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Disaster risk reduction requires systemic change for effective emergency management

Why did we undertake this study?

Disaster risk reduction and climate policy are central to emergency planning and preparedness, but whether current policies reflect international best-practice is uncertain. Critical examination of policies, planning and preparedness in light of global debates can identify areas where disaster risk reduction and climate risk management can be improved.

How was it done?

We examined the policy context for disaster risk reduction in Canada and Australia and its application to flood and drought planning and preparedness. We analysed 71 government documents and consulted practitioners at local, provincial/state, and federal levels.

What did we find?

Major findings of this study include:

- Disaster risk reduction in emergency management policy reflects international discourse by emphasising an 'all-hazards' and 'whole-of-society' response, with targeted interventions aimed at vulnerable groups.
- Policy implementation is constrained by internal (e.g., institutional silos) and external conditions (e.g., competing interests from non-government stakeholders).
- Short- and long-term disaster risk reduction and climate risk management will likely be constrained by development patterns and priorities (e.g., economic growth) that often supersede proactive emergency management.

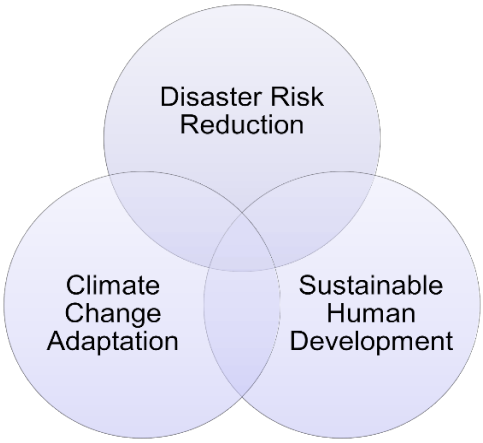

Figure 1: The importance of approaching emergency management more holistically

What are the implications?

Disaster risk reduction is influenced by policies and decisions outside of emergency management. Despite emergency management policies reflecting international best-practice, systemic changes to public policy and administration are necessary to avoid gaps in planning and preparedness. For example, disaster and climate vulnerabilities should be integrated and mainstreamed into existing legislative and decision-making frameworks spanning government mandates, including in emergency management, natural resource management, and economic development. Without systemic change in disaster and climate risk management, existing vulnerabilities for communities and vulnerable groups will increase. Further research is needed to better understand the mechanisms through which systemic change can occur at all levels of government.

Want more information?

The full paper is available from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2022.2048784.

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