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Increasing communities' resilience to disasters; an impact-based approach

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Abstract

The conventional processes of science, and the incorporation of science into policy and practice, appear not to be resulting in improved disaster reduction solutions for communities, despite intense research into hazards and risk. Resilience to disasters is increased when the societal impacts of disasters are reduced. On this basis, the contribution that Disaster *Risk* Reduction (DRR) can make to Disaster *Impact* Reduction (DIR) is assessed, and it is demonstrated that reducing event risk by reducing event probability only reliably reduces community disaster impacts for events that occur frequently. Such events do not fit the UNISDR definition of a disaster. Therefore, DRR cannot reliably improve DIR. Instead, DIR can be addressed directly by way of community adaptation, based on carefully selected impact scenarios derived by community-expert-official collaborations considering a broad range of event and asset damage scenarios. Probabilistic risk is a useful tool in insurance and re-insurance, and possibly in national policy-making, but such national policies are likely to be undermined by inevitable failures of risk-based approaches at the local level. This work clarifies the common usage of "risk" as meaning either impact, or impact x probability.

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