

# **FINISH THE SENTENCE CHALLENGE**

**DISASTER  
DEATHS  
ARE  
AVOIDABLE**



**International Awareness Day for Avoidable Deaths (IAD4AD)**

**2026**

**KALINGA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (KISS), ODISHA, INDIA**



VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS  
  
**SENDAI FRAMEWORK**  
FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 2015-2030

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**About Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN):** ADN is a global-local membership network dedicated to reducing disaster deaths that are avoidable in low- and middle-income countries. ADN is a member of the Sendai Framework's Voluntary Commitment Platform and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Leading Edge Programme Networks and Partnerships Group.

# 1. Introduction

Every year, the International Awareness Day for Avoidable Deaths (IAD4AD) invites global campaigners to pause, reflect and take action on the fact that disaster deaths are avoidable. (DDAA). As part of the global campaign, the Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN) launched the Finish the Sentence Challenge, inviting participants to reflect on the slogan DDAA, using the prompts of 'if', 'because', 'when' and 'due to'. Participants were encouraged to reflect on risk governance, systemic vulnerabilities and the everyday actions that can reduce avoidable mortality. A secondary objective of the campaign is to promote global recognition of the slogan itself. According to UNDRR (2017, p. 8), disaster deaths refer to “the number of people who died during the disaster, or directly after, as a direct result of the hazardous event.” These deaths may be categorised as direct, indirect, or missing, each offering important insights into the preventability of disaster-related mortality.

## 2. Methodology

On 19 March 2026, 77 sentences were developed by 19 participants at Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Odisha, India. 18 responses were recorded for 'if', 21 responses for 'because', 22 responses were recorded for 'when' and 16 responses were recorded for 'due to'. Two responses were excluded due to illegible handwriting, one 'if' and one 'when'. The Challenge was led by Drs. Ramya Pinnamaneni and Pratap Kumar Jena, with Prof. Nibedita Ray-Bennett as the resource person. The data was transcribed verbatim by Dr. Biswajit Paul and cleaned by Ms. Lauren MacLeod.

## 3. Results

### 1. Disaster deaths are avoidable if...

1. treatment is timely.
2. people are informed, infrastructure is robust and evaluation plans are swiftly put into place.
3. the government implement a program for space and people who live in the disaster zone or risk zone.
4. people are aware of risks and safety measures.
5. the government ensures strict safety standards, standard operating procedures and its proper coordination.
6. people are informed and trained; systems are proactive.
7. we get early warning follow proper steps and get prepared.
8. we shift our focus from reactor relief to long term preparedness and mitigation.
9. government and citizens prioritize disaster risk reduction and invest in public safety education.

10. proper planning, risk assessment, public awareness and rapid response mechanisms are in place.
11. more awareness is spread among people; correct survey is done and ensured the policy and treatment accordingly.
12. we have a well communicated and trained bomb threat management team in the hospital; we eventually get to buy lots of extra time for mobilising the whole population and avoid panic and trapped.
13. strong disaster management system exists, like resilient infrastructure, coordinated health system and strong health services.
14. quick response and coordination are ensured during disasters.
15. people are knowledgeable and they know what to do.
16. governments ensure proper planning and timely action
17. immediate attention is provided with cooperation of all ground level stakeholders involved in disaster management.

## 2. Disaster deaths are avoidable because...

1. it is not natural and due to factors such as old age or natural accidents, it is neither incurable like cancer last stage or any fatal disease. This can be predicted and cured being aware of repercussions and symptoms.
2. of adequate preparation and prompt response prevent disaster related mortality.
3. they are big issues for human well-being and development.
4. community awareness leads to safer response or action.
5. governments can prepare and protect people.
6. it's predictable as it is not natural.
7. they are predictable and become deadly due to lack of preparedness, early warning and timely response, as well as a lack of awareness.
8. they are not accidents; they are missing opportunities to save lives.
9. communities can work together during disasters and rescue team help quickly.
10. they are often the result of human action or inaction rather than the natural event itself.
11. many hazards can be predictable.
12. effective preparedness, early warning systems/ symptoms and timely response can reduce risk and save lives.
13. of the advanced technologies, improved primary health clinics and community health clinics and awareness among the common people.
14. awareness deaths are not fate. They are failures which can be fixed.
15. proper preparedness and response reduce deaths.
16. many risks can be reduced through proper planning and safety measures.
17. of safe infrastructure and early warnings.
18. they result from preventable vulnerabilities, not just natural hazards.
19. it can be predicted by employing technology.

