

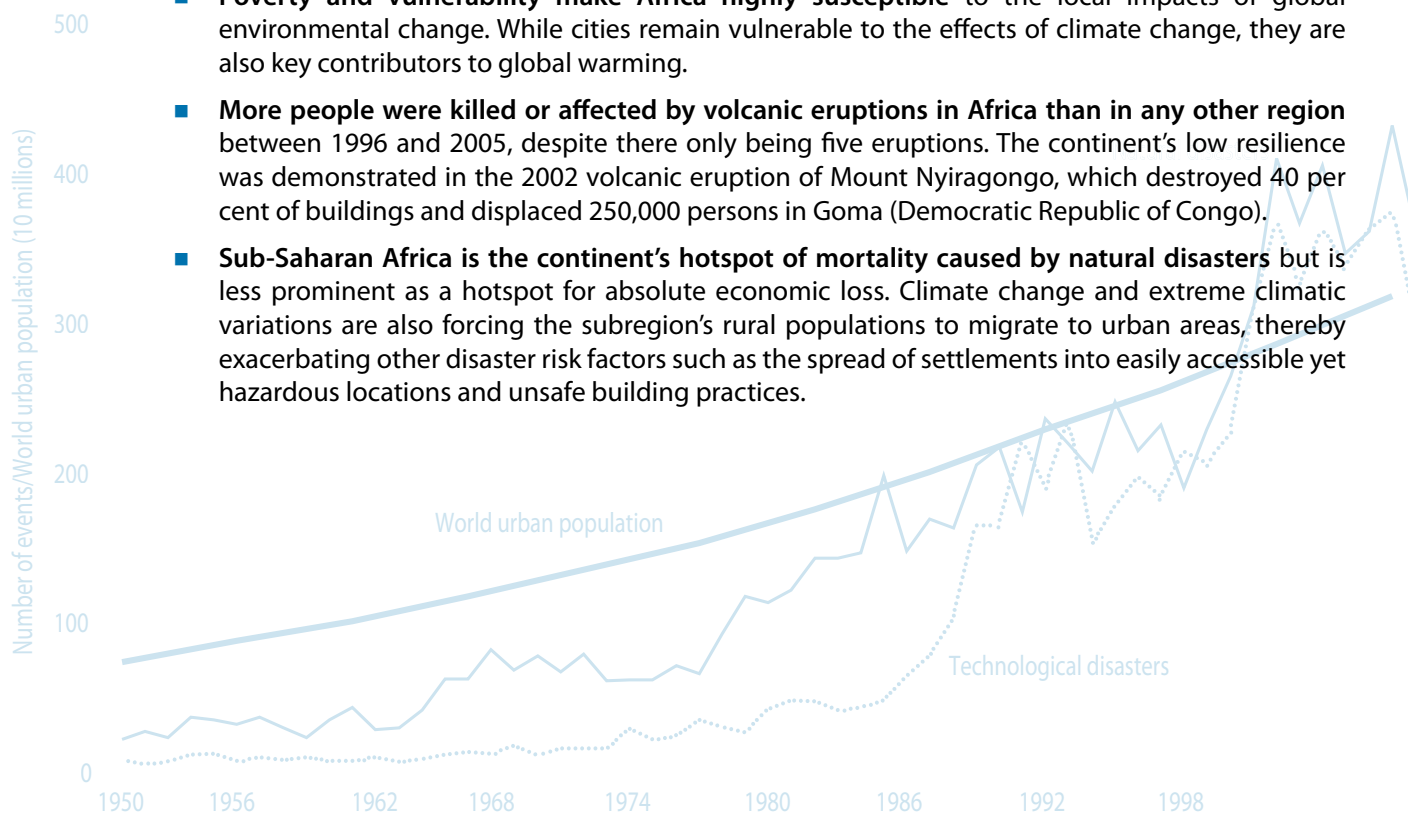


DISASTER
facts & figures

Africa

Africa, the world's second-largest and second most-populous continent is home to 900 million people, accounting for approximately 14 per cent of the world's population. Africa is the fastest urbanizing region in the world, exposed to risks associated with chaotic urbanization. In 2005, urban populations were recorded at 39.7 per cent in Africa and are projected to increase to 53.5 per cent by 2030. Cities generate the potential for substantial losses from single large disaster events, creating new challenges for risk management. The region's vulnerability is further aggravated by poverty, conflict, chronic disease and weak governance.

