

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The explanations offered here are not formal UNDP definitions. To aid comparability, these definitions are similar to those used in the ISDR Secretariat publication, *Living with Risk: A Global review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives*.

Armed conflict: A contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.¹

Civil society: A realm of political action lying between the household and the state but excluding for profit private sector organisations. Civil society organisations are commonly exemplified by non-governmental and community-based developmental organisations, but also include a wide range of other groups including sports clubs, interest groups, trade unions etc.

Coping capacity: The manner in which people and organisations use existing resources to achieve various beneficial ends during unusual, abnormal and adverse conditions of a disaster phenomenon or process.

Disaster risk management: The systematic management of administrative decisions, organisation, operational skills and abilities to implement policies, strategies and coping capacities of the society or individuals to lessen the impacts of natural and related environmental and technological hazards.

Disaster risk reduction: The systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices to minimise vulnerabilities, hazards and the unfolding of disaster impacts throughout a society, in the broad context of sustainable development.

Empowerment: A process in which individuals learn by their own actions to become fully engaged in shaping their development potential. The process is necessarily self-led, but benefits from facilitation by supporting actors.

Human vulnerability: A human condition or process resulting from physical, social, economic and environmental factors, which determine the likelihood and scale of damage from the impact of a given hazard.

Governance: Governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

Income poverty: A status whereby a lack of financial resources limits the ability of an individual or household to meet basic needs. What is included in basic needs is culturally determined so that different levels of financial status may be described as conveying relative forms of income poverty.

Livelihood: The means by which an individual or household obtains assets for survival and self-development. Livelihood assets are the tools (skills, objects, rights, knowledge, social capital) applied to enacting the livelihood.

Natural disaster: A serious disruption triggered by a natural hazard causing human, material, economic or environmental losses, which exceed the ability of those affected to cope.

Natural disaster, slow onset: A disaster event that unfolds alongside and within development processes. The hazard can be felt as an ongoing stress for many days, months or even years. Drought is a prime example.

Natural disaster, rapid onset: A disaster that is triggered by an instantaneous shock. The impact of this disaster may unfold over the medium- or long-term. An earthquake is a prime example.

Natural hazards: Natural processes or phenomena occurring in the biosphere that may constitute a damaging event.

Physical exposure: Elements at risk, an inventory of those people or artefacts that are exposed to a hazard.

Risk: The probability of harmful consequences, or expected loss of lives, people injured, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted (or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human induced hazards and vulnerable conditions. Risk is conventionally expressed by the equation:

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability}$$

Resilience: The capacity of a system, community or society to resist or to change in order that it may obtain an acceptable level in functioning and structure. This is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organising itself, and the ability to increase its capacity for learning and adaptation, including the capacity to recover from a disaster.

Social capital: A shorthand term used to describe a combination of social norms (such as trust), relationships (such as reciprocity) and ties (such as hierarchical clientalism or horizontal group bonds) held by an individual or predominant within a social arena.

Sustainable development: Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.

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1. Strand H., Wilhelmsen, L. and Gleditsch, N.P. 2003. *Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook*, PRIO: Oslo