



International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Reducing risks of disaster posed by climate change

Who are we?

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction is an umbrella “movement” that aims to more effectively reduce the risk of disasters. Governments, non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, regional organisations, development banks, bilateral donors, academic institutes and the private sector use the ISDR to coordinate their efforts to reduce disaster risks. They share information, establish priorities and common approaches, work together to develop methods and tools, and to advocate for action globally.

The ISDR has a secretariat based in Geneva and New York, and principal regional units in Bangkok, Cairo, Nairobi and Panama. The main role of the ISDR secretariat is to promote and support the implementation of the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* and to support and coordinate the efforts of ISDR system partners to implement risk reduction in their areas of competence. Secretariat activities include advocacy, network and partnership development and information generation and dissemination. The secretariat does not directly implement programmes in countries but it encourages and assists partners to do so. The ISDR system helps to bring all parties to the table and to focus on country needs and coherent approaches, in line with what the UN reform wants to achieve.

How can disaster risk be reduced?

There are many practical ways to reduce the risk of disasters. These include careful assessment of areas where hazards and socio-economic vulnerability combine to produce the greatest risks; public education to help people avoid areas of risk, protect their communities, and know what to do when disaster threatens; building codes tailored to local conditions to ensure resistance to storms; good land use management and flood controls to reduce the levels of flooding in settlements; early warning systems that provide all people with meaningful information, and well-organised public services with the mandate to reduce disaster risks. These are called “disaster risk reduction” measures and are practiced all over the world. Disaster risk reduction is critically important for adapting to the changing climate as climate change will only increase disasters.

The main facts about climate change and disasters

Together with environmental degradation and rapid urban growth, climate change impacts will further aggravate the physical, social and economic vulnerability of millions of people to disasters in many regions, making disasters more devastating than ever before. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is predicting more intense and frequent extreme weather events such as storms, high rainfalls, floods, droughts and heat waves. Coupled with sea level rise, this will lead to more disasters in future – unless prompt preparatory action is taken. 75% of disasters are already related to extreme weather, and climate change is expected to increase the severity and frequency of those kinds of disasters – with hazards such as storms, high rainfalls, floods, droughts and heat waves on the rise, coupled with rising sea levels. From 1995-2004, a total of 2.5 billion people were affected by disasters, with losses of 890,000 dead and costs of US\$ 570 billion (For more information see <http://www.unisdr.org/disaster-statistics/introduction.htm>).

Here are the some of the consequences of the IPCC projections:

- ☞ The rise in temperature will increase the frequency and severity of heat waves: more hot weather will cause more deaths and illness among the elderly and urban poor.
- ☞ Decreased precipitation will lead to more severe and more frequent droughts, hurting the poor who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, especially in Africa.
- ☞ Increased precipitation will trigger floods and mudslides, endangering populations and their assets.
- ☞ Warmer oceans will mean more intense cyclones (typhoons and hurricanes) and storms.
- ☞ Sea level rise will lead to more floods damaging coastal cropland and displacing millions of people from coastal and small island communities.

Who is most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?

- ☛ The poorest countries and poor people in wealthy countries will suffer earlier and most because they have the least means to adapt (no property insurance and little savings, for example) and often must build their houses and live in high-risk areas such as slopes, flood plains and ravines, which are prone to landslides and floods.
- ☛ Developing countries heavily dependent on climate-sensitive sectors, such as agriculture. Climate change is likely to further reduce already low incomes and increase illness and death rates in developing countries.
- ☛ Coastal areas communities will be particularly vulnerable to floods. Worldwide, nearly 200 million people today live in coastal flood zones that are at risk; in South Asia alone, the number exceeds 60 million people. (IPCC)

How can measures to reduce disasters help to adapt to climate change?

The United Nations General Assembly established the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) in 2000 as a global strategy to reduce disaster risks, to promote action, partnerships and to develop necessary information and tools. However disasters continued to grow, and in January 2005, 168 governments met in Kobe, Japan and agreed on a ten year plan of action, the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*, with the goal to substantially reduce disaster risks over that decade.

The Hyogo Framework offers a comprehensive set of priority actions to reduce climate-related risk and vulnerabilities through early warning, education, public awareness, as well as better urban and land use planning measures. It also calls for the integration of risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies.

Here are various actions that will contribute to reducing the disaster risk posed by climate change:

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation
2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning
3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels
4. Reduce the underlying factors
5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels

For more information about the Hyogo Framework for action, please consult the ISDR website: <http://www.unisdr.org>

What is the position of ISDR in the current climate change negotiations?

The ISDR asserts that adaptation must be a fundamental pillar of any post-2012 climate change agreement and that risk reduction and risk management must be core elements of climate change adaptation. It promotes immediate action to implement adaptation and risk reduction in vulnerable countries in the period 2008-2012.

The ISDR also encourages:

- ☛ Making use of the Hyogo Framework for Action to ensure a systematic rather than project-based approach to adaptation
- ☛ Scaling-up the use of existing risk reduction tools
- ☛ Integrating adaptation and risk reduction into development planning in all sectors
- ☛ Improving science capacities and services for risk management in climate-sensitive sectors.

ISDR side events in Bali

Friday 7 December, 1300-1500: ISDR Working Group on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction side event. The discussions will focus on how to include disaster risk reduction in post-2012 regime based on an agreed statement from the ISDR Working Group on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, and with practical experience reported by ISDR system partners.

Saturday 8 and Sunday 9: Development and Adaptation Days. Red Cross is organising a discussion on disaster reduction with the participation of ProVention, ISET and other ISDR partners.

Monday 10 and Tuesday 11: Media workshop organized by ISDR and the Asian Pacific Broadcasting Union. The training will brief 20 journalists about the relevance of disaster risk reduction in adapting to climate change.

For media requests please contact:

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For more information about the ISDR and climate change see: <http://www.unisdr.org/climate-change>

