

# The concept of vulnerability

## Objectives:

- Get to know risk-related vulnerabilities

## STEP BY STEP

### BEFORE STARTING

The teacher introduces the activity by writing these words on the blackboard and reading these definitions (contained in the [glossary](#)):

#### Disaster - Risk - Hazard - Vulnerability


**Disaster** - an event that causes serious damage or disruption of the normal course of life


**Risk** - the possibility that a phenomenon may cause harm to people, settlements and the environment in a given period of time and in a given area


**Hazard** - the intrinsic capacity of a given element or phenomenon to cause harm to the environment or to people

**Vulnerability** - propensity to suffer damages from an event


To explore the difference between risk and hazard, the teacher can show [this](#) video.


**Disastro**  - *un evento che causa gravi danni e il turbamento o lo sconvolgimento del normale corso della vita*

**Rischio**  - *è la possibilità che un fenomeno possa causare danni alle persone e all'ambiente in un determinato periodo di tempo e in una determinata area*

**Pericolo**  - *probabilità che in un determinato luogo si verifichi un evento calamitoso di una determinata intensità entro un determinato periodo di tempo*

**Vulnerabilità**  - *La propensione a subire i danni derivati da un evento*

Per approfondire la differenza tra **rischio**  e

**pericolo** , l'insegnante può mostrare questo video:

## LOOKING FOR VULNERABILITES

In this second step, the focus is on vulnerability in an emergency.

What makes us vulnerable? Vulnerability is the predisposition to be affected or damaged by a disaster. In other words, it indicates **a reduced ability to prepare for, cope with, resist and react to a disaster.**

Factors determining vulnerability can include social, political, economic and environmental factors. The teacher writes on the blackboard an explanation of vulnerability and an example for each of the listed factors. The teacher can expand on the description of the four factors by consulting the document [Vulnerability to Disasters in Europe](#) ([link](#)).

**Social vulnerability:** the social dimension illustrates the conditions of individuals and the population as a whole. These conditions relate to demographics, gender, health, social interactions and education.

For example, a person with limited access to education or with a precarious job who does not understand information may be more vulnerable under hazardous conditions. Moreover, some risks are higher for men and others for women in some societies.

**Political vulnerability:** the political dimension considers the quality of government and the ability of a state to provide a rapid response in an emergency.

For example, states that are poorer or where there are ongoing wars or uprisings have greater difficulty and capacity to intervene in emergency situations to ensure an effective response to the population.

**Economic vulnerability:** the economic dimension takes into account factors related to employment (e.g. GDP per capita, income inequality, etc.), and aspects related to a country's capacity for innovation and development.

For example, countries able to invest in earthquake-resistant buildings will be able to withstand the effects of an earthquake and ensure continuity of economic activities and workers.

**Environmental vulnerability:** The environmental dimension describes the health of the ecosystem and the actions taken by governments to keep it healthy.

For example, in areas where mountain environments are preserved and protected, the probability of having a landslide following heavy rain is lower than in a


mountain area where the ecosystem is altered by man due to deforestation.

## EXPERIENCES OF VULNERABILITY

For each of these vulnerabilities, the teacher asks for examples related to actual events that were experienced directly or indirectly.

A question for food for thought: "*During the Covid 19 pandemic, can you tell us which individuals were most vulnerable, who had the hardest time protecting themselves and why?*"

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Detecting vulnerabilities is the first step in activating responses that can increase the capacity to prevent, predict, cope with and overcome an emergency and thus decrease the value of .