

ISDR *Highlights*

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International Strategy
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We welcome your input, ideas and suggestions for future issues, including contributions for the feature article. Please direct all correspondence (including subscription requests) to: isdr@un.org

United Nations Inter-Agency Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR)

Palais des Nations
CH 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Tél: +41 22 9172103 / 762 / 759
Fax: +41 22 9170563
isdr@un.org
www.unisdr.org

UN/ISDR Latin America and the Caribbean

P.O. Box 3745-1000
San José, Costa Rica
Tél: +506 224 1186
Fax: +506 224 7758
eird@eird.org
www.eird.org

UN/ISDR Africa

Block U Room 217
UNEP, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya
Tél: +254 2 62 41 01
Fax: +254 2 62 47 26
ISDR-Africa@unep.org
www.unisdr.org/africa

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)

Recognising that natural hazards can threaten any one of us, ISDR builds on partnerships and takes a global approach to disaster reduction, seeking to involve every individual and every community towards the goals of reducing the loss of lives, the socio-economic setbacks and the environmental damages caused by natural hazards. In order to achieve these goals, ISDR promotes four objectives as tools towards reaching disaster reduction for all:

- Increase public awareness to understand risk, vulnerability and disaster reduction globally
- Obtain commitment from public authorities to implement disaster reduction policies and actions
- Stimulate interdisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships, including the expansion of risk reduction networks
- Improve scientific knowledge about disaster reduction

FEATURE ARTICLE

Landslide Mitigation in Uganda

*By the Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees,
Office of the Prime Minister, Uganda*

"After gardening, my family and I went home to prepare lunch. Some neighbours had joined us making us altogether 13 in the home. Just as I was starting to serve lunch it began raining and I asked one child to go out and untie the goats. No sooner was he out than we heard a loud bang. The boy shouted that the "monster" was coming; actually, the landslide had struck. We scrambled out of the house running in different directions. I ran to the kitchen, picked up my 3-month baby, pulled out some other children, and ran. After the landslide had settled, we went back to find that two of my children had been buried never to be seen again. Five cows, two donkeys, three goats, and one sheep had also been buried (She reminisces and cries). My two other children were dug out of the debris, these survived."

Nambi, landslide victim of the Nanderu village in Buluganya sub-county



Sironko community group

During the last few decades, farmers living on the slopes of Mount Elgon in the Sironko district of Uganda have moved higher and higher up the slopes in search of land for agriculture. In the process, they have cleared the slopes of their natural vegetation leading to environmental problems such as landslides soil erosion, flooding, deformation of the landscape, among others. Landslides in particular have become rampant, with disastrous impacts on communities in Sironko. Characterised by the movement of soil and rock down slope under gravitational influence, landslides result from slope instabilities caused by natural and man induced factors. In recent years, landslides have become a major problem in the mountainous parts of Uganda because of the damage and risk associated with them.

The approach aims at finding long-term solutions to the landslide problems and emphasises disaster prevention rather than responding to landslides as they occur.

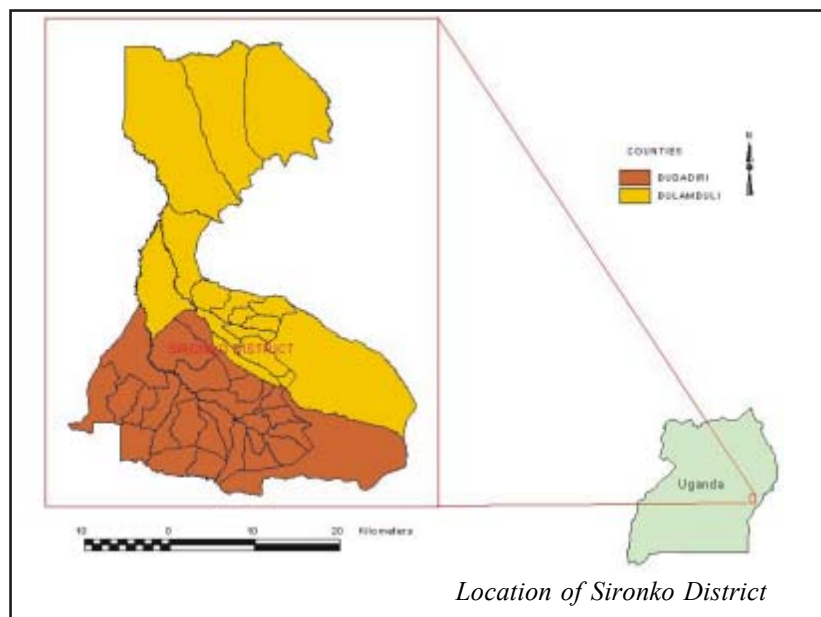
The frequency of landslides has been on the increase, and during the period 1991-2000 there were over 86 landslides. This high number can mainly be attributed to El Niño rains that occurred between 1997 and 1998. The most affected people are women and children who spend most of their time at home and in gardens. Many other people displaced by landslides in Bumasiywa, Buluganya and Zesui migrated into nearby Mt. Elgon National Park, and it is estimated that over 500 families encroached and settled in the park, where they acquired large tracts of free land.

