

AJEM BOOK REVIEW

Global assessment report on disaster risk reduction (2009)

**Book Review: Filling the Ark,
Animal Welfare in Disasters
by Leslie Irvine (2009)
Temple University Press**

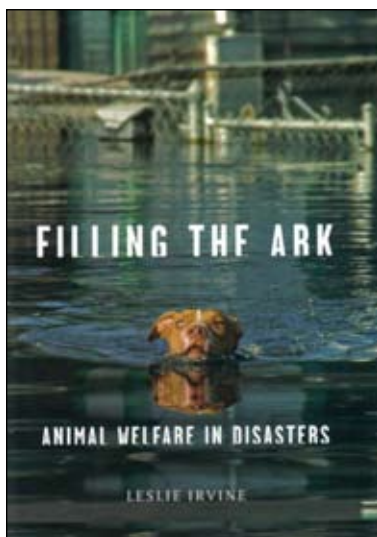
Reviewed by George Seymour

A damaging cyclone, rising flood waters or raging and unpredictable bushfires; all terrifying events for their victims, all the more so when they are trapped in cages. In times of disaster, animals whether caged in a farm or research laboratory, domesticated and reliant upon humans or in the wild, often find themselves helpless to events.

Many of them play a significant role in society, a role that all too often places them in danger from natural disasters. However, in times of disaster they can find their welfare and interests unaccounted for, unplanned for and unprotected.

It is this gap in disaster readiness and response that Leslie Irvine, an Associate Professor at the University of Colorado, seeks to address in her new book *Filling the Ark: Animal Welfare in Disasters*.

Disaster planning must have at its core a concern for the vulnerable. Leaving behind caged animals in the path of fire or floodwaters represents a massive failure in disaster planning and response.



It is often not the natural disaster itself that causes the most harm but the human factor – the factory farms, the research labs or the policies on the acceptance of domestic animals in evacuation plans. Irvine brings to light many examples of where disaster planning and emergency response have been wholly inadequate in protecting the welfare of animals.

The book is a personal one for Irvine who brings her experiences in helping animals in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and other disasters. On the basis of her first hand experience and extensive research she makes recommendations for disaster planning and policy, but her ambitions are larger than this; she makes the case for a larger re-appraisal of our use of animals.

In writing *Filling the Ark*, Irvine poses important questions. She covers the need to ensure that animals are not placed in the path of danger and that when disaster strikes there are comprehensive response plans ready to be actioned. What emerges is a sobering account covering public policy, the practicalities of handling animals in emergencies and animal advocacy.

A central, but unanswerable, question that Irvine seeks to tease out is how societies can treat different animals in starkly differing fashions dependent upon species and/or the use to which they are put by humans. What type of institutional thinking, she questions, could possibly find consistency or logic in trapping and rehabilitating sea otters in the wake of the Exxon Valdez oil spill at a cost of \$80,000 per animal with the bulldozing of live chickens in battery cages following a tornado? Such decision making suggests a mindset towards animals that is not always consistent, rational or compassionate. Irvine's mission is to rectify this.

Filling the Ark provides a consistent and compelling argument on how we could, and should, be doing more through our emergency management practices to ensure the welfare of animals.

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“Risk and poverty in a changing climate”

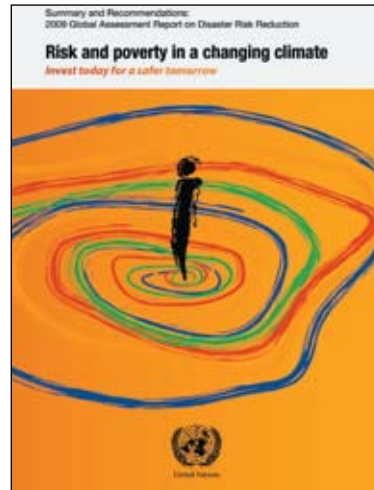
Source(s): United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat (UNISDR)

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The Report is the first biennial global assessment of disaster risk reduction prepared in the context of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). The ISDR, launched in 2000, provides a framework to coordinate actions to address disaster risks at the local, national, regional and international levels. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA), endorsed by 168 UN member states at the World Conference on Disaster



Reduction in Kobe, Japan in 2005, urges all countries to make major efforts to reduce their disaster risk by 2015.

The Report was coordinated by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)

Secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the ProVention Consortium, the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute and a wide range of other ISDR partners.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), UNDP, UNEP, the Government of Norway, the Government of Switzerland, the ProVention Consortium and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) contributed financial resources that enabled the successful development of the Report.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Australian Journal of Emergency Management

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Letters must contain a name, address and daytime phone number of the author. Unsigned letters or those submitted without a phone number will not be considered.

Regular contributors should submit letters on varied subjects. Letters by the same author that reiterate opinions previously expressed may not be published. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit any Letter to the Editor.

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