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The Role of Crisis Management in Sustaining Development During Global Emergencies

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Abstract

In recent years, the world has faced many serious problems—such as health emergencies, natural disasters, wars, and economic crises—that have slowed down progress toward global goals like ending poverty, improving education and healthcare, and protecting the environment. This study looks at how managing such crises in a smart and organized way can actually help countries continue developing, even during tough times.

The research is based on information gathered from books, reports, and studies by various organizations. It shows that old ways of handling emergencies—where decisions are made only by those at the top—often don't work well when problems affect many areas at once. Instead, better results come from approaches that include the use of new technologies like artificial intelligence, local wisdom and traditions, practical training in schools, and involvement of communities in decision-making.

The study suggests many useful actions, such as teaching crisis management as a subject in schools and colleges, promoting multiple skills for earning, improving local healthcare and emergency systems, and giving more leadership roles to women and youth. It also stresses the importance of working together with other countries and using digital tools to respond faster during emergencies.

In short, the research says that crisis management should not be treated as something that happens only after a problem starts. Instead, it should be part of everyday planning and development. If governments, schools, and communities work together and prepare in advance, we can not only bounce back from disasters but also build stronger and fairer societies. This kind of preparation is very important if we want to achieve global development goals by the year 2030.

Keywords: *Crisis management, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Global emergencies, Climate resilience, Economic recovery, Community participation, Digital infrastructure, Artificial intelligence, Disaster preparedness, Resilient governance.*

Introduction

Since 2020, the world has encountered a series of unprecedented challenges that have tested the resilience of public health systems, economies, and societies. From widespread health emergencies and climate-induced disasters to armed conflicts and economic disruptions, these crises have hindered progress toward achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are targeted for accomplishment by 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

This decade is marked not only by natural disasters—such as floods, droughts, and global health emergencies—but also by human-made crises including geopolitical tensions, social unrest, and financial instability. These disruptions have slowed or reversed gains in poverty reduction, education, gender equality, and environmental protection. The urgency to meet the 2030 agenda, therefore, is now paired with the equally critical need to **build resilient systems** capable of withstanding and recovering from such shocks (UNDP, 2020).

One of the most defining global emergencies emerged in late 2019, quickly escalating into a worldwide disruption by early 2020. In India, the outbreak led to a national lockdown, exposing socio-economic vulnerabilities and impacting sectors such as tourism, education, aviation, and informal employment (Chaudhary et al., 2021). The International Labour Organization reported that over **2.7 billion** workers globally were affected by full or partial workplace closures during the crisis (ILO, 2020).

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In light of these developments, it is evident that **achieving sustainable development by 2030** will require more than policy planning—it will demand proactive **crisis management**, adaptive governance, and strong coordination across sectors. Integrating resilience strategies into development plans is essential for protecting human well-being, ecosystems, and inclusive economic growth in the face of recurring and overlapping global emergencies.

What is Crisis Management?

"Crisis management is the application of strategies designed to help an organization deal with a sudden and significant negative event. A crisis can occur as a result of an unpredictable event or as an unforeseeable consequence of some event that had been considered a potential risk."(Hošková-Mayerová, 2016)

Effective Crisis management helps to mitigate the threats associated with the crisis. The most important concern in a crisis is public safety. Basically, crisis management is designed to protect the society & its stakeholders from threats. Neglecting public safety significantly worsens the impact of a crisis.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development means using our resources wisely so that we can meet our needs today without harming the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It looks at the bigger picture by focusing on different aspects of life—like education, health, clean water, enough food, fair income, awareness, and strong leadership. This approach helps make sure that everyone benefits from growth, not just a few, and that we take care of the environment at the same time.

However, progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as outlined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has faced significant setbacks in recent years due to global crises.

Impact of Global Crisis on Sustainable Development Goals

Large-scale disruptions such as global health emergencies and their cascading socio-economic effects have continued to impede progress toward several key SDGs—particularly **No Poverty (Goal 1), Zero Hunger (Goal 2), Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8), Good Health and Well-being (Goal 3), and Quality Education (Goal 4)**.