Gazettment of Mt. Elgon as a national park was aimed at protecting the important water catchment and biodiversity found therein, and encroachment on this fragile ecosystem has led to a number of other environmental problems such as loss of biodiversity, exposure of the park to further degradation due to landslides, and interfering with an important water catchment. If measures are not taken to reverse the trend, the area – which covers 11,961 thousand hectares – is likely to be entirely devastated by landslides.

Over 90 per cent of the population on the slopes of Mt. Elgon is dependent on subsistence agriculture for a living. Any activity that damages their crop or hampers agricultural production affects their livelihood. Landslides are therefore a major socio-economic problem in the district and government as a whole. It has led to loss of lives, crops, land productivity, and other property.

Landslides have also led to the degradation of mountain ecosystems, which are important water catchments, and damaged roads, bridges, steel ladders schools, and water sources. For the Ugandan government to mitigate damage of public infrastructure due to landslides yearly, it requires millions of dollars. Consequently, the government has not been able to cope with this problem.

Landslides have caused conflicts among the local people, whose property such as crops and woodlots have slid from one plot to another. Due to small fragmented pieces of land, when landslides occur, there is a tendency for property to move from one plot to another, sometimes with crops intact. This



causes people to claim ownership of such crops, while those whose property is covered by debris also claim ownership of the same.

In the past, successive governments in Uganda have addressed natural disasters as they occur, mainly because disasters have been perceived as natural incidents that cannot be averted. This reactive approach to disaster management has been a major setback to development and has cost the country enormous financial losses. Realising that the landslide problem is increasing, the Government of Uganda with one-year financial and technical support from the German Technical Corporation (GTZ) initiated a new approach to disaster management. The approach aims at finding long-term solutions and emphasises disaster prevention rather than responding to landslides as they occur. An initial study on landslides in the Sironko district aimed at establishing the causes, impact, and possible mitigation measure to landslides, a multidisciplinary approach was used field surveys,

including visits through consultation with district and local authorities, in addition to focus groups openly discussing communities' experiences and possible future solutions. Data analysis using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) identified the main causes of landslides in the area, including human activities.

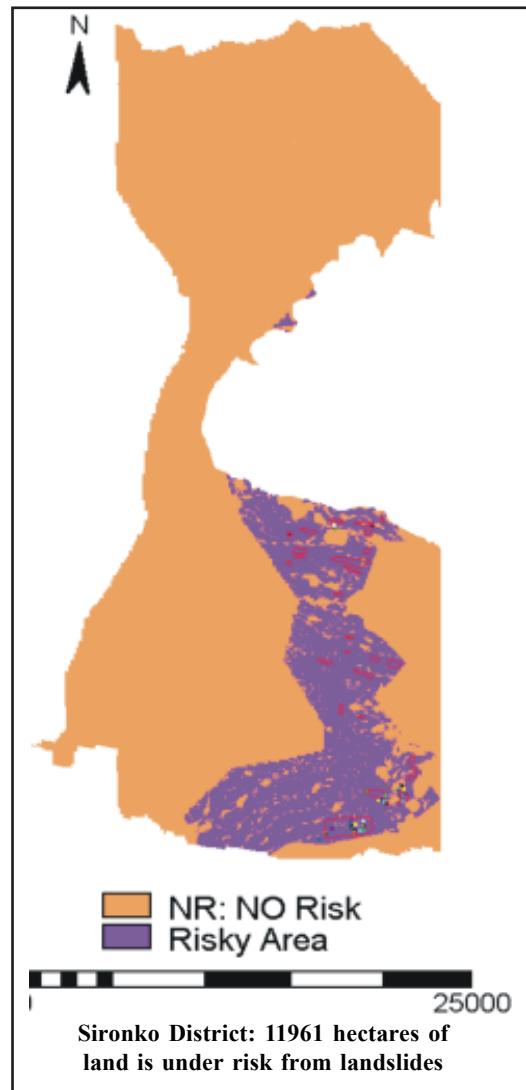
Disaster prevention is one of the most effective approaches to minimise the negative impacts of landslides and should be institutionalised to ensure its sustainability.

