

Questions to spark thinking about systemic disaster risk

Speed read

- Shifting the way you think about risk from a hazard focus to a systemic disaster risk focus is a journey for individuals, communities, organisations, and governments.
- Whole-of-society involvement in managing risk is vital to resilience and reducing loss and harm caused by disasters.
- There are some important questions that can be asked to spark reflection, thinking, and discussion about systemic disaster risk, no matter what the context is.

Key points

Some key questions to spark reflection, thinking and discussion:

Personal Reflection Questions	Team/Organisation Discussion Questions
What is my context and existing knowledge?	What is disaster risk reduction?
What are my core values/principles and how do they perhaps differ from others?	What is climate change?
What are the impacts of disasters on myself, my community, my place, the country and globally?	What things are there no answers for?
Why do I want to take action to mitigate or otherwise reduce disasters?	Where are gaps in knowledge and how can we leverage those knowledge gaps?
How prepared am I to make decisions before and during a disaster and face the consequences of these decisions?	How do you reduce disruption to people's livelihoods in the face of more frequent and intense disasters?
What information is my priority to learn before and/or during a disaster?	How do you prepare communities to better manage the effects on their physical and mental wellbeing, which can extend long after the hazard has passed?
What do I want and need to protect most and what am I most willing to risk?	How do you prepare communities to better manage the effects on their physical and mental wellbeing, which can extend long after the hazard has passed?
How would you encourage everyone to work towards resilience and reduce risk and disasters?	Do you know who the beneficiaries are that are impacted by your decisions (even if they are not your direct responsibility)?
Do you need to upskill or reach out to expertise across your organisation/community?	Do you have public trust and mandate for your risk decisions? Are values aligned?
What can I do to influence change?	Have you included wider parts of the community and not just within your organisation in your decision-making?

Quick Guide

Personal Reflection Questions	Team/Organisation Discussion Questions
Are my roles and responsibilities clear?	Are organisational roles and responsibilities clear?
	Have you determined the type of decision you need to make before you choose the risk assessment method to use?
	Have you sought a wide range of views?
	What is an acceptable level of risk and for whom?
	Which groups will benefit from the risk reduction measure and which groups will bear the cost?
	What new thinking is most relevant to your risk practice?

Take action

- Set aside some time for personal reflection on these questions.
- Organise a group discussion or workshop within your team or organisation. Use some (or all) of these questions to prompt thinking and discussion. Remember to set an objective for the discussion and get feedback from participants at the end.
- Refer to the Managing Exercises Handbook for further advice on designing discussion exercises.

More information

- Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience 2021, Systemic Disaster Risk: <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-systemic-disaster-risk/>
- Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience 2020, Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience: <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-community-engagement>
- Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience 2017, Managing Exercises: <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-managing-exercises/>