

# Preface

We are witnessing an ever-increasing level and intensity of disasters, from Chile to Mozambique and beyond, devastating millions of ordinary lives and causing long-term misery for vulnerable populations. In 2013, Asia was the continent most often hit by natural disasters (40.7 percent), followed by the Americas (22.2 percent), Europe (18.3 percent), Africa (15.7 percent), and Oceania (3.1 percent). In the same year, Asia accounted for 90.1 percent of global disaster victims, followed by Africa (5.1 percent).<sup>1</sup> Additionally, population trends and climate change are increasing the world's vulnerability, and all stakeholders, especially the public and private sectors, must find ways to reduce risks from all hazards, particularly natural hazards. On March 7, 2015, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) reported that the vast majority of disasters globally are climate-related, which now account for over 80 percent of all disaster events and contribute enormously to economic losses as well as population dislocations generated by disaster events.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, representatives from many nations of the world recently met in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan, from March 14 to 18, 2015, at the *Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction* to examine their respective disaster risk reduction strategies, with an emphasis on how to “build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters.”<sup>3</sup> The thousands of participants included representatives of governments, parliaments, civil society, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, non-governmental organizations, national platforms for disaster risk reduction, focal points for the Hyogo Framework for Action, local governments, scientific institutions, and the private sector, as well as organizations of the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations. According to the UNISDR, the conference, amongst other activities, finished the assessment and review of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action; deliberated on the knowledge gained through the regional and national strategies/institutions, plans for disaster risk reduction, and their recommendations, as well as relevant regional agreements within the implementation of the Hyogo Framework of Action; adopted a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction; identified modalities of cooperation based on commitments to implement a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction; and determined modalities for a periodic review of the implementation of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

Accordingly, the purpose of this book, *Planning for Community-Based Disaster Resilience Worldwide: Learning from Case Studies in Six Continents*, is to provide a unique resource in which a wide array of case study material from six continents discusses and surveys, in considerable depth, the multifaceted matrix of natural and

human-made disasters and, of critical significance, their bearing on the loss of human and productive capital, the conduct of national policies, the setting of national development priorities, and the nature of international aid (through multilateral lending and technical cooperation) and bilateral assistance strategies and programs of donor countries. In order to ensure the efficacy and appropriateness of their support for disaster survivors, international agencies, humanitarian and disaster relief organizations, scholars, non-governmental organizations, and members of the global emergency management community need to have insight into best practices and into lessons learned from various disasters across national and cultural boundaries, which is provided by the large number of authors in this book from around the world. Similarly, the evidence obtained from the numerous case studies in *Planning for Community-Based Disaster Resilience Worldwide* serves to build a worldwide community that is both better informed about the cultural and traditional contexts of such disasters and better enabled to prepare for, respond to, and finally rebuild sustainable communities after disasters in different environments.

The distinct contributions of this volume are its emphasis on the built environment (architecture, landscape, urban design, community planning, land-use modeling, and engineering, amongst others) whilst being multidisciplinary in approach; the fresh perspectives that the authors from around the globe bring to bear on the subject matter through their in-depth empirical work; and its value as a resource (reference book) for academics and those researching and looking for original source material on the different aspects of disaster studies in a wide variety of cultural, economic, social, and geographical contexts.

In addition to these contributions, the book's unique benefits to the audience include the provision of insights into how local communities globally develop long-term resilience to disasters and manage catastrophes in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe; and its provision, through its numerous innovative interdisciplinary case studies, of needed scientific data regarding the causes and consequences of disasters, as well as strategies and long-term plans that have been implemented world-wide to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and reconstruct communities after disasters and build resilience to their occurrence.

An additional value of the book derives from the fact that, although the different contributing authors address the phases of the disaster management spectrum from vastly different conceptual and operational perspectives, they all converge around the issue of the applicability and relevance of lessons learned in other cultural and environmental contexts intercontinentally.

## The structure of the edited book

This volume consists of an introduction, five sections (each with its own brief section introduction), and a conclusion. In totality, they present different approaches to disaster risk reduction and all the phases of disaster management in various contexts.

The components of the book are:

- Introduction
- Part 1: Africa
- Part 2: The Americas
- Part 3: Asia

- Part 4: Australia
- Part 5: Europe and Multi-Continental Studies
- Conclusion

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## Notes

- 1 D. Guha-Sapir, P. Hoyois, and R. Below (2014), *Annual Disaster Statistical Review 2013: The Numbers and Trends* (Brussels, Belgium: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters).
- 2 “Ahead of Global Risk Reduction Conference, UN Review Finds Vast Majority of Disasters Climate-Related” (2015, March 7), *Australian News.Net* [Website], available at <http://www.australiannews.net/index.php/sid/230848467>.
- 3 Ibid.

## Bibliography

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