Enabling Environment Required for Adoption of
Total Disaster Risk Management Approach in Disaster-Prone Countries
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Introduction: ISDR in essence[1]:

–   Basic history: IDNDR (1990-1999), Yokohama Conference (1994), Potsdam Conference on Early Warning (1998), Guayaquil Conference on El Niño (1998), UN GA resolutions (2000 & 2002) establishing & confirming respectively ISDR based on 2 mechanisms: Inter-Agency Secretariat (UN/ISDR) and Task Force for Disaster Reduction (IATF/DR).

–   ISDR's mission is to develop a culture of prevention and build resilient societies and communities by promoting increased awareness of the importance of disaster reduction as an integral component of sustainable development. The objective is the reduction of human, social, economic and environmental losses due to natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters.

–   This mission needs to be undertaken by involving progressively all relevant institutions and experts, in various sectors, that are interested in the subject. It also needs to be based on values and criteria that are developed further below.

–   Main functions of the ISDR Secretariat are to serve as an international clearing-house for exchange of relevant information on the subject and to provide policy and technical advice through its network of experts and focal points. It is to increase public awareness, training and education, to develop a culture of prevention and to facilitate inter-agency collaboration and partnerships

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- The involvement of civil society representatives is essential to ensure the community development purpose of the ISDR. In this regard, NGOs contributed greatly to the work of the IDNDR and some continue to participate actively in ISDR through membership in the IATF/DR or through specific collaboration with the ISDR Secretariat, these are mainly NGOs of an international nature and they include academic and scientific institutions, private sector and professional and expert institutions.

- At present, ISDR Secretariat is working closely with organizations such as IUCN, ICSU, Global Fire Monitoring Centre, Munich Reinsurance, as well as those of a regional nature such as ADRC, ADPC, OAS, AU, etc. In some countries more than others, NGOs are actively involved in the work of national platforms for disaster reduction. This is the case in Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy or the United Kingdom but also in developing countries like Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Philippines, South Africa and some countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Among the NGO community, the academic and scientific institutions play a key role as they are the main sources for development of knowledge in society. Given the extensive and increasing amount of institutions interested in disaster reduction, we are gradually evolving towards a wider forum for consultation, discussion and exchange of information. In this regard, we are envisaging to take advantage of the ten-year review of the Yokohama Conference of 1994, coming up in 2003 and 2004, to convene thematic and regional forums to mobilize and discuss policy and technical guidance on the matter, building specific partnerships and provide specific assistance to organizations working on disaster reduction. Although the personal contact is and will always be essential, we are also planning to develop a substantive interaction by electronic means and to mobilise support and participation in important initiatives in each of the fields where disaster reduction is required.

- In 2003, opportunities to build specific partnerships will be provided by the five-year review of the 1998 Potsdam Conference on Early Warning and the Guayaquil Conference on El Niño, also of 1998. These reviews

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and partnerships are being planned with the assistance of the Governments of Ecuador and Germany, OCHA, UNDP, UNEP, WMO, World Bank and a number of academic, regional and sub-regional entities (CAF, CAN, IADB, IRI of Columbia University, Potsdam research centres, etc.)

Main aspects and issues of disaster reduction

- Disaster reduction aims at enhancing and supporting a wide variety of activities. Some are related to disaster management, others are not. Disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness are intimately related with disaster management and therefore require the active and effective participation of disaster management institutions and experts. However, **vulnerability and risk reduction management go beyond disaster management** and include the tasks of urban, rural and land-use planners, educators, scientists and researchers, psychologists, lawyers, economists, architects, sociologists, engineers, agronomists, health professionals, etc. They are not necessarily related with disaster preparedness, response or recovery needs (see page 21 and 23 of Global Review)

- Specific legislation and policies leading to programmes and projects addressing risk and vulnerability reduction are required. However **risk and vulnerability reduction need to be integrated as essential components of programmes in the fields of combating poverty, addressing climate change or urban sustainable development. These are not the responsibility of disaster or emergency managers,** however they must be fully aware and contribute to them. Other skills and capacities are required.

