

NEWS

PROVENTION
CONSORTIUM

INSIDE

- ProVention News
- Transfer of Secretariat
- Measuring Mitigation: a methodological review – and a request for assistance
- 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent commits to reducing the risk and impact of disasters
- Launch of ProVention Risk Transfer Initiative in India
- Identification and Analysis of Global Disaster Risk Hotspots
- Applied Research Grants for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Reducing flood risk in Africa: Strengthening community flood resilience through local partnerships in Sudan
- ProVention partner in the spotlight: IFRC
- ECLAC manuals
- Building Safer Cities: The Future of Disaster Risk

The ProVention Consortium is a global partnership of governments, international organisations, academic institutions, the private sector and civil society organisations dedicated to increasing the safety of vulnerable communities and to reducing the impacts of disasters in developing countries.

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ProVention News

ProVention News is the first issue of a newsletter produced by the ProVention Secretariat in Geneva. The quarterly newsletter will inform and update partners and other interested readers on ProVention activities and current project outputs. Since ProVention News is a brief update, readers are directed to the ProVention website for further information. Comments and contributions from ProVention partners are welcome.

Transfer of Secretariat

Following a successful launch and start-up period, the ProVention Consortium Secretariat was transferred in March 2003 from the World Bank's Disaster Management Facility to the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Rotating the Secretariat every few years was envisioned from the outset as a way to expand the reach and impact of ProVention activities, add new perspectives and increase the participation of other organisations in the Consortium.

Hosted by IFRC, ProVention now benefits from the connection with the global network of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies, providing opportunities to link ProVention partners to civil society, support community-oriented initiatives and mobilise grassroots support for disaster reduction. The shift from the World Bank to IFRC also helps to re-enforce the links between disasters and development, joining different international organisations through a collective effort to address the problem of natural disasters and find innovative solutions to managing disaster risk in developing countries.

The Secretariat is responsible for the management and coordination of ProVention activities and serves as the contact hub for all members of the Consortium as well as the broker of new partnerships. Located at the IFRC HQ in Geneva, the Secretariat team is currently comprised of:

- David Peppiatt, Manager
- Bruno Haghebaert, Senior Officer
- Maya Schaerer, Senior Assistant

PROJECTS

Measuring Mitigation: a methodological review – and a request for assistance

Although those working on natural disaster reduction believe that disaster mitigation ‘pays’ – in the broadest sense of the word – there is surprisingly little hard evidence in support of this statement. This is a critical gap in risk management. Many agencies remain reluctant to commit significant funds to risk reduction until it can be proved that it is a cost-effective use of resources.

Planning and appraisal methods used in development and mitigation projects tend to bypass the question. For example, although structural mitigation measures usually undergo cost-benefit (CBA) and related analysis, the costs and benefits of incorporating a wider range of mitigation features into development projects more generally are often ignored. Similarly, environmental impact assessment (EIA) guidelines used in development projects do not require assessment of the potential impact of natural hazards on a project, and so do not identify possible mitigation needs that should be addressed.

Monitoring and evaluation of risk reduction initiatives tends to be short-term, tied to project cycles. It focuses on the initiatives’ outputs (e.g. numbers trained in disaster planning, area sown with drought-resistant seeds), rather than their impact (e.g. the extent to which lives, assets and livelihoods are better protected during disasters).

A new ProVention project seeks to address these problems by developing guidelines on how project appraisal methodologies can be adapted to consider risks from natural hazards, and on appropriate ways of monitoring the impact of risk reduction.

The first stage of the project is a review of existing methodologies and practices across a range of agencies, geographical locations, scales of operation and development/disaster contexts. It comprises desk research, interviews and surveys.

This work is being carried out by two independent researchers, who would welcome any help that development and disaster management agencies can give. They are particularly keen to obtain:

- copies of project planning and evaluation methodologies;
- ‘good practice’ examples of hazard risk appraisal in project planning;
- ‘good practice’ examples of evaluations of the impact of risk reduction measures.

If you can provide such material, know where it might be found, or have other ideas about information that might benefit the project, please contact the project team: Charlotte Benson (cbenson321@aol.com) or John Twigg (j.twigg@ucl.ac.uk). ■

28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent commits to reducing the risk and impact of disasters

The 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement took place in Geneva from 2-6 December, 2003, involving over 1500 representatives of the Red Cross/Red Crescent and member states party to the Geneva Conventions. The Conference agreed on an Agenda for Humanitarian Action which focuses on enhancing protection of people affected by armed conflict and reducing the impact of disasters and disease on vulnerable people. The ProVention Consortium was invited to participate in sessions relating to disaster reduction and given the opportunity to make a statement as well as contribute to the conference workshops. The Conference concluded with major commitments to minimising the impact of disasters and disease through supporting risk reduction measures, advocacy efforts and strengthening partnerships with other organisations active in disaster reduction. ■

Launch of ProVention Risk Transfer Initiative in India

Recognising that a vast majority of the poor and most vulnerable communities in India have limited access to risk transfer schemes or mitigation measures, ProVention is supporting a pilot project in collaboration with the Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI) in Ahmedabad to promote the application of micro finance and micro insurance for disaster risk management. The project explores the potential for the convergence of a micro finance, micro insurance and micro mitigation approach to help poor people transfer risks that cannot be eliminated and have safety nets during times of disaster. The initiative also aims to engage the corporate sector, in particular the insurance industry, in an innovative approach to improving risk management for the poor.