The findings were presented to authorities and community members at a two-day workshop, incorporating their views and feedback into the long-term plan for landslide mitigation. The first step was to

raise public awareness and increasing government sensitivity at all levels to ensure that no lives are lost due to landslides during the El Niño period, predicted to occur from October 2002, as well as future rainy seasons. It was noted that many community members were unaware of the fact that landslides effects could be mitigated, believing that landslides were a result of fate. Increased community awareness was achieved through sensitisation meetings in sub-counties and via numerous radio spots and media articles, proving highly successful as during this period, no deaths were recorded due to landslides in Sironko. Some people in landslide-prone areas expressing willingness to relocate to safer areas. However, in many cases voluntary relocation presents a great challenge to communities, as they lack the means for acquiring land and initial settlement and there is no official program in place to support those willing to relocate. Land scarcity and insecurity in the low lying areas also prove relocation to be difficult and slow.

It was also noted that improved sensitization was deemed necessary to make people appreciate the need to plant trees in such areas and also take on tree planting as an income generating activity, just like agriculture. Although many people are eager to implement the mitigation measures, some people with land in the risky areas are not willing to plant trees because of lack of land for agriculture.

Other goals included building capacity in landslide management at all levels, training and equipment of the relevant offices, the integration of landslide issues in the district development plans to ensure that landslide issues are planned for and managed accordingly, promoting better farming methods at community level through the training of farmers in appropriate farming methods for hilly areas, training local leaders on bylaw and ordinance formulation to



enable them formulate appropriate laws for management of hilly and mountainous areas. The final component of the project was the development of a district disaster management plan to ensure planning for effective response to disasters that befell the district.

This project, which is continuing its mid-term and long-term activities with the financial help of the Ugandan government, has brought to light that the concept of disaster prevention is one of the most effective approaches to minimise the negative impacts of landslides and should be institutionalised to ensure its sustainability. This implies that institutions responsible for management of hilly and mountainous areas should plan for the careful use and management of these areas instead of simply responding in the event of a disaster. The long-term solution to the landslide prone areas is reforestation and afforestation but given the high population pressure

and land tenure system, it is important that this is preceded by a lot of sensitisation of the local community and their leaders. There is also a need to formulate enforceable ordinances and bylaws that are specific to a particular area, particularly relevant to district and lower local governments.

For further information on the Sironko project, please contact Ms. Gorretti Kitutu, National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), gkitutu@nemaug.org

We would also like to thank Mr. Martin Ower for his permission to reproduce the information and photographs in this article. Article written by Nahid Bhadelia based on the Sironko Landslide Mitigation Report, by the Ugandan Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, 2003.



Gender mainstreaming in disaster reduction

Soroptimist International is a highly respected non-governmental organization holding consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council. The women's global voice organization has actively promoted support and empowerment for women worldwide, comprising over 100,000 members in 122 countries.

At the Soroptimist International/Europe (SI/Europe) Pan-African Women's Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya (2 May 2003) 270 participants from 53 European and African countries came together to share experiences related to promoting gender equality in Africa. UN/ISDR Africa contributed to the event by highlighting the importance of gender within disaster reduction, noting that African women are often found to live in areas prone to disaster risks due to inadequate access to relevant information in addition to poor socio-economic conditions.

More information on SI can be found at www.sorop.org

African cooperation in disaster risk management

Since its inception in 2001, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been actively involved in addressing issues related to its programme of action for the redevelopment of the African continent. On 23-24 April NEPAD organized a workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa, supported by UN/ISDR Africa promoting the development of a comprehensive programme on disaster management and food security. The World Bank provided funding for the workshop.

NEPAD committed to working with a group of experts to develop specific area projects for implementation by bringing stakeholders together for participatory decision-making, with outcomes evaluated from a national, sub-regional

and international perspective. Regional economic communities will work in conjunction with the NEPAD Secretariat to improve national capacities as part of the 'NEPADising' process.

