



World Health  
Organization

WHO Mediterranean Centre  
for Health Risk Reduction

CONTRIBUTING TO  
**BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES**  
FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

The WHO Mediterranean Centre for Health Risk Reduction (WMC) was established in 1997 through a memorandum of understanding between the Government of Tunisia and the World Health Organization (WHO). Promoting its inter-regional dimension, the Centre's scope of work has since expanded to build public health capacity in Africa, the Middle East and Europe in order to reduce risks arising from vulnerabilities

and to better prepare the response to and recovery from emergencies.

WMC is a service provider to Member States, WHO, the Global Health Cluster and health sector partners. Through its established common technical platform the Centre aims to build institutional and human capacity for public health; with the ultimate objective of improving the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations.



#### Main tracks at the Centre:

Working with a range of partners WMC's programmes are designed to:

- facilitate the development and implementation of learning programmes and activities including distance learning for public health
- organize conferences, congresses and workshops on a variety of health and non-health subjects
- analyse and map vulnerabilities and risks related to disasters
- coordinate and promote operational research for health and humanitarian action
- manage information through its knowledge gateway
- develop and promote tools for health risk communication, social mobilization and community capacity strengthening.

WMC's primary concern is capacity-building for disaster preparedness and response within the health sector. By systematically addressing gaps and needs at the field level, WMC aims to:

- help countries and communities at risk strengthen their own resilience and health systems to manage tomorrow's possible emergency/disaster;
- strengthen the institutional response capacities of organizations such as WHO, Global Health Cluster partners and humanitarian organizations working for health action in times of crises; and
- ensure that efforts to reduce health risks are in line with the aims and strategies of human security and sustainable health development.

WMC fosters WHO's participation in global disaster risk reduction initiatives based on the system of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) but also creates synergies at intergovernmental levels to address the importance of health security, protection, advocacy and promotion of displaced or migratory populations throughout Africa, the Middle East and Europe.



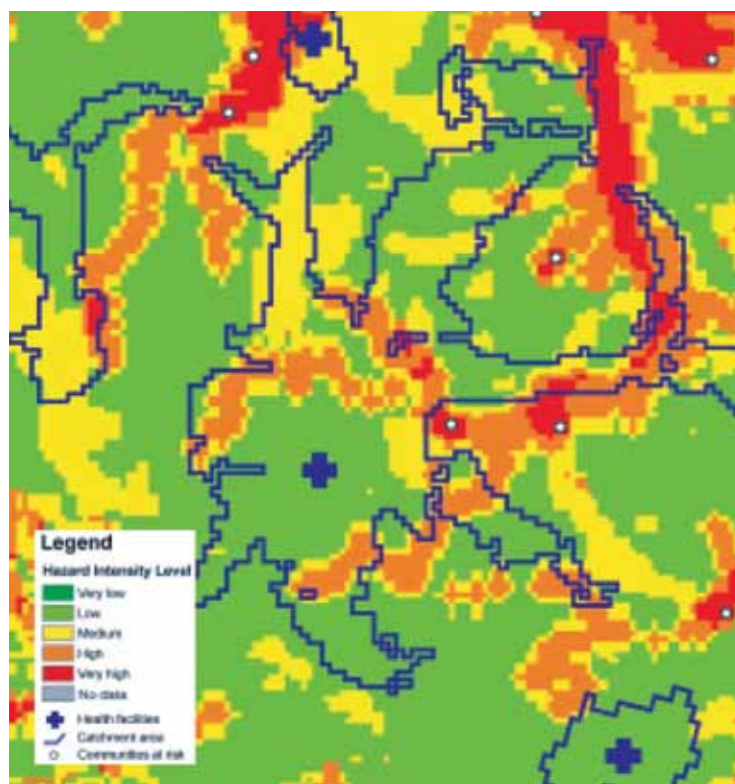
### **Public health capacity-building**

Human capacity development is at the heart of any major public health programme/initiative. The Centre can provide the technical know-how required to design, facilitate and implement learning programmes and activities as well as the necessary facilities and administrative and logistic support needed to organize cost-effective events such as training courses, distance learning forums, workshops and consultations.

WMC plays an important convening and facilitating role with its training and learning platform to foster institutional linkages between

academia and experienced international specialists and trainers in order to develop curricula, distance learning packages, and to conduct courses using adult learning principles and methods.

WMC has an agreement with the Mediterranean Conference Centre in Hammamet, Tunisia to host conferences, meetings and workshops in an environment which foster learning and sharing. A wide range of participants and experts from the African sub-continent, the Middle East, and Europe have already benefited from this service