Recent Unemployment Trends in India

- In **fiscal year 2023–24**, India's unemployment rate rose to approximately **8.0%**, with nearly **37 million people** actively seeking work during that period—marking the first time since the 2020–21 crisis that the rate again breached 8% cmie.com.
  Private surveys, such as from **CMIE**, reported unemployment reaching about **8%** during the same timeframe, compared to official government estimates around **4.9% to 5.6%**, highlighting significant discrepancies due to methodological differences and undercounting informal labor
  Reuters+1The Times of India+1.

- A recent **Reuters poll of economists** suggested the true rate of unemployment may be **nearly twice** the officially reported figure—implying actual unemployment could be around **10% or higher** Reuters+1Reuters+1. Further data reveals labor markets experienced contraction in early **2025**, with the workforce shrinking by **4.2 million in March**, the lowest since late 2024 cmie.com.

Middle-Class and Poverty Trends

- In **2020**, about **32 million Indians** were pushed out of the middle-income category, and an estimated **75 million people were driven below the poverty line** orfonline.org+4Reuters+4aljazeera.com+4.
  While these were severe shocks during the pandemic, **more recent aggregate figures on middle-class contraction and rising poverty beyond 2020 have not been released** by sources like Pew or CMIE.
  Implications for Sustainable Development
- Persistently high unemployment in **2023–24 (~8%)**, and potential underreported joblessness reaching **10% or more**, indicates that achieving **Goal 1 (No Poverty)** and **Goal 8 (Decent Work)** remains a serious challenge. Even though the acute middle-class losses were recorded in 2020, ongoing **labor market vulnerabilities** and **underemployment** threaten longer-term resilience, including progress on **Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 3 (Health), and Goal 4 (Education)**.The data reflects both the **fragility of recovery** and the **incomplete restoration** of economic activity—demonstrating the need for more robust, inclusive and targeted crisis-response policies aligned with sustainable development agendas.

Review of Literature

1. ***Understanding Sustainable Development: Meaning & Importance***
   The foundation of sustainable development lies in balancing environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Bal et al. (2020) in *MDPI Sustainability* explore the ecological implications of global consumption patterns and land use, pointing to the unsustainable trajectory of biodiversity loss. Their modeling suggests that unchecked economic growth driven by consumerism poses severe long-term risks to planetary health. Complementing this, the Earth Commission's report (2024), summarized in *The Guardian*, highlights how systemic inequalities—particularly in resource access—undermine collective sustainable development goals (SDGs). The report argues for policies integrating social justice with environmental constraints to prevent tipping points and urges governments to prioritize distributive justice in climate and development strategies (The Guardian, 2024).

These studies reinforce the argument that sustainable development must not be understood merely as a technocratic framework but as an ethical imperative demanding systemic reform. The importance of aligning consumption, production, and governance with planetary boundaries is central to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNDP, 2023).

2. ***Defining 'Crisis': Conceptual Frameworks***

The definition of "crisis" has evolved through decades of theoretical refinement. Hermann (1972) originally conceptualized crises as situations involving a high threat, short decision time, and surprise. Rosenthal & Kouzmin (1997) extended this by emphasizing the role of public administration in navigating complex emergencies. Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2003) advanced the discourse by defining crises as non-routine, high-stakes disruptions that endanger institutional legitimacy and public safety.

These frameworks inform how scholars and policymakers differentiate between chronic risks and acute disruptions. For instance, climate change is often seen as a "creeping crisis," while the COVID-19 pandemic exemplified a "sudden shock" crisis. Mitroff's later synthesis emphasized crisis typologies—natural, technological, and hybrid—and the importance of an integrated response mechanism (ResearchGate, 2020). These insights are crucial for designing anticipatory frameworks for global emergencies.

3. ***Series of Global Crises (Jan 2020–Jun 2025)***

The last five years have witnessed cascading and compounding global crises—collectively termed "polycrises" by economic and policy analysts. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed unprecedented health, economic, and social shocks. According to *MDPI* (2021), human resource systems faced severe strain, prompting mass digitization, mental health crises, and layoffs.

In 2023–24, geopolitical tensions, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Taiwan Strait instability, further destabilized global supply chains and energy markets. In mid-2024, climate-induced disasters, including severe droughts in East Africa and extreme flooding in Europe and India, intensified food insecurity and forced displacement. *The Guardian* (2025) reports that these climate shocks significantly raised food prices, exacerbating poverty among the world's poorest.