For further information on NEPAD, please refer to www.nepad.org

Early warning to El Niño in Uganda

As part of the country's El Niño mitigation and preparedness action plan, the Ugandan Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees has set in place preparedness measures and early warning systems throughout various districts warning against imminent rains and storms related to the El Niño phenomenon. Warning messages are broadcasted on national and community radio stations alerting residents at risk, and have proved most successful in reducing the impacts of hazards throughout the country.

In demonstration of his commitment to integrating disaster reduction in public policies, Prime Minister Prof. Apolo Nsibambi took the initiative to establish an Inter-Ministerial El Niño Committee comprising representatives from a range of sectors – including the ministries of finance, defence, health, education, and works, transport and communications – to guide policies designed to mitigate and manage the likely effects of the hazards.

For further information on Uganda's action plan, please contact Mr. Martin Ower, Ugandan Department of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, opmdisaster@infocom.co.ug

Launch of new ISDR *Inform: Disaster Reduction in Africa* magazine

UN/ISDR Africa is pleased to announce the launch of its new regional magazine, *ISDR Inform: Disaster Reduction in Africa*.

To receive a copy of the magazine, please contact UN/ISDR Africa, ISDR-africa@unep.org



Latin America and the Caribbean *update*

Risk reduction commitment in Antofagasta

In May 2003, UNESCO in collaboration with UN/ISDR launched the "Safer Cities Initiative" building on the experiences of the 1998-1999 RADIUS project (during the IDNDR) implemented in Antofagasta.



Training on the application of risk estimation tools to urban planning and sustainable development

The launching workshop was held on 14th May, in Antofagasta, and included both a seminar, with active participation of both scientists and local authorities, as well as training sessions targeted for the city officers in charge of city planning on the application of the RADIUS risk assessment tools and methodologies for sound urban planning.

Antofagasta Mayor Mr. Pedro Araya expressed his complete support for this initiative, affirming his commitment for its continuation in local communities.

Building on national and regional developments already in place for risk assessment and contingency planning, local authorities proved to be extremely interested in participating in the Safer Cities CCT programme, and agreed to use complementary tools such as the UN/ISDR and UNICEF education game 'Riskland' and the University of Chile's mobile laboratories on seismology and earthquake risk, to enhance an existing package offering a wealth of information related to disaster risk reduction, educating children and raising public awareness.

For further information, please contact Elina Palm, UN/ISDR LAC, elina.palm@eird.org

Community learning at Chile's interactive mini-museum

In October 2002, the National Office for Emergency Management of Chile (ONEMI) opened the first mini-museum on hazards and the risks faced in Chile. The interactive museum, located at ONEMI headquarters in Santiago, includes a comprehensive review of the principal hazards of the past decade, in addition to interactive activities such as educative seismic and tsunami simulators that allow children and adults to learn the basic steps to take to reduce risk and vulnerabilities in Chile. Technologies related to disasters provide concrete examples of successful methodologies and tools to assist in reducing their impacts.

For further information on the museum please contact Carmen Fernandez Gibbs, ONEMI, pcivil@onemi.cl

Memorandum of Understanding signed be- tween UN/ISDR and CEPREDENAC

Ms. Elina Palm, UN/ISDR Latin America and the Caribbean (representing UN/ISDR Director Mr. Sálvano Briceño), Mr. Gerónimo Giusto-Robelo and Dr. Elizabeth Cubías, CEPREDENAC



In line with the declaration signed by Central American Presidents at the 1999 high-level meeting on the reduction of vulnerabilities and disaster impacts, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UN/ISDR and the Central American Centre for Coordination for Natural Disaster Prevention (CEPREDENAC) was signed on 22 May 2003, in El Salvador. The MoU represents the commitment of both organizations to work in partnership to promote disaster reduction at both the regional and national levels, especially targeting those groups and sectors most vulnerable in societies.

Further information on the UN/ISDR and CEPREDENAC MoU is available at www.cepredenac.org

Remembering Hurricane Mitch: 5 years later

Hurricane Mitch in 1998 was a disaster that no one in Central America will ever forget. The enormous loss of lives, livelihoods and property completely changed the region's attitude and perceptions towards natural hazards, and five years later various regional actors have taken the initiative to plan a forum entitled Mitch+5 that will take place in late 2003. Mitch+5 aims to provide the opportunity for a review and evaluation of what has occurred in the context of disaster reduction since the hurricane in Central America, assessing whether the vulnerabilities to natural disasters that existed five years ago have since increased or been reduced. The event will involve international organizations, regional institutions, non-governmental organizations and communities to reflect on the lessons learned from the Mitch experience and consider the direction that disaster reduction in the region is taking towards the future.

