

# Taking Stock

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**E**very December I find myself taking stock of the year gone by. Has my work made a difference? Have I helped my fellow man? What remains to be done for the most vulnerable among us?

Our final issue of 2016 brings new insights—some hopeful, some alarming—to help answer these questions for those of us who work to improve disaster preparedness and response. The insights focus on 3 areas: vulnerability, responder resilience, and disaster preparedness.

### **VULNERABILITY**

Time after time we see that disasters disproportionately impact predictable groups: women, children, the poor, the isolated. In an article on the effects of Atlantic hurricanes, Dresser et al<sup>1</sup> again show the increased vulnerability of the poorest nations to the impact of natural disasters. From Syria, Elsafti et al<sup>2</sup> bring us an alarming report on the state of children. One in 5 children in war-torn Syria has been displaced, and 1 in 20 has lost a parent during the war. Most of these children have no access to pediatric medical care or education, and many lack necessities such as clean water, healthy food, and sanitation facilities. In nearby Turkey, Ekmekci<sup>3</sup> reports on the work to strengthen early warning and response systems to comply with European standards on cross-border health threats.

### **RESPONDER RESILIENCE**

There is both good news and bad news about the effects of disasters on responders. Nissen and Heir<sup>4</sup> bring hopeful news from Norway that people in a workplace previously targeted in a terrorist attack now feel safer after efforts to better prepare workers and secure their workplace. In contrast, Kawashima et al<sup>5</sup> report that 4 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake post-traumatic stress disorder and burnout remain a problem in responders with high stress indicators right after the earthquake.

### **PREPAREDNESS**

Several innovations are proposed in disaster preparedness. Khorram-Manesh et al<sup>6</sup> propose a new approach to educating disaster managers to better meet today's disaster response challenges. In Los Angeles, Cha et al<sup>7</sup> show that community coalitions face challenges in creating partnerships for community disaster resilience, but do better with education, self-sufficiency, and civil engagement. Finally, Canyon et al<sup>8</sup> recommend a community resilience model for response to climate-mediated disease threats in Hawaii.

As 2016 draws to a close, this issue serves as a call to action to everyone in the disaster response community. We will remember the most vulnerable, support our fellow responders, and ensure that future disaster survivors receive the help they need. Together we can make 2017 a safer and better one for disaster survivors around the world.

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### Cover Images:

In the article, “Children in the Syrian Civil War: the Familial, Educational, and Public Health Impact of Ongoing Violence,” authors Abdallah Mohamed Elsafti, Gerlant van Berlaer, Mohammad Al Safadi, Michel Debacker, Ronald Buyl, Atef Redwan and Ives Hubloue document the familial, educational, and public health state of Syrian children after several years of conflict. Pages 874–882. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2016.165>.



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