- The task of reducing risk and vulnerability to natural hazards is of **long-term nature thus needing a progressive approach**, involving gradually interested institutions and connecting short-term objectives and activities with medium and longer-term goals.

- It addresses **all sectors of society as no single sector can do it alone**, government, business, academic, scientific and technical institutions,

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NGOs, CBOs, media, schools, etc., and at all levels, from local to international. Therefore, specific platforms or networks need to be developed to include in a participatory manner, all these sectors, at national as well as local levels.

– Even though community development needs to be at the front of the disaster reduction effort, the human, social, economic and environmental consequences of disasters usually affect the wider society. Generally this is both nationally and globally. Thus it requires **investments that go beyond the amounts required for preparedness, response and recovery surrounding a disaster strike.** They require integrated policies at global as well as national and local levels.

– A current general estimate indicates that most of the investments made in disaster management, go to relief and response activities. Only a very tiny part goes to enhancing prevention and risk reduction. This is mostly in developed countries. It is therefore urgent that a process be set to reverse this trend **by reducing the increasing cost of relief efforts (with the negative dependency consequences that they bring along) and ensure that more resources can be allocated to development needs.**

– This can only be achieved by a **combined effort of humanitarian and development agencies.** This includes in the latter those that invest not only in the overall development, environment and sustainable development projects but also those working on specific sectors, health, agriculture, education, etc. It is also imperative to include risk reduction in their priorities. This will reverse the existing trend in investments in development projects, avoid the continuous repetition of mistakes and reproduction, and sometimes increase the vulnerabilities and risks associated. This could be achieved by starting with a strong partnership between the departments managing humanitarian contributions and those managing investments in development and environment programmes in the bilateral and multilateral donor agencies.

– This need becomes even more acute when we realize that the **expanding**

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urban population, the increase in poverty, the environmental degradation and the expected climate change will only increase the vulnerabilities and thus the intensity and frequency of disasters for many years to come. Two reports launched recently dramatically underline this reality. The UNCTAD report on the Least Developed Countries which shows that poverty and dependency have only increased, and the IFRC World Disasters Report which this year focuses on Reducing Risk and also shows the formidable threats posed by the increasing vulnerabilities to natural hazards. I strongly recommend reading and comparing these two reports with the ISDR Global Review coming out this week.

– It is therefore essential that **while improving and enhancing preparedness, response/relief and recovery/reconstruction/rehabilitation measures, attention be increasingly paid also to the reduction of the vulnerabilities and risks** that are at the heart of the disasters.

– This can only be effective if done in a **concerted and participatory manner aiming at clear and specific long-term objectives, and with a strong political priority** given by communities and local and national authorities.

– Developing an enabling environment for risk management and a culture of prevention aims at **addressing some of the most important obstacles for sustainable development** (ignorance and greed being among the main ones). It aims also at giving **preponderance to values such as respect, tolerance and solidarity over competitiveness, individualism and defensiveness/aggressiveness.** Unfortunately, the increasing liberalization and market orientation of our modern societies are perceived to be rather promoting the latter values and attitudes.

– Therefore, **the most important sector to be addressed is education.** It is in the school curricula as well as in extra-curricular activities that these values and attitudes need to be developed by each society and community. The role of media (cinema, TV, radio, press and the internet) is of course, essential as it also shapes behaviour of individuals and communities.

- **Role of ISDR**: the ISDR was created as an instrument to assist in this process and jointly with partners, the ISDR Secretariat is embarked in a planning process to identify and develop specific long-term objectives with recommendations and guidelines to all sectors in society and at all levels, which we expect to achieve by the year 2004 to coincide with the ten-year review of the Yokohama Conference of 1994.

