



TOURISM FOR A BETTER WORLD

Disaster in Tourism

What Constitutes a Disaster?

A **disaster** goes beyond what we typically consider an emergency. It's characterized by a significant degree of societal disruption that overwhelms the capacity of local resources to cope. As Laura explains, "Disasters thus disrupt the functioning of society. There are many hazards that can cause a disaster as in the previous lessons. Important is that regardless of the hazard, its effects can often be minimized through human action before a disastrous event occurs."

Crucially, a disaster only occurs when a **hazard meets high vulnerability and exposure**. While hazards, especially natural ones, will inevitably occur, preparing for them by actively reducing exposure and vulnerability significantly lowers their risk and, consequently, the likelihood of a disaster.

Disasters Don't Have to Happen: A Tale of Two Businesses

Consider this story of two friends, both tourism business owners in the same part of Your country, who experienced a severe rain event very differently:

Business Owner 1: Unprepared, Significant Damage

"That was really the worst night of my life. It rained as hard as I have ever experienced. My hotel was virtually flooded; some rooms were no longer habitable, and I had to rebook guests. My dinner service was interrupted when the power suddenly went out. A real disaster! I'm worried about negative online reviews. I truly didn't expect such effects and wasn't prepared."

- **Impact:** Business heavily affected.
- **Preparation:** Did not anticipate such an impact from rain and was unprepared.
- **Consequences:** Multiple rooms flooded, leading to guest relocation; power outage disrupted dinner service, leaving guests upset.
- **Concerns:** Worried about damage to the hotel's image and negative social media reviews.

Business Owner 2: Well-Prepared, Limited Impact

"My weather alert informed me in advance that a storm was coming. I was able to instruct my employees to take appropriate measures in time. During the last renovation, I had already taken precautions, improving my drainage system, for example. In case of a power outage, we always have a generator on standby. My manager informed guests about the impending storm and explained the safety measures. All in all, we were well prepared for the event."

- **Awareness:** Received weather alerts and expected the extreme event, allowing staff to take precautionary actions.
- **Planning:** Was aware of this type of event and had prepared for it, including checking all window seals at the start of the season.
- **Contingency:** Had a backup generator to ensure continuous power supply.
- **Communication:** Trained manager to communicate with guests, reassuring them of safety and providing entertainment during the bad weather.

This story vividly demonstrates how **preparation can drastically reduce the impact of a hazard**, leading to a very different outcome.

You have successfully completed the this learning unit of "Resilience in Tourism." What specific aspect of disaster preparedness would you like to explore next for your business?