

# UN sketches countries with climate risk profile

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A Malawian farmer works at a field. Disasters caused by climate change will inflict the highest losses in poor countries with weak governments that have dashed for growth and failed to shield populations which settle in exposed areas, a UN report has said.

Disasters caused by climate change will inflict the highest losses in poor countries with weak governments that have dashed for growth and failed to shield populations which settle in exposed areas, a UN report said on Thursday.

"Disaster risk is not evenly distributed," said the report, released on the sidelines of the world climate talks in Bonn, as it urged countries to shore up protection for their citizens.

From 1990 to 2007, loss of life and property from weather-related

disasters rose significantly, with floods the biggest single cause, it said.

Large developing countries, led by China, India, Bangladesh and Indonesia, suffered the biggest mortality in absolute terms, but in relation to population, the highest tolls were in Dominica, Vanuatu and Myanmar.

Poor small-island states and poor landlocked states, which can suffer years-long economic damage after an extreme weather event, are most in the firing line, according to the report, "Risk and Poverty in a Changing Climate."

Together, these states account for more than two-thirds of countries with "very high" economic vulnerability to such disasters.

"Disaster risk is increasing fastest in low- and low-middle income countries with rapidly growing economies," said the report.

"These countries have rapidly increasing exposure but relatively weak institutions. While they are making improvements in risk-reducing capacities, these have yet to catch up with rising exposure."

Scientists on the Nobel-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) say the impacts of [global warming](#) are already perceptible.

For this century, they predict storms that could become more violent and frequent and more floods and droughts, as weather systems are changed by the planet's warmer surface.

Presenting the report, Andrew Maskrey of the UN's International Strategy for Disaster Reduction explained why risk was not evenly spread among all countries.

Risk depends not only on the weather but how people are exposed to such events and whether governments are prepared to deal with the threat and have the means to do so, he told a press conference.

For instance, people who migrate to fast-growing cities in search of a better life can be cruelly exposed to storms and floods if their only housing is shanty huts with no drainage, said Maskrey.

"Climate change is going to magnify risk but it's also going to magnify risk because of increasing hazard and decreasing resilience," he said.

He gave the example of Japan and the Philippines. Japan has 22.5 million people who are exposed to cyclones each year while the Philippines has 16 million. But the annual cyclone death toll in the Philippines is 17 times that of Japan.

Maskrey said 97 percent of losses related to disasters were weather-related, and only three percent were caused by earthquakes, tsunamis or volcanic eruptions.

Massive storms may grab the world headlines, but a worrying trend is the rise in disasters of a lesser magnitude that may hit only at regional level, he added.

"There has been a doubling in climate-related reports at local level since the 1980s, and more importantly, a quintupling in the housing damage associated with these frequent, low intensity loss reports," he said.

"This is the kind of under-the-radar-screen picture you don't pick up just by looking at Hurricane Katrina, Cyclone Nagis, and occasional large-scale events. This is really what is happening on the ground."

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