20. everyone is aware about the consequences.
21. like an early warning and use by mistake, lack of knowledge, awareness, or unknown cause that inflict death.

### 3. Disaster deaths are avoidable when...

1. symptoms are identified causes or instance is predicted.
2. governments, communities and individuals collaborate to lower risks and respond effectively.
3. they are predictable and recurring.
4. investment in improving infrastructure is done to withstand hazards.
5. early warning systems are in place.
6. risks are identified and managed effectively.
7. communities are aware, systems are prepared to overcome all the outcomes.
8. communication is clear and fast and government takes preventive steps.
9. early warning systems are in place and communities are trained to proactively with different groups of people and organization come together in a symphony of action.
10. communities have access to early warning systems and clear actionable evacuation plans.
11. in cases of advanced healthcare technologies, and more awareness among common people and the healthcare professionals.
12. there is a well organised, hierarchical, yet two-way defined communication system between the disaster management team and also the population. This proves to have a very effective role in preparedness and mitigation in disaster.
13. early warning and evacuation are effective emergency response.
14. timely evacuation and early warnings are implemented.
15. there is proper preparedness and people are evacuated from high-risk areas.
16. effective preparedness and early warning systems are in place.
17. precautionary measures are undertaken specific to the disaster.
18. people are aware about the first step precaution.
19. facilitation in access, knowledge and training to handle incidents is done.
20. there are a system level awareness and knowledge to local or population and awareness regarding common causes or accidental death. And also, by providing nearest of or facilitate the rough network
21. there are an efficient mechanism and coping capacity of the system, which can provide early prevention or protection measure before the occurrence of disaster and also necessary provisions or procedure after the occurrence of disaster. For example, taking necessary steps or actions after occurrence of a flood, or earthquake or tsunami, by providing quick relief to areas where people suffered, moving them to safe, rescued areas, proper healthcare facilities along with provisions for food and shelter. Rapid relief, rapid dissemination of information about disaster helps in

gathering support from state, country as well as international support or global support.

#### 4. Disaster deaths are avoidable due to...

1. better preparation, better disaster management, and easier access to emergency services.
2. a good organisation and a good system of prevention.
3. coordination between authorities and communities to work together and for better response.
4. proper planning, policies, and training the responders.
5. effective disaster management, rapid response.
6. trained people and evacuation plans.
7. effective disaster risk governance and prioritization of human life in policy making with implementation of strict building codes, and land use regulations.
8. the implementation of resilient infrastructure such as earthquake-proof buildings, effective food defences etc.
9. advancement of technology, better disaster policies and coordinated efforts between authorities and communities.
10. the healthcare facilities, more experienced professionals and also because of advanced technologies.
11. awareness, through early warning and through community action.
12. planning and risk reduction, and community awareness.
13. effective disaster management and healthcare support.
14. rapid emergency response and medical services on time.
15. strong disaster risk reduction system and emergency response system.
16. preparedness of the state for combating such situation.

#### 4. Findings

Across all responses, participants expressed a clear and consistent view that disaster deaths are preventable when risks are understood, systems function effectively, and both governments and communities act proactively. Participants repeatedly emphasised that avoidable mortality hinges on timely treatment, predictive capacity, robust and resilient infrastructure, and well-coordinated preparedness and response mechanisms. The data revealed the perceived importance of early warning systems, communication, and community-level awareness and training, which was seen as essential for enabling rapid evacuation, safe decision-making, and reduced exposure to hazards.

Participants highlighted the role of governance, noting that strict safety standards, enforced building codes, land-use regulation, and coordinated disaster management structures prevent deaths. Many responses pointed to systemic contributors as underlying drivers of

preventable mortality, particularly in high-risk or resource-constrained settings, such as weak disaster governance, inadequate planning, insufficient healthcare capacity, and inequitable access to information and services. Several students framed disaster deaths as failures of preparation, policy, and prioritisation rather than accidents, arguing that vulnerabilities are more deadly than hazards.

Overall, the findings show a shared belief that disaster deaths are avoidable because they are predictable, manageable, and shaped by human decisions. With appropriate policies, long-term investment in preparedness and mitigation, inclusive decision-making, trained responders, and coordinated action across government, communities, and health systems, most disaster-related mortality can be prevented, whether from delayed medical care, structural collapse, exposure, or systemic neglect.