability and hazards are not dangerous, taken separately. But if they come together, they become a risk or, in other words, the probability that a disaster will happen.

Nevertheless, risks can be reduced or managed. If we are careful about how we treat the environment, and if we are aware of our weaknesses and vulnerabilities to existing hazards, then we can take measures to make sure that hazards do not turn into disasters.

Risk management doesn't just help us prevent disasters. It also helps us to put into practice what is known as sustainable development. Development is sustainable when people can make a good living and be healthy and happy without damaging the environment or other people in the long term. For instance, you can make a living for a while by chopping down trees and selling the wood, but if you don't plant more trees than you cut down, soon there will be no trees and will no longer have the means to make a living. So, it isn't sustainable.

What is Disaster Prevention and Mitigation?

Prevention and mitigation are all those actions we can take to make sure that a disaster doesn't happen or, if it does happen, that it doesn't cause as much harm as it could. We can't stop most natural phenomena happening but we can reduce the damage caused by an earthquake if we build stronger houses and on solid ground.

What is prevention? Taking measures in order to avoid an event turning into a disaster. Planting trees, for example, prevents erosion and landslides. It can also prevent drought.

What is mitigation? Measures that reduce vulnerability to certain hazards. For instance, there are building techniques that ensure that our houses, schools or hospitals will not be knocked down by an earthquake or a hurricane.

Prevention and mitigation begin with:

- Knowing which hazards and risks we are exposed to in our community.
- Getting together with our family and our neighbours and making plans to reduce those hazards and risks and to avoid them harming us.
- Actually doing what we planned to do in order to reduce our vulnerability.
- Taking action, not just talking.