These overlapping crises reveal the fragility of global systems and challenge linear development planning. They show that sustainable development cannot be detached from global health, geopolitical stability, and climate resilience.

4. ***Socio-economic & Environmental Impacts of Global Crises***

The pandemic alone led to massive socio-economic losses and temporary environmental gains. A *PMC* (2020) study reports an initial 17% drop in global CO_2 emissions in early 2020 due to lockdowns, although these rebounded quickly. Unemployment spiked, informal labor markets collapsed, and gender inequality deepened, particularly in developing economies.

A Financial Times (2024) review of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report estimated biodiversity-related economic losses of $10–25 trillion annually. The degradation of ecosystems reduces food security and raises exposure to zoonotic diseases, illustrating how environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities are deeply intertwined.

Furthermore, education disruptions and mental health challenges among youth, especially in low-income communities, threaten long-term human capital development. These impacts highlight the need for crisis-resilient education, universal healthcare, and green economic restructuring.

5. ***Crisis Management Frameworks & Measures***

Crisis management has evolved from reactive, militarized approaches to proactive, multi-stakeholder strategies. Alshoubaki (2020) reviews theoretical models emphasizing "risk society" theory, which positions modernity itself as a generator of crises through technological and ecological disruption. His literature synthesis underlines the importance of capacity building and inter-agency coordination in crisis governance (Inderscience, 2020).

A more recent *ResearchGate* (2021) literature review integrates models of anticipation, preparedness, response, and learning. It highlights the need for agile systems that detect early warning signals, implement adaptive protocols, and institutionalize post-crisis reflection to avoid recurrence. Widiantoro and Shahadan (2024), in their systematic review, identify leadership agility, digital integration, and multi-scalar coordination as central to 21st-century crisis management.

For example, mobile-based early warning systems and decentralized healthcare triage mechanisms were successfully deployed in Southeast Asia and Africa during COVID and climate emergencies. The emphasis is increasingly shifting toward "resilience by design," where systems are built to absorb and adapt rather than merely resist disruption.

Synthesis and Implications

Taken together, the literature establishes clear links between global crises, developmental vulnerabilities, and crisis response architecture. The 2030 SDGs framework remains a guiding roadmap, but the pathway to its realization requires stronger alignment with crisis foresight and preparedness. The reviewed literature affirms that:

- Sustainable development is fragile without resilience.
- Crisis is not an exception but an accelerating norm.
- Multi-level, integrated, and proactive crisis management is essential.

The review also highlights an epistemic shift from deterministic planning to adaptive governance. Scholars and practitioners increasingly advocate for participatory planning, anticipatory intelligence, and cross-sectoral partnerships to build societies that are both sustainable and crisis-resilient.

The synthesis of the reviewed literature underscores that sustainable development and crisis management are not parallel concerns but deeply intertwined imperatives. The recent series of global crises—from pandemics to geopolitical conflicts to

climate extremes—demonstrate the inadequacy of siloed, reactive governance models. A transition to proactive, inclusive, and resilient systems is no longer optional but essential.

Future development strategies must embed crisis anticipation into their frameworks, and global cooperation must prioritize equity and local capacity. Innovation, education, and institutional agility emerge as crucial drivers for building societies that can not only withstand but also evolve from crisis events. The integrated approach presented across the studies provides a strong foundation for rethinking development in the face of a rapidly changing global risk landscape.

Objectives

1. To examine the impact of global emergencies on the progress of key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. To identify measures for crisis management that can support the achievement of SDGs at local, national, and global levels.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and qualitative research design, aimed at exploring the importance and need for crisis management in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The research is entirely based on secondary data, which provides insights into existing patterns, challenges, and best practices concerning crisis response and sustainable development across global contexts.

A qualitative approach is well-suited to this research, as it allows for in-depth exploration of concepts, theories, and narratives found in literature, rather than relying on numerical or statistical analysis (Creswell, 2013). The descriptive nature of the study facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how global emergencies impact SDGs and how strategic crisis management can be aligned with long-term development goals.

