



International Day for Disaster Reduction: Resilience is for Life



All across the globe, countries face the possibility of being hit by natural disasters such as flooding, hurricanes, earthquakes, landslides, among others. These disasters, especially those of a high magnitude, have serious effects on a country's health, infrastructure and economy. Therefore, being ready for such events is vital to protecting a country's resources, especially its human resources.

In order to promote a global culture of disaster reduction, including disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness the United Nations (UN) General Assembly has designated October 13 as the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR). It is a day to celebrate how people and communities are reducing their risk to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction.

Leading up to the World Conference for Disaster Reduction in 2015, the Step Up initiative was launched in 2011, focusing on particular groups and how they can be involved in disaster risk reduction for each year's celebration from 2011 – 2015. Therefore, this year's theme: 'Resilience is for Life', focuses on the ageing population. It highlights the need for a more inclusive approach for older people in disaster risk reduction and recognises the critical role they can play in being ready for disasters through their experience and knowledge.

When planning for disasters, considering the elderly is important because older people are at an increased risk of being affected by any disaster that affects an area. Some of the risks that the elderly face in a disaster are:



- Adapting to changes – elderly persons may be prone to developing additional health problems during disasters, e.g., even small changes in hydration or nutrition can have major impacts on older people pushing them beyond their limits.

- The elderly may be separated from caregivers or their caregivers may be injured or killed during a disaster.
- Because of their inability to move freely, older people may find themselves unable to access healthcare services, as well as other essential services such as food, water, shelter and latrines.

Since the elderly face heightened risks during disasters, it is important to do the following when preparing an Emergency Response Plan:

- Carry out a needs assessment to identify those at risk, noting where they live, their specific needs and how they can be addressed.
- Ensure transport, emergency shelter and alert or warning systems and processes are accessible.
- Train service providers and emergency responders to be aware of specific needs and vulnerabilities.
- Most importantly, the elderly should be involved in planning processes and preparedness activities since they would have local knowledge and experience, which can be harnessed for disaster risk management. Since they are well respected in the community, they will also be in a position to influence decisions and help in conflict resolution processes.



You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN or email us at eit.epaguyana@gmail.com