- **Africa has experienced the fastest rate of increase in the incidence of natural disasters over the last three decades.** The number of major natural disasters in the world increased from 100 to more than 400 per year, from 1975 to 2005. The growth rate has been highest for Africa, where a threefold increase in such disasters has been experienced in the last decade alone.
- **Flooding** is the most frequent natural disaster type in Africa, resulting in the highest mortality.
- **Earthquakes, floods and storms cause the greatest economic loss on the continent,** and droughts and famine affect an estimated 174 million people.
- **Economic loss** to disasters, estimated at US\$ 10 billion, is low compared to other world regions, but is high as a proportion of Africa's GDP.
- **Poverty and vulnerability make Africa highly susceptible** to the local impacts of global environmental change. While cities remain vulnerable to the effects of climate change, they are also key contributors to global warming.
- **More people were killed or affected by volcanic eruptions in Africa than in any other region** between 1996 and 2005, despite there only being five eruptions. The continent's low resilience was demonstrated in the 2002 volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo, which destroyed 40 per cent of buildings and displaced 250,000 persons in Goma (Democratic Republic of Congo).
- **Sub-Saharan Africa is the continent's hotspot of mortality caused by natural disasters** but is less prominent as a hotspot for absolute economic loss. Climate change and extreme climatic variations are also forcing the subregion's rural populations to migrate to urban areas, thereby exacerbating other disaster risk factors such as the spread of settlements into easily accessible yet hazardous locations and unsafe building practices.



Americas

The Americas consist of North America and South America with their associated islands and regions. They cover 8.3 per cent of the Earth's total surface area and, with some 890 million people, contain about 14 per cent of the human population.

- From 1997 to 2006, there were 392 **human-made disasters** in the Americas, with 28 deaths, costing US\$83 million. Central America is considered a hotspot in terms of mortality caused by natural disasters.
- **Windstorms** are the most frequent type of disaster, affecting the most people and causing the highest total economic loss. Windstorms can also trigger flooding and landslides.
- Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras and Nicaragua in 1998, killing some 20,000 people, many of whom lost their lives to landslides. A disproportionate number of victims were street children. Many losses in small regional towns smothered by mudslides or flash floods were caused by deforestation in adjacent agricultural areas.
- **The 2005 Hurricane Katrina alone caused US\$ 81.2 billion in economic damage** in the United States of America, making it the costliest natural disaster in the country's history.
- **Cuba has developed effective procedures for quick evacuation of Havana** and other urban areas in the face of repeated hurricanes.
- La Masica, Honduras, was the only community to register no deaths in the wake of Hurricane Mitch thanks to an early warning system operated by women in the community.
- **In Bogota, Colombia, 60 per cent of the population live on steep slopes subject to landslides.** In 1966, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, landslides caused 1,000 deaths. Houses were subsequently reconstructed at the original sites. As a result, 1,700 people were killed the following year.
- **Flooding and landslides in Venezuela in 1999 caused about US\$1.9 billion in damages and killed some 30,000 people.**
- **If sea levels rise** by just one meter, many coastal megacities with populations over 10 million, such as Rio de Janeiro or New York, will be under threat.
- San Francisco and Los Angeles follow Tokyo with the **highest Natural Hazards Risk Index values.** The Index identifies high exposure in cities with large physical assets and commercial interests.
- **About half of all hospitals in Latin America and the Caribbean are located in high-risk areas.** Over the 1980s and 1990s, 100 hospitals and 650 health centres, equating to approximately 5 per cent of all such structures in this region, were destroyed in disasters. In the Pereira earthquake in Colombia in 1999, 74 per cent of the region's schools were damaged.
- **Mexico City**, located in an area at risk from earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and floods, is responsible for around one third of Mexico's GDP.
- **Colombia** has demonstrated regional leadership in urban planning for risk reduction, saving lives from landslide and earthquake hazards.