

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Over the last two decades, more than 1.3 million people and nearly two trillion dollars have been lost to disasters caused by natural hazards.

Disasters compound the effects of poverty and inequity while eroding costly development gains. While disasters can happen anywhere, 85 percent of those exposed to disasters reside in developing countries.

However, investing in disaster preparedness can help mitigate impact, save resources and protect development progress. It is estimated that for every dollar spent reducing disaster risk, seven dollars will be saved from economic losses associated with cleanup and recovery.

UNDP's Approach

Taking advantage of its presence in 177 countries, UNDP has been specifically granted a mandate by the UN General Assembly to undertake operational activities for disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness.

Working under the auspices of the *Hyogo Framework for Action*, which aims to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015, UNDP works with partner agencies, such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to support nationally and locally driven initiatives.

UNDP works with **governments** to build capacity and ensure that laws, policies and institutions are developed that can assess disaster risk, develop early warning systems, and prepare. In **communities**, UNDP helps to raise awareness and develop the skills needed to respond to local threats. At the same time, OCHA supports the UN in emergency preparedness, as well as helps to mobilize and coordinate international humanitarian assistance and strengthen efforts to develop government capacity. The shared goal of these complementary efforts is to ensure that in the event of a disaster, responses are timely, appropriate and effective.

UNDP IN ACTION

Preparing Communities

In **Kyrgyzstan**, UNDP and the Government recently trained 40-rural rescue teams in Osh, Jalalabad and Batken provinces. These teams will serve as first-line responders during the event of a disaster and have undertaken mock drills to speed up response times.



Pakistan search and rescue training, Photo: UNDP Pakistan

In **Malawi**, UNDP is working with the Government to establish village civil protection committees. So far, 50 committees have been set up and trained in both the production of hazard maps and the development of contingency plans. Communities will now be better able to identify local hazards and outline evacuation routes.

In **India**, UNDP has supported an ambitious community-based disaster management programme that spans more than 240 districts across the country. So far, more than 9,000 volunteers have been trained in emergency first aid.

Preparing Governments

In **Yemen**, UNDP has helped the Government establish a Disaster Management Unit, as well as a National Emergency Operation Center. UNDP has also helped set up a national authority, hire and train staff, and provide all necessary equipment. Following this support, a new National Disaster

Management Plan is now in place.

In **Pakistan**, UNDP assisted the Government in establishing a satellite based tsunami early warning system and conduct evacuation drills in the coastal areas of Baluchistan and Sindh. These activities will lead to faster and more efficient response times should a disaster occur.

In the cyclone-prone **Maldives**, UNDP strengthened an early warning system that includes Doppler radar, as well as helped train staff in meteorology. This gives the country the skills and equipment to operate an independent storm warning system.

Key Highlights

- UNDP has helped **25** countries set up **Early Warning Systems** and **58** countries have developed **legal frameworks** to facilitate disaster preparedness;
- To oversee disaster prevention, preparedness and emergency response, UNDP has helped **45** countries set up **national disaster management agencies**, and at least **23** countries have prepared **contingency plans**.

In both **Uzbekistan** and the former Yugoslav Republic of **Macedonia**, UNDP has developed mobile phone applications which detail what to do before, during and after an emergency. This allows users to click on specific locations to follow what is happening during an emergency, as well as access local emergency phone numbers.

Preparing the UN

The UN system prepares for disasters through Inter-Agency Contingency Plans, which allow for coordination and financial resource planning. Directed by OCHA, the plans bring together experts who prepare hypothetical disaster profiles and conduct training exercises.

To ensure rapid response to a catastrophe, UNDP maintains a database of skilled experts who can deploy to disaster zones on short notice. Since 2009, over 100 disaster risk reduction and recovery experts have been deployed to provide earthquake

What we have learned from preparing for disasters

- The engagement of local communities is critical. It is important to follow a participatory approach, involving women and marginalized groups, as well as to empower village leaders to direct disaster management activities;
- Capacity building of government institutions is a continuous process and qualified local experts are rare, even among top decision-makers. Therefore, it is important to build capacity at the national level to support local level preparedness. Projects should address this capacity gap and provide training to the national coordination structure;
- Efficient coordination, between government institutions, NGOs and UN agencies, as well as political support and resource commitments, are vital to long-term success; and
- Mobile phones and social networks have enormous untapped potential for sharing practical knowledge and best practices.

assistance in **Haiti** (2010), flood response support in **Pakistan** (2010) and typhoon-response in the **Philippines** (2012), amongst others.

There is now a growing appreciation of the need to plan for how recovery could be managed *before* disaster strikes. To facilitate *recovery preparedness*, UNDP has assisted authorities in **Bolivia**, **Ecuador** and **Indonesia**, in institutionalizing recovery preparedness and designating appropriate roles and responsibilities for the post-disaster period.



Community risk mapping in Peru. Photo: huairouconnect

Partnerships for Preparedness

In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, in order to better understand the extent of damage and loss, UNDP, the World Bank, the European Commission, and the local Government undertake comprehensive post disaster needs assessments. These assessments are the first step in designing a response and informing subsequent activities. Since 2008, at least 29 of these assessments have been conducted in countries as diverse as **Haiti**, **Indonesia**, **Lao PDR**, **Lesotho**, **Nigeria** and **Samoa**.

Recently, UNDP has partnered with global shipping company Deutsche Post/DHL, to implement the **Get Airports Ready for Disasters** Programme. Airports often serve as communications centers and evacuation shelters during a disaster, and are critical for managing the flow of people and supplies, especially in the case of humanitarian relief. Airports must for example, manage the flow of incoming aid, including an influx of relief specialists and supplies. The programme focuses on training airport staff and officials in emergency logistics and the preparation of contingency plans. So far the programme has been rolled out in **Bangladesh**, **Indonesia**, **Lebanon**, **Nepal** and **Turkey**.

For more information, visit: www.undp.org/cpr

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