STOPPING DISASTERS
DEVASTATING LIVES
CENTRE FOR DISASTER PROTECTION'S
STRATEGY 2019-2024
This is the Centre for Disaster Protection’s first five-year strategy, covering the period from September 2019 to September 2024. It sets out our vision, mission, values, and goals. The Centre’s goals will be reviewed and amended on an annual basis.

ABOUT US

In 2017, the UK Prime Minister announced the creation of the Centre for Disaster Protection. This was in response to global recognition that climate change, population growth, urbanisation, and conflict are making disasters more frequent, more deadly, and more expensive. The protracted and overlapping nature of contemporary crises mean that finding better ways to plan and respond must remain high on the global agenda. The Centre has been established to help with these problems by supporting countries and international organisations to transition from reaction to readiness. We focus on disaster risk financing (DRF) to help ensure that money and plans are in place before a disaster strikes, so that the most vulnerable people are better protected.

At the Centre we are currently in a ‘start-up’ phase, funded by UK Aid through the Prosperity Fund and the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and we work with a wide range of partners. We are located in the City of London and are staffed by a multi-disciplinary team.

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OUR VISION & MISSION

Our vision is:
A world where disasters do not devastate lives.

Our mission is:
To support countries and the international system to manage risks—moving from reaction to readiness—because we believe that disasters should not be surprises.

The Centre aims to be a ‘positive disrupter’, challenging the world to find better ways to prepare for and respond to disasters. We firmly believe that better is possible and we want to support countries and organisations as they take control and act earlier to protect people’s futures.

Our niche area of expertise is disaster risk financing. We want to see a change in the way the world pays for disasters so that adequate support is available to those who need it, when they need it. This means not only looking at budgetary and financial tools available to governments to ensure money is available on a timely basis but also developing effective systems to plan and deliver that support to the most vulnerable people, ideally in a way that reduces future risks and needs.

Ad hoc, slow and unpredictable financing in response to annual humanitarian appeals is proving inadequate in the face of more frequent and severe climate events, conflict and state fragility. However, there is positive change on the horizon. Improvements in technology are helping people to understand more about risk and vulnerability. Development and humanitarian actors are experimenting and innovating with new financing mechanisms and earlier action. Industry is increasingly offering products for risk management. And donors and the multilateral system are taking exploratory steps towards ensuring that pre-arranged disaster finance is as attractive to countries as post-emergency finance.

Communities, countries and international organisations are increasingly concluding that it is better to proactively manage risks, rather than pay for the consequences after disasters. However, creating a culture in governments and international organisations where risks are clearly identified and owned—with corresponding plans, systems and resources— is not easy. There are often incentives to maintain the status quo and continue to treat disasters as surprises.

At the Centre, we want to help grow the emerging evidence base on how to better reach and support people in need. We want to work with governments and organisations to: create practical solutions; incentivise proactive risk management and risk financing; and support risk-informed decision-making. We want to increase the quality of budgetary and financial mechanisms and tools, and the quantity of finance that is available to countries to help manage, and ultimately reduce, their risks.

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1 IFRC define a disaster as ‘a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to cope using its own resources. Through other causes than nature, disasters can have human origins.’ We also recognise that disasters can be slow to develop, for example drought.

2 We define ‘disaster risk finance’ as the system of budgetary and financial mechanisms to credibly pay for a specific risk or risks, arranged before shocks occur. This can include paying to prevent and reduce disaster risk, as well as preparing for and responding to disasters.
Impartiality

It is critically important for the Centre to operate impartially, and offer fair opinions that are based on objective criteria, unbiased by personal or organisational interests or advantage. The Centre will ensure that our views, advice and professional judgement are not compromised by bias, conflict of interest or the undue influence of others. We will do all we can to ensure objectivity and impartiality in our work.

We are currently solely funded by DFID and have long-run funding, channelled through a separate organisation which acts as a managing agent. We are accountable to an independent, multi-stakeholder board. We will continue to ensure that our governance structure and funding streams support and protect our impartiality.

Quality

We operate to high standards and aim to become a recognised, reliable, trusted, and authoritative voice in disaster risk financing. A distinctive attribute of our work will be that it has been performed to a high degree of excellence. Rigorous peer review and quality assurance procedures aim to ensure the quality of all our work.