The data for this study has been gathered through an extensive review of secondary sources, including: Peer-reviewed journals, Research articles and institutional reports (e.g., from the UNDP, World Bank, and ILO), Government publications, Official websites (e.g., UN SDGs, CMIE, WHO), Public policy papers and think tank analyses. The selection of sources has been guided by the relevance, credibility, and recentness of the data, primarily focusing on developments post-2020. Thematic content analysis has been applied to interpret and synthesize findings from various sources in order to highlight: The direct and indirect effects of crises on SDGs, The gaps in existing crisis response mechanisms, Proposed frameworks and innovative strategies for future resilience.By analyzing the secondary literature, the study aims to bridge the gap between crisis management theories and sustainable development practices, providing a foundation for policy implications and further empirical research.

Findings

Impact of Global Emergencies on Sustainable Development Goals and Strategic Measures for Effective Crisis Management

Global Emergency / Crisis	Affected SDGs	Effects of Crisis	Crisis Management Measures
COVID-19 Pandemic (2020–2022)	SDG 1,2,3,4,8,10,16	A) Massive job losses; food insecurity and child malnutrition; learning loss and educational discontinuity. EOFA estimates ~132M additional undernourished by end-2020 (MDPI, Wikipedia). B) Lockdowns and school closures disrupted learning and health gains globally (House of Lords Library).	A)Universal healthcare & shock-responsive social protection (e.g. direct cash transfers; UBI) (United Nations). B)Digital health (telemedicine, AI surveillance) and remote education platforms (arXiv). C)Green recovery packages (renewables, circular economy) to create jobs and lower emissions (SpringerLink).
Food Price & Climate Crises (2022–2024)	SDG 2,3,13	A)Rising food prices driven by climate events pushing millions into hunger; 281M acutely food insecure in 2023 (Le Monde.fr). B)Nutrition crisis and stagnating child health gains (Financial Times).	A)Invest in climate-resilient agriculture (drought-resistant crops, local food systems). B)Ecosystem-based adaptation and nature-based disaster risk reduction integrated into development plans (United Nations). C)Nutrition assistance funds; structural reform and debt relief to boost resilience (TIME).
Multiple Environmental & Climate Crises (2020–2025)	SDG 11,12,13,14,15	A)Triple planetary crisis: biodiversity loss, pollution, climate change intensifying—economic and health disruptions globally (Wikipedia). B)UNSDG report (2025): only ~35% of SDG targets are on track; 18% regressing (United Nations).	A)Disaster risk reduction aligned with Sendai Framework (investigation, resilience planning, early warning) (Wikipedia, Wikipedia). Integrate climate-insurance and risk financing to buffer against shocks (1 % insurance coverage improves SDG attainment by ~6 %) (United Nations). B)Promote circular economy and sustainable consumption to decouple growth from

			materials use (United Nations, SpringerLink).
Economic & Geopolitical Instability ("Polycrisis") (2023–2025)	SDG 8,10,16,17	A)Compound crises (inflation, debt, conflict, migration) have stalled SDG progress and elevated inequality (Reuters). B)Declining aid budgets and lagging investment in vulnerable nations, especially for digital infrastructure (Reuters).	A)Global financial cooperation: debt restructuring, innovative finance, multilateral aid aligned to SDGs (UNFSS, United Nations). B)Strengthen cross-sectoral partnerships, data-driven stakeholder collaboration and digital platforms for inclusive development strategies (press.un.org, arXiv, United Nations).

Conclusion

In recent years, the world has faced many serious emergencies like health pandemics (such as COVID-19), economic slowdowns, and natural disasters caused by climate change. These problems have slowed down progress toward important global goals set by the United Nations, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals include ending poverty (SDG 1), stopping hunger (SDG 2), providing good healthcare (SDG 3), giving everyone access to quality education (SDG 4), and ensuring decent jobs and economic growth (SDG 8).

In India, just like in many other developing countries, these crises have made things worse. Unemployment has gone up sharply, with jobless rates crossing 8% in 2023–24, and millions of people were pushed into poverty—especially during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. These numbers show how fragile development progress can be when big disruptions happen.