For further information on Mitch+5, please refer to www.cepredenac.org

Farewell to our respected colleague Paul Bell

It is with great sorrow that we received the news of the loss of Mr. Paul Bell, OFDA-USAID, one of the most generous and forward-looking experts in the field of disaster management. Mr. Bell's dedication to assist developing countries (mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean) to enhance their disaster management capacities has been one of the main features in the advancement of disaster management in the region. His visionary approach contributed greatly to move disaster risk reduction forward within the disaster management community and to identify the need to build bridges with other relevant sectors such as health, environment, development, among others. We had the privilege of working with him on several occasions and benefited greatly from his wise and timely advice. He was indeed a supporter of the ISDR, and we hope that his example, values and attitudes will be continued by his colleagues in San José and Washington.



Space applications for disaster management and prevention

Over 20 European countries and some five international organizations met near Brasov, Romania, for a four day regional workshop on space applications for disaster management and prevention. The event, hosted by Romania's space agency and organized by the UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UN/OOSA) and the European Space Agency (ESA) with support from other partners including UN/ISDR, was the fourth in a series of five regional workshops intended to pave the way to the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III.



The discussions reflected the wide array of space-related capacities and initiatives existing in Europe today, which range from prevention to response tools derived from space-supported tools. The presence of ESA and the European Commission to the event took on special significance in light of the forthcoming accession of several countries to the European Union. In this context the ISDR is regarded as a vital link to global policies and strategies for disaster reduction and a means of coordination among countries in the region, especially for the development of compatible initiatives.

The growing ISDR network in Europe is a tool for added synergy in this and other fields, and the ISDR Secretariat is working with national platforms and focal points throughout the region to include space application components in disaster reduction initiatives.

For further information, please refer to www.oosa.unvienna.org or contact Francesco Pisano, UN/ISDR, pisanof@un.org

Vulnerability in the Euro-Med area

A few days after the strong earthquake that shook Algeria in May 2003 the figures emerging from the media are all but reassuring: over 2,000 lives lost, some 1,000 people still missing and a huge 15,000 homeless. At a time when the international community is stepping up discussions on how to include disaster reduction in sustainable development criteria, and the ISDR community of the Euro-Mediterranean region is focusing on the forthcoming review of the 1994 Yokohama Strategy, the Algeria quake is all too similar to what already happened in Turkey and similar to other developing countries. Sub-standard construction methods – especially evident in public housing – is being pointed at as the main cause of the surge in urban vulnerability that led to the massive toll in both catastrophes.



22 December 1999: 28 dead and 175 injured in north-west

18 August 1994: 172 dead and 288 injured in western region of Mascara

29 October 1989: 30 dead and 400 injured in Tipaza region

10 October 1980: About 3,000 dead and 8,000 injured and in al-Asnam

9 and 16 September 1954: 1,400 dead and 14,000 injured

The problem of urban vulnerability to natural hazards has been raised more and more often in the past years. Within the follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, UN-HABITAT, UNU, ICLEI and UNESCO (among others) are working on specific initiatives to publicise the need to take serious action now to reduce urban risk. In the same vein, the ISDR Secretariat and its partners across the region are consolidating a Euro-

Mediterranean network of national platforms and focal points for



Asian and the Pacific *update*

South Pacific contribution to the Yokohama review

Approximately 90 participants representing 20 countries attended the recent 11th Pacific Disaster Managers Meeting and Communities at Risk Conference held in Sigatoka, Fiji. Prime Minister The Hon. Laisenia Qarase officially opened the Conference, emphasizing the vital role risk management plays in good governance in the region. UN/ISDR Director Salvano Briceño presented the keynote address at the Conference providing an international perspective on the need for a global agenda to address the many complex issues related to disaster reduction, in particular in the context of achieving sustainable development goals. The event represents the Pacific region's contribution in the lead up to the 2nd World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to be held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005. The main recommendations from this meeting included: the development of a community risk management policy for the region; the development of a national disaster management planning and legislation framework; continued support for improvements to response communication and coordination; and continued high level advocacy to support the implementation of Comprehensive Hazard And Risk Management (CHARM).

For information on the results of the Communities at Risk Conference, please

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_11837