Creativity

We aim to bypass the boundaries of traditional thinking and practice in order to challenge the status quo. We will encourage all those working in this field to explore, use their imagination, and to be inventive in pursuing dynamic and innovative solutions to some of the world’s most serious problems.

Empowerment

We want to support others as they shift from reaction to readiness. Empowerment is a core feature of what we do—it is both the means and the end. All our interactions with our partners aim to build strength, confidence and capacity. This is also true for staff working at the Centre. They operate in a safe environment where they are valued, respected, and are empowered to achieve their goals and do their best work.
Our strengths

Organisations and countries are increasingly working on risk management and financing and yet we believe that the Centre has a particular role to play in the global risk management architecture.

We are impartial
We provide impartial and high quality guidance, views and perspectives, making us a trusted partner. We are rigorous about identifying any real or perceived conflicts of interest in our work. We have no hidden incentives and do not stand to gain from particular approaches, products or instruments being used, meaning that we can give countries and organisations a fair, unbiased view of how they can best manage and finance their risks.

We are multidisciplinary
We focus on disaster risk financing through a deliberately multidisciplinary lens as we believe that many different perspectives and types of expertise are needed to generate appropriate solutions. All ideas, projects, research, and innovations coming from the Centre will have been collaboratively sense-checked and vetted by our team comprising experts in risk management, public financial management, economics, risk modelling, finance, actuarial science, humanitarian delivery, gender, inclusion, and basic service delivery.

We are nimble
We are a small, flexible and nimble organisation. We can work closely with our partners, developing trusted relationships. We can quickly deliver strategic and targeted work as opportunities to add value arise, making the most of policy windows as they appear. But we can also quickly scale-back operations once progress is made, when our services are no longer needed, or as others are able to take over. Our size also enables us to experiment and tackle risks, as well as make quick decisions and ‘course correct’ as we learn.

We are positive disrupters
We are focused on catalysing change, sparking innovation, and challenging the status quo. We aim to find positive alternatives to ensure that risks are better managed and needs are better met.

Our partners

We understand that we cannot reach our vision alone. Our success is dependent on working with other organisations. Our projects are typically co-designed with other organisations; our research and reports are often co-authored or co-sponsored. Everything that we do is done in collaboration with: national governments; development insurers; development banks; the private sector; bilateral donors; civil society and NGOs; the UN system; and humanitarian agencies.
OUR FIVE-YEAR GOALS

We have set four overarching goals that aim to take us closer to our vision of a world where disasters do not devastate lives. The goals have been carefully designed to address what we believe to be the key constraints to progress in disaster risk financing:

- gaps in understanding and evidence;
- information asymmetries;
- weak capacity;
- differing interests and incentives;
- and a dysfunctional status quo.

By 2024:

GOAL 1
We will have a respected and widely used quality assurance function that has increased the quantity and quality of risk financing products and services.

We will develop a quality assurance methodology, process, and function that can be used by all actors—including donors, multilateral organisations, industry, NGOs, and national governments—when they need impartial, high quality advice on risk financing. Providing technical transparency will increase trust in risk financing products and will highlight best practice and great solutions that are being developed.

GOAL 2
Our effective technical assistance and capacity building will have supported high risk, vulnerable countries to make better risk management decisions.

We will provide high quality technical assistance and capacity building to national governments, multilateral organisations, and donors with an emphasis on knowledge exchange and genuine skills transfer. Examples could include helping to develop a DRF strategy for a country; supporting an organisation to select suitable finance triggers; or providing training on shock-responsive social protection. Over time, this will lead to countries (either supported directly or through multilateral organisations) making better decisions on risk ownership, financing and management.

GOAL 3
We will be internationally recognised as driving change through evidence, experimentation and learning which will strengthen the global evidence base on risk financing.

Through strategic commissioning of applied research, evaluations and evidence pieces, and influencing investments by others, we will build up the currently limited evidence base on risk financing so that we have more evidence of what works. Our research will focus on identifying effective solutions and examples of proven best practice in effectively reaching poor and vulnerable people. It will be a global public good and therefore publicly available and widely disseminated amongst different stakeholders, including through key meetings and global events.

GOAL 4
Through advocacy and influencing, we will have improved the quality and quantity of risk financing through the multilateral system.

As a positive disrupter we will use different strategies and instruments to prompt change in how multilateral organisations and the international system plan for and respond to disasters. Specifically, we will work with development banks, development insurers, and multilateral humanitarian agencies to advocate for more and better risk financing.