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his report, *The Year of Recurring Disasters: A Review of Natural Disasters in 2012*, examines four topics: disasters in 2012, with a focus on recurring disasters (Chapter 1); the role of regional organizations in disaster risk management (Chapter 2); wildfires (Chapter 3); and the important role of women in disaster risk management (Chapter 4). Here are some of the highlights from this year's review:

- The year of recurring disasters. We refer to 2012 as the 'year of recurring disasters' as several of the year's disasters that had the most of fatalities, economic damages and/or number of people affected were similar to those occurring the previous year (Typhoons Bopha and Washi in the Philippines, Hurricanes Sandy and Irene in the Caribbean/US, and three years of widespread flooding in Pakistan). In the absence of a generally accepted definition, this report defines a recurring disaster as "the recurrence of a single natural hazard in the same geographic region within a one-year period." This report seeks to draw some lessons for humanitarian actors and policy makers from recurring disasters in 2011 and 2012.
- What we learn from recurring disasters. Recurring disasters have severe negative effects on human development by undermining the resilience of affected individuals and communities. Resolving livelihood issues as well as finding durable solutions for those displaced by disasters are core components of successful disaster recovery. The devastation caused by recurring disasters in 2012 also highlights the need for increased commitment and investment in disaster risk reduction. The implementation of sound disaster (and displacement) laws and policies can play an important role in mitigating the negative effects of recurring disasters and can contribute to the development of more resilient societies.
- Statistically, 2012 was an 'average' year. There were no mega-disasters during the year that caused massive loss of life as in 2010 (Haiti earthquake) and 2011 (Great Japan earthquake and tsunami). In comparison with the annual averages over the past decade, fatalities in 2012 were far below average and the amount of economic losses was close to the ten-year average. Data on the number of disasters is mixed, with disaster databases showing both above and below average numbers for 2012. The deadliest disaster of 2012 was Typhoon Bopha/Pablo in the Philippines; the most expensive disaster was Hurricane Sandy in the US and Caribbean; and the disaster affecting the most people was the drought/food crisis in the Sahel region.
- While overall humanitarian funding in 2012 was stable, funding for natural disasters dropped. After several years of mega-disasters and consequent high funding for disaster response, international humanitarian disaster funding dipped to the relatively low level witnessed in 2009. Meanwhile, overall humanitarian funding was fairly stable due to ongoing conflicts and complex emergencies. The

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disaster responses receiving the most humanitarian disaster funding in 2012 were the response to the drought/food crisis in the Sahel and the flood response and post-flood early recovery activities in Pakistan.

- Regional organizations play an increasing and diverse role in disaster risk management. The landscape of regional organizations is complex and diverse, reflecting differences among and within regions. In most regions, governments and other actors see value in working together to prevent disasters and, to a lesser extent, to respond to disasters occurring in the region. In several important cases, international organizations have supported the development of strong regional initiatives. While there are few binding regional instruments in disaster risk management, regional organizations have worked out different mechanisms for encouraging collaboration, including frameworks for disaster risk reduction, regional military protocols, joint training exercises and regional insurance schemes.
- Wildfires are more often hazards than disasters. While globally there are hundreds of thousands of wildfires each year, most of them are not considered "disasters" as they do not threaten human health, lives or livelihoods. There were 156 wildfire disasters reported over the 2000-2011 period, making up only 3.39 percent of all natural disasters recorded during that period. The 780 fatalities from wildfires recorded by the international disaster database make up 0.07 percent of global disaster fatalities during the period.
 - The growth of urban sprawl and climate change are major factors in changing wildfire risks. Because of an array of factors more and more people are living in areas where residential housing borders undeveloped wildland vegetation, called the wildland-urban interface. In the US, for example, this has led to a massive increase in the number of houses destroyed every year by wildfires as well as a massive rise in fire suppression costs.
 - A hotter and drier climate in many parts of the world, fuelled by global warming, will lead to more favorable conditions for wildfires, while increased precipitation or desertification in other regions might actually decrease wildfire risk. On the other side of the equation, forests and wildlands absorb and store major quantities of carbon dioxide. Loss of forest and forest degradation in which wildfires play an important role contributes as much as 17 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions each year, a quantity higher than emissions from global transport. Burning forests are thus major drivers of climate change.
- A gender-sensitive approach to disaster risk management is a smart approach. The gender dimensions of natural disasters have gained increasing recognition at the international level since the 1990s. It is now generally recognized that women are typically at greater risk from natural hazards than men, particularly in low-income countries and among the poor, and that they often also face particular protection risks in the period following a disaster. Indeed, natural disasters and climate change often exacerbate existing inequalities and discrimination, including those that are gender-based, and can lead to new forms of discrimination. However,

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it is also important to recognize that women play significant roles in all stages of disaster and climate risk management; they are often at the frontline as responders and bring valuable resources to risk reduction and recovery efforts. Yet, in practice, disaster risk management policies and processes throughout the world largely exclude the important work already being done by women. We argue that the effective and meaningful participation of women in policy-making, programming and implementation is crucial to increasing the success of disaster risk management in all phases. This participation, combined with timely and adequate attention to the gendered aspects of disasters and climate change, can in turn lead to greater gender equality and strengthen the resilience of entire communities.