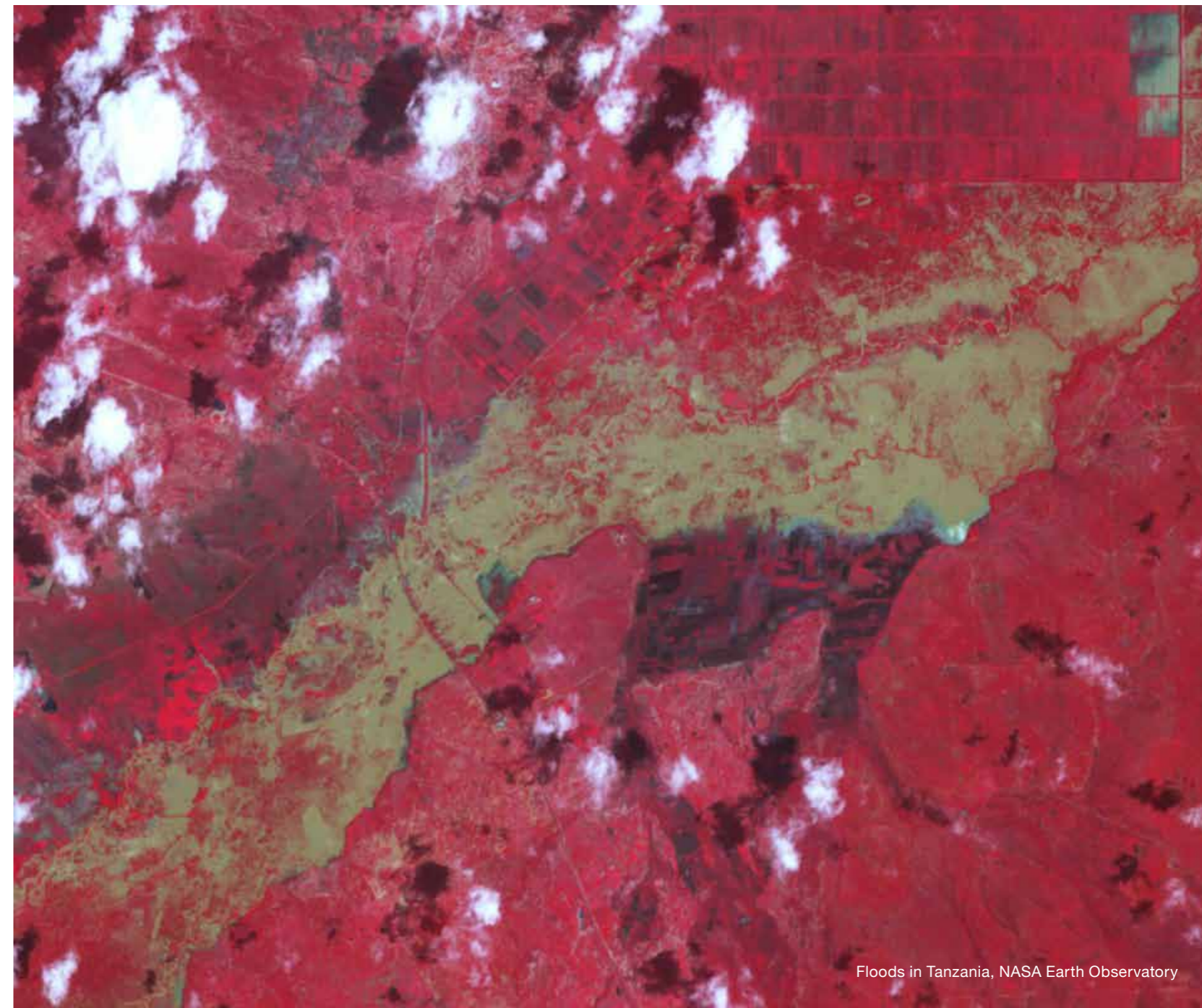
Vulnerability and risk mapping

### Mapping and analysing risk

WMC provides a technical base to analyse vulnerability and risk within health with the objective of supporting countries in developing their own capacity to assess risks and incorporate the results into disaster management programmes for the health sector.

The Vulnerability and Risk Analysis and Mapping (VRAM) programme aims to:

- evaluate countries' technical capacity to assess and analyse hazards, vulnerabilities, capacities and risks;
- support the development of national and local capacity within ministries of health and other partners to enable countries to implement the VRAM process;
- partner with local institutions to conduct and facilitate detailed assessments of potential hazards, associated health vulnerabilities; capacities and risks in countries most at risk;
- develop, document and share methods, protocols and tools for the collection, mapping and analysis of health hazards, vulnerability and risk data and information taking climate changes into account;
- integrate data coming from different sources in a way that it answers countries and WHO's needs and support evidence-based decision-making;
- provide the necessary infrastructure and technical support for countries, WHO and its partners to apply available public health models for the strengthening of their emergency preparedness and response capacities;
- create and maintain a network of institutions working in health hazard, vulnerability, capacity and risk analysis and mapping.



Floods in Tanzania, NASA Earth Observatory

### Knowledge gateway and operational research

In coordination with its partners, WMC contributes to the creation, analysis and sharing of information and knowledge on health risk reduction, emergency preparedness, response and recovery in order to:

- coordinate and conduct operational research as well as define best practices before and after disaster;
- provide web-based online systems for information for action, as well as tools for managing and accessing information related to public health and disaster risk reduction through its clearing house;
- support the strengthening of capacities for knowledge management;
- support monitoring and evaluation of health risk reduction and emergency preparedness and response programmes.

The knowledge gateway is designed to gather and filter relevant information and technical guidance related to health emergency preparedness and response in multiple languages as well as varying formats for easier access and distribution. The gateway will document, assemble and sort case studies and best practices to be made available to the community of emergency preparedness and humanitarian response professionals, in essence building a “one-stop” shop for all relevant information in this area.



### Health Risk communication and social mobilization

WMC has developed capacity and experience through a network of experts and institutions assisting governments in the design and delivery of social mobilization and behaviour change programmes. In order to sustain the impact of such programmes, community resilience, capacities and ownership must be strengthened.

Risk communication is a multidimensional, complex and evolving process of increasing significance for public health protection. It is the means by which public health advice and information is translated

into action and communicated to the public and/or target audience to ensure understanding and awareness of risks and threats to health. WMC makes use of all available media and web based tools (RSS feeds, podcasts, online videos and other networking services) to design and promote messages of public health importance. As risks differ considerably between regions, countries and communities, health messages will be adapted to take into consideration localized social and cultural norms.





**WMC is a service provider to Member States, the whole WHO, the Global Health Cluster and health sector partners, and provides a common technical platform for interested partners in its main areas of work and capacity.**



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