

Inadequate infrastructure pushes up the risk of disaster

World Risk Report 2016 on the consequences of possible extreme natural events in 171 countries

Berlin, 25 August 2016 – Inadequate infrastructure and weak logistic chains substantially increase the risk that an extreme natural event will become a disaster. This is a core finding of the World Risk Report 2016, published by the Institute for Environment and Human Security at the United Nations University (UNU-EHS) and Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft – Gemeinsam für Menschen in Not e.V., in cooperation with the University of Stuttgart, which was presented today in Berlin.

“When it comes to aid measures following extreme natural events, the challenges mostly lie in the ‘last mile’ of the logistics chain: organising transportation despite destroyed streets or bridges and ensuring fair distribution when there is a shortage of for example water, food and shelter,” explained Peter Mucke, Project Director of the World Risk Report and Managing Director of Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft. “Crumbling transport routes, unreliable electricity grids and dilapidated buildings not only hinder humanitarian aid from overseas, but also delay crucial aid for those affected in the event of a disaster.”

“The international community must invest more in the development and maintenance of critical infrastructure even before disasters occur,” said Dr. Matthias Garschagen, Scientific Director for the report and Lead Scientist at the Institute for Environment and Human Security at the United Nations University (UNU-EHS). “Sufficient, high-quality infrastructure, which is well-managed institutionally, can not only prevent the often catastrophic consequences of natural hazards such as flooding or storms, but it can also play a crucial role in the distribution of humanitarian aid supplies in the event of a disaster. Critical infrastructure can thus reduce the risk of natural hazards for populations and it can mitigate economic losses.”

Dr. Iris Menn, Programme Director at Bündnis member Christoffel-Blindenmission (CBM), emphasised the growing importance of locally organised humanitarian aid: “Actors on site, for instance civil-society and church organisations, are often fully familiar with the local, cultural situation and know the people who most urgently require assistance. They are the first ones who can take action in the event of a disaster and they are also there when the international aid organisations leave again.”

An important part of the report is the World Risk Index, which was calculated by the Institute of Spatial and Regional Planning at the University of Stuttgart (IREUS). The index assesses the risk of disaster in 171 countries through the combined analysis of natural hazards and societal vulnerabilities. The island state of Vanuatu once again displays the greatest risk in 2016. Germany is ranked number 147. “Societal factors, such as nutrition, medical services and governance, decide to a large extent whether a natural hazard becomes a disaster,” said Dr. Torsten Welle, Senior Scientist at IREUS. “But through targeted interventions the impacts of disasters can be reduced and important lessons can be learned from recognized weaknesses.”

Attention journalists:

- The report can be download at: <http://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:5763>
- You may request additional printable images, infographics and map materials from us.
- Our authors are available for telephone or in-person interviews.

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Bread for the World, Christoffel-Blindenmission, Kindernothilfe, medico international, Misereor, terre des hommes, Welthungerhilfe and the associated members Deutsche Lepra- und Tuberkulosehilfe, German Doctors and Plan International provide as Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft acute and long-term assistance in disasters and in crisis regions.

The Institute for Environment and Human Security at the United Nations University (UNU-EHS) looks at risk and vulnerability aspects of human security and the consequences of complex natural hazards and global change.

The Institute of Spatial and Regional Planning at the University of Stuttgart (IREUS) stands for a research and teaching agenda that aims to enhance disaster risk reduction, sustainability and resilience in spatial and infrastructure development.