



A1 HIDDEN ISSUES – INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

Revealing fatalistic beliefs about disasters: information for facilitators

Tools in this section of *Reveal* provide background information on hidden issues for facilitators. Tools in other sections are designed to be used with communities.

Questions for a facilitator to consider:

What disasters have affected the communities you are working in over the past few years? Have things changed as a result of the disasters? Have steps been taken to avoid the same thing happening again?

How do people view disasters? Are they seen as things that will happen anyway, and that little can be done about them, or as events that can be prepared for?

Sometimes, disasters that could have been prevented can badly affect a community because people have held fatalistic attitudes. Fatalism is the belief that we cannot change the future. It leads to people accepting problems rather than trying to solve them.

Fatalism is a very common attitude when it comes to disasters such as drought or earthquakes. Many people believe that a disaster is an 'act of God' or 'an act of nature' and that there is little or nothing we can do about it. In this way, fatalistic beliefs are a 'hidden issue' because the community does not yet have access to correct information and a proper understanding of why disasters happen.

What does the Bible say?

The Bible shows that God is a God of love and compassion, and that he experiences sorrow when people suffer. Although we often use the term 'natural' to describe disasters, many human factors contribute to them. And injustice in our societies means that poor and vulnerable people suffer from the same hazard much more than rich people. Micah 6:8 tells us 'to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'. This verse motivates us not only to show compassion after a disaster has happened, but also to make efforts to stop disasters happening, by tackling this injustice. Biblical stories such as that of Noah and the flood (Genesis 6) and Joseph and the famine (Genesis 41 and 46-49) show us the importance of, and wisdom in, preparing for disasters. For Bible studies on this issue, please see **Part B** of *Reveal*.

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene

A1 HIDDEN ISSUES – REVEALING FATALISTIC BELIEFS ABOUT DISASTERS

Understanding disasters

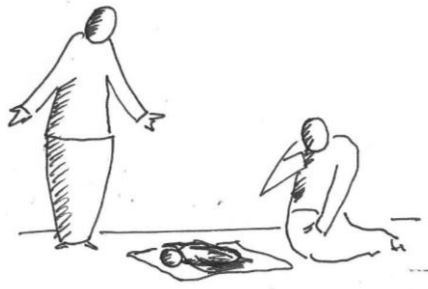
When we talk about why disasters happen, it is helpful to separate the reasons into two categories:

HAZARD - the natural event	VULNERABILITY - the reasons people are affected by the hazard
<p><i>Examples:</i> Heavy rain Ground shaking Lack of rain</p>	<p><i>Examples:</i> Living on unprotected river bank Never learnt to swim Houses not earthquake-resistant Living on steep slopes Planting crops that need lots of water to survive</p>

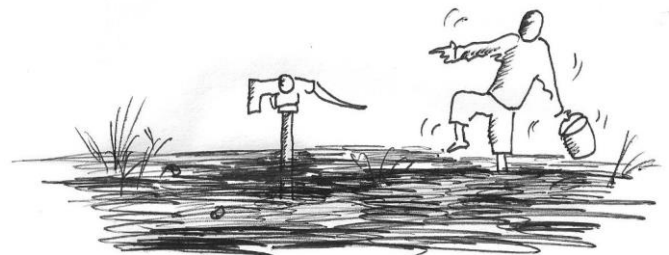
A hazard only turns into a disaster if there is some vulnerability. Usually we cannot do much about the hazard. However, vulnerabilities often have a human cause, so we can change them.

How does fatalism affect people?

Fatalistic beliefs which keep people vulnerable can be very damaging. Vulnerability to disasters can result in the following outcomes:



Loss of life, particularly of the most vulnerable people (children, women, older people, people with disabilities).



Loss of clean water sources (for example, damaged pipes or a polluted well).

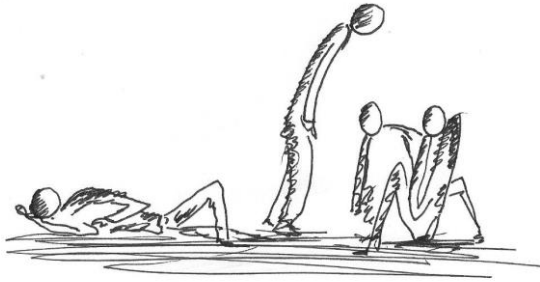


Homes damaged and destroyed.



Crop failure and loss of livelihoods.

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Poor nutrition and poor health.



Damage to buildings and infrastructure.

However, people's lives, property and livelihoods can be protected when action is taken to lessen or end their vulnerability to disasters.

Using Reveal

Please see **Part A2** for tools to help communities to understand about why disasters happen and what can be done to prevent them. For Bible studies which look at disasters and preparing for them, please see **Section B**. And there are tools explaining different Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) responses that communities may choose in **Section C**.



Finding out more

- Tearfund (2011) *Disasters and the local church*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/disasters/disasters_and_the_local_church/
- Tearfund (2011) ROOTS 9: *Reducing risk of disaster in our communities*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/roots/reducing_risk_of_disaster_in_our_communities/

Related tools:

- A2 – The need to prepare – reducing the effect of disasters [A2: *Disaster risk management-1*]
- A2 – Disasters ball game - understanding shocks and stresses [A2: *Disaster risk management-2*]
- B – Fatalism: can we avoid disasters? (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-1*]
- B – Noah — lessons in preparedness (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-2*]
- B – Preparing for disasters (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-3*]
- B – God of justice and mercy (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-4*]
- B – God's provision for the future (Bible study) [B: *Disaster risk management-5*]
- C2 – Flood-resistant buildings [C2: *Disaster risk management-1*]
- C2 – Protecting a spring (a water source) [C2: *Water, sanitation & hygiene-2*]

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