



# Salient Features on Human Crisis and Their Disaster Management

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## Editorial

A humanitarian crisis (or sometimes humanitarian disaster) is defined as a singular event or a series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety or well-being of a community or large group of people. It may be an internal or external conflict and usually occurs throughout a large land area. Local, national and international responses are necessary in such events.

Each humanitarian crisis is caused by different factors and as a result, each different humanitarian crisis requires a unique response targeted towards the specific sectors affected. This can result in either short-term or long-term damage. Humanitarian crises can either be natural disasters, man-made disasters or complex emergencies. In such cases, complex emergencies occur as a result of several factors or events that prevent a large group of people from accessing their fundamental needs, such as food, clean water or safe shelter.

Humanitarian crisis may arise from both natural and man-made conflicts and disasters. Humanitarian crisis from natural disasters include tsunami, earthquake, hurricane, floods, droughts, and wildfires that may result in disruption through damage to property, physical injury and death, psychological distress, displacement of individuals and families, and prolonged disruption in normal daily activities. On the other hand, crisis from manmade disasters such as wars, social unrest, protests, conflicts, and terrorist attacks have a broad range of impacts on the physical, mental, and social well-being of the individuals affected.

An on-going or lingering pandemic may amount to a humanitarian crisis, especially where there are increasing levels of virulence, or rates of infection as in the case of AIDS, bird flu or tuberculosis. Major health-related problems such as cancer, global warming typically requires an accentuated or punctuated mass-event to justify a label of "crisis" or "disaster".

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) lists categories which include different types of natural disasters, technological disasters (i.e. hazardous material spills, Chernobyl-type nuclear accidents, chemical explosions) and long-term man-made disasters related to "civil strife, civil war and international war". Internationally, the humanitarian response sector has tended to distinguish between natural disasters and complex emergencies which are related to armed conflict and wars.

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## Different Types of Emergencies

An event or hazard can be naturally occurring or man-made. It can come on rapidly or gradually.

Naturally occurring hazards (as classified by EM-DAT) include:

Geophysical – earthquakes, volcanos, landslides, avalanches, tsunamis

Meteorological – storms, cyclones, hurricanes, typhoons, blizzards

Hydrological – floods, storm surges

Climatic events – droughts, extreme temperatures, wildfires

Biological – epidemics, infestations

## Man-made hazards

Include conflict, environmental degradation, pollution and industrial accidents.

Socially, women and children (mostly girls) receive a significantly decreased amount of attention in response to humanitarian crises. Women and children make up 3 quarters of refugees or displaced persons at risk post-crisis. A quarter of this population is of reproduction age and a fifth of this population is likely to be pregnant. In times of emergency and such crises, deaths associated with pregnancy, reproductive health, sexual violence and sexual exploitation increase drastically especially amongst females. During such emergencies, women lose access to family planning services, prenatal care, postpartum care and other health services. The heightened risk of female health and safety makes them vulnerable to disease, violence and death.

Non-profit organizations such as the Women's Refugee Commission deal with aiding particularly women suffering from various types of humanitarian crises. According to the Women's Refugee Commission, during the first hours of a humanitarian crisis, women and young children is at most risk. During such an event, agencies and organizations approach matters variably. However, the top critical requirements within hours and months of the crises include: keeping the refugees and internally displaced persons away from danger, allowing access to fundamental needs such as food and healthcare, identification information, preventing sexual violence and other.

## Disaster management

Responding to current emergencies is just one part of our response to disasters. Our approach to disaster management means we are active before, during and after disasters strike, focusing on the following areas:

- Water and sanitation
- Health and nutrition
- Food
- Child protection
- Education for children

- Shelter
- Humanitarian protection
- Humanitarian advocacy

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