- Meanwhile, short-term objectives for 2002-2003 that will set the ground for the longer-term process include:

    - Development of an **on-going process to review, measure, assess and monitor disaster reduction initiatives** around the world, starting with the preliminary version of the Global Review published this week, which is the first report on the subject;

    - The **mainstreaming of disaster reduction in main global agendas**, namely: the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August 2002) and its programme of action (see background document on links between disaster reduction and sustainable development which has gradually been improved during the WSSD process). Other main agendas include: the Millennium Road Map, Poverty reduction programmes of World Bank and UNDP, the human settlements-Habitat agenda and the negotiations on climate change and desertification conventions and protocols;

    - The strengthening of the **IATF/DR** to become an increasingly recognized and important forum for discussion and inter-agency collaboration at the international level;

    - The development of **regional and national outreach programmes** jointly with partners; and

    - The strengthening of the **clearinghouse function** to enable the ISDR to become a truly global strategy that all those concerned with

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disaster reduction can use as a platform for cooperation.

Main obstacles to be addressed to enable risk management to become an integral part of sustainable development policies, programmes and projects in countries and communities in disaster prone-areas

- Lack of awareness and ignorance on the relevance of the subject which does not allow for communities to put pressure on political and economic leaders who thus focus their attention on other priorities and the short-term.

- Lack of clear long-term objectives as part of sustainable development that could be agreed upon as an over-arching priority for the nation or community and that would motivate opposing political constituencies in any given society to join efforts above other conflicting differences.

- Incomplete or short-sighted vision of many multilateral and bilateral programmes that fail either to identify specific (quantifiable and measurable) long-term goals or to connect short-term investments with medium and longer-term objectives. A general vision does not substitute for specific long-term objectives and short-term activities do not necessarily build into medium or longer term processes. Often, ill advised and misdirected development practices increase the risk to disasters.

- Competition for resources and protagonism due mostly to ignorance or short-sighted vision (of both recipient and donor agencies). These can only be overcome by developing leadership and strong partnerships among donor and recipient agencies and between humanitarian, development, environment and other sectors. These partnerships would facilitate attracting greater resources; they would allow for visibility for all and at the same time be able to address more effectively the long-term needs. A pilot project could be envisaged in this regard with the aim of providing lessons for a wider programme.

- Lack of understanding that real partnerships go far beyond signing a MoU

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or entering into a formal agreement and require constantly sharing of knowledge and resources, as well as achievements and failures. Partnerships depend on the same basic resource: **people**; and it is people's skills, strengths and shortcomings that either will help to solve a problem or that will create even more problems. Therefore, understanding people as well as their values, attitudes and behaviour, are also essential components of disaster reduction and response strategies and programmes.

– Lack of understanding that partnerships with long-term objectives in this field require appropriate leadership and management and that building a team requires spending time on the team building process in the first place.

Main elements for an enabling environment for reducing risk and vulnerability to natural hazards

(See Chapter 7 of Global Review for more detail)

– Increasing the widespread understanding of risk management, the nature of hazards (hazard assessment) and the vulnerabilities present in individuals and communities (vulnerability assessment).

– Bringing the ecological sphere into disaster risk reduction and understanding environmental degradation.

– Recognizing disaster risk reduction primarily as national and local responsibilities: increasing the political will and the participation of civil society in policy and decision-making and continue developing efforts to decentralize risk management.

– Enhancing policy development and integration, ensuring consistent approaches to common problems, integrating risk management in land-use, urban and rural planning.

- Increasing education, training and awareness along with information networking and research for production of knowledge and technologies.

- Expanding partnerships at national as well as local levels, in particular with the private sector that has much to contribute and to benefit from integrating risk management.

- Development of specific methodologies, preferably addressing risk with a multi-hazard approach.

- Measurement of progress, setting benchmarks or targets and indicators and assessing progress periodically, to extract lessons for improving management and policy-making.

'*Living with Risk, a global review of disaster reduction initiatives*'

Recommended sections with elements for developing an enabling environment for the risk reduction management:

- Chapter 1,
- Chapter 3,
- Chapter 7
- Tables and graphs in pages 21, 23, 44, 150

It is also recommended you read the Foreword, Introduction and Preface.
A good summary was included in the kit prepared for the press.

The Global Review can be found in its entirety on the websites of ISDR: www.unisdr.org and www.eird.org .

It is also available in CD-Rom upon request to the ISDR Secretariat.

A few hard copies are available for those who are interested in providing feedback (comments, amendments or additions) for the preparation of a full version planned for the end of 2002.