To deal with such crises and keep moving toward the SDGs, good planning and crisis management are essential. This means we need to:

- Improve safety nets like pensions and support programs for the poor,
- Build better digital and climate-proof infrastructure,
- Make sure education and healthcare are available for everyone,
- Create more environment-friendly jobs.

Also, it's important for local governments and institutions to be ready for future emergencies by including crisis planning in their everyday work.

This study—based on analysis of expert opinions and reports—confirms that we cannot treat sustainable development and crisis management as separate things. They must go together. To protect people and ensure a better future, we need smart, fair, and forward-looking policies that can help everyone recover and thrive, even during tough times.

Recommendations

In recent years, the world has faced major problems like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate disasters, and economic struggles. These have slowed down progress on important global goals like ending poverty, improving healthcare, and ensuring quality education. To protect and strengthen our progress, we need to be better prepared for future crises. This means planning ahead, thinking in many directions, and working together at all levels—locally, nationally, and globally.

To begin with, we must **teach students about crisis management** in schools and colleges. This means including topics like emergency response, decision-making during disasters, and mental health care in the classroom. We also need **practical learning**, like mock drills, expert talks, and real-life simulations, so that students and ordinary citizens know what to do when an emergency happens.

i. Indigenous Multi-Skill Systems

India has a long tradition of communities helping each other through different skills—like the **Bara-Balutedar system**, where each person had a useful role. We can **revive and modernize** such systems by blending **traditional knowledge** with **modern skills**, like digital literacy and vocational training. This way, people can have **more than one source of income**, which makes them less vulnerable when a crisis hits.

ii. Global Partnerships to Improve Healthcare

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that our **health systems need to be stronger**. We should improve small clinics in villages, train more health workers, and use mobile health vans in remote areas. By working with **international organizations** like the WHO and UNICEF, we can get **expert support, funding, and technical help**. Also, we must **give more attention to mental health**, which is often ignored during emergencies.

iii. Go Local

During crises, **local groups like panchayats and municipalities** understand their community's needs best. We should give them the **power and resources** to make decisions. Planning should involve the people, using **local data** and simple tools to build solutions that match their needs. At the same time, **climate-friendly practices** like green energy, eco-friendly farming, and clean transportation should be included in all development efforts.

iv. Digital Infrastructure

Countries should build **smart welfare systems** that can automatically help people during tough times. These systems should provide access to **food, healthcare, education, and money**, especially to vulnerable groups like daily-wage earners, migrants, and women. **Digital tools and real-time data** can help reach the right people faster. Special efforts should be made to **empower women and young people** by teaching them digital skills, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

v. Advanced Technology and AI

Technology and **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** can help **predict and manage disasters** better. For example, early warning systems, satellite maps, and AI models can tell us where floods, storms, or disease outbreaks may happen. Local governments should use these tools to act fast and smart. **Sharing open data** and improving cooperation between departments will also increase trust and transparency.

vi. Working Together as a Global Community

Most big emergencies affect more than one country, so it's important that countries **work together**. They should **share ideas, pool resources, and plan jointly**. Groups like SAARC, ASEAN, and the UN can help not just after a disaster, but also in planning ahead through joint drills and sharing knowledge.

To reach the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, we must **stop just reacting to crises** and start **preparing ahead**—in smart, fair, and community-led ways. By combining **modern innovations, local knowledge, empowered communities, and teamwork at all levels**, we can build a future that is safer, more equal, and better prepared for any challenge.

Conclusion

The study reaffirms that sustainable development and crisis management are deeply interconnected and must be pursued in tandem. The recent series of global emergencies—ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic and climate-induced disasters to geopolitical instability—have demonstrated the fragility of developmental gains and the urgent need for proactive, integrated resilience strategies. Achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 requires not only visionary policies but also the embedding of crisis anticipation, preparedness, and adaptive governance into everyday planning. Governments, institutions, and communities must work collaboratively to strengthen social protection systems, invest in climate-resilient and digital infrastructure, ensure equitable access to healthcare and education, and promote environmentally sustainable livelihoods. By combining modern technological innovations, traditional knowledge, community empowerment, and global cooperation, societies can not only recover from crises but also evolve into more equitable, inclusive, and resilient systems.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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