

DISASTER BIOETHICS

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Disasters wreak havoc, leaving death and destruction in their paths. They also trigger many ethical dilemmas for those directly affected, and for planners and responders. What help should be sent? Who gets the limited resources available? When disasters occur, they tend to overwhelm local/national capacities in their effort to respond effectively, resulting in the existence of huge imbalances between urgent needs and available resources. Since disasters have become more frequent and are very costly, disaster risk reduction and management have become priorities for national as well as international agencies.

Both in policy development as well as in our actual responses to disasters, ethical considerations and decisions are pivotal. However, few resources are available as yet for disaster ethics. Policy makers, humanitarian agencies and individual responders experience a lack of ethical guidance and training materials that might help them to better address the challenging and distressful ethical dilemmas occurring in disasters. This presentation will highlight some of the ethical issues in disasters.