The first phase of the Regional Risk Transfer Initiative was launched in September 2003 at a

meeting in Delhi by a multi-stakeholder group involving DMI, the Indian Government, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, ILO, IFRC and New India Assurance Company. Stakeholders acknowledged the critical contribution of micro finance towards local development and the potential for developing micro insurance schemes as a way to help poor households manage risk. The project will draw on the recent ProVention initiative on Microfinance and Disaster Risk Management and seek to apply the guidelines produced by ProVention and UN Capital Development Fund.

The project will be used to pilot test models of micro insurance schemes and share learning with a wide stakeholder group through the ProVention Consortium. ■

Identification and Analysis of Global Disaster Risk Hotspots

This ProVention activity, managed by DMF, aims to improve the quantitative identification of geographic areas of high global disaster risk potential- "disaster hotspots". The Hotspots Project will characterise and quantify natural disaster risks to obtain a data-based, first order risk analysis to help the prioritisation of global disaster risk management efforts. The project is a collaborative initiative involving a number of Consortium partners, including Columbia University, the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, Middlesex University, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, Atmospheric and Environmental Research Inc., the World Bank, UNEP, OCHA and WFP.

Global analysis, complemented by specific case studies, is underway using three complementary approaches:

- an overall geographic analysis of hotspots based on the exposure of a) population and b) population-weighted GDP to all major hazards individually and combined;
- an economic analysis that seeks to qualify the economic impacts of climatic hazards;
- and an event-by-event analysis of mortality associated with select hazard events.

Three case studies, "Global Drought Hazard: A Pilot Study for Asia"; "Sri Lanka Case

Study"; and "An Expert Assessment of Storm Surge Hotspots", have been recently completed and are under review for publication. Two additional studies are under preparation: "Flood Risk and Vulnerability Assessment in North-eastern Kenya", and a case study on Caracas, Venezuela. For more information on this initiative please visit: <http://www.proventionconsortium.org/projects/identification.htm>. ■

Applied Research Grants for Disaster Risk Reduction

Launched in December 2002, the Applied Grants programme provides small grants for research projects in order to promote the development of young professionals from developing countries dedicated to reducing disaster risk. Applicants worldwide were invited to propose creative research projects on disaster reduction. Project proposals focussed on the links between disasters, poverty and the environment, and fall into three general categories: hazard and risk identification, risk reduction, and risk sharing/transfer.

All applications underwent an independent and rigorous evaluation process based on content, objectives, impacts, implementation, budget, feasibility and innovation. Sixty-five individuals and/or teams won grants of up to US\$5,000. The winning proposals cover a number of topics, ranging from the spread of forest fires due to honey-hunters in South Africa, to coastal erosion vulnerability mapping in the Philippines, to training youths in emergency preparedness and first aid techniques in Bulgaria, to studying the awareness of earthquake risk among the population of Mendoza, Argentina.

Awards have been granted to students and young professionals from the following 27 countries: Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe.

The Disaster Management Center (DMC) of the University of Wisconsin-Madison is administering the programme in collaboration with the World Bank, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center in Thailand and the Cranfield Disaster Management Centre in the UK. DMC is hosting a virtual space where the young researchers can network and learn from one another. The grants programme will be evaluated in 2004 with a view to launch a second round in 2005.

For more information about this programme, please read the press release (www.proventionconsortium.org/projects/appliedres_press.htm). ■

Reducing flood risk in Africa: Strengthening community flood resilience through local partnerships in Sudan

Sudan is one of the most flood prone countries in Africa. Six major floods occurred between 1990 and 2001 affecting over 1.5 million people and causing several hundred million dollars of damage. Recent flooding in August 2003 in Kassala and Sinnar State affected over 200,000 people. While the capacity of the Sudanese government, international agencies and NGOs has been considerably strengthened in the field of drought and famine early warning in the last decade, capacity building in the field of flood mitigation, preparedness and early warning systems has received limited attention.



Photo : International Federation

This ProVention project intends to address this gap and aims at bringing together the expertise of different actors in the field of flood preparedness and mitigation, such as the Sudanese

government authorities, UNEP, the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS), IFRC Nairobi, NGOs and local businesses.

The project aims to address the problem of increasing flood risk at both the national and local level. National capacity building focuses on the development of a comprehensive national disaster preparedness training curriculum, the establishment of a national working group on floods and the organisation of a national workshop on flood risk reduction involving all major stakeholders in the country. A disaster preparedness training curriculum is being developed alongside activities at the community level, such as awareness and low cost flood defence works. In a second phase, starting in April 2004, the project will focus on the strengthening of national and community based flood early warning systems. The next phase of the project will also involve local business, such as Coca-Cola Khartoum, who have indicated a commercial interest in minimising business interruption from floods and protecting their workforce and facilities from seasonal disasters. ■

PROVENTION PARTNERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

ProVention News includes a profile of partners to highlight the disaster reduction strategies, structures and activities of different members of the Consortium. This first edition focuses on the current ProVention Secretariat-host organisation, IFRC.



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Strategy

In its mission to improve the lives of the most vulnerable, IFRC prioritises four core areas of work for the Red Cross/Red Crescent: Disaster Response; Disaster Preparedness; Health & Care in the Community; and Humanitarian Values. The focus on disaster preparedness includes risk reduction as an essential part of the work of IFRC. The IFRC's 10 year strategy, *Strategy 2010*, highlights the Red Cross/Red Crescent approach to reducing vulnerability and building capacity by dividing it into three different categories:

- preventing suffering by helping people prepare for and avoid exposure to situations that can increase their vulnerability;
- assisting people who suffer a dramatic increase in vulnerability due to a sudden disaster or crisis;
- and alleviating suffering by reducing vulnerability and improving the capacity of people who live constantly in situations where their socio-economic security and human dignity are threatened.

The strategy focuses on strengthening disaster preparedness planning, building effective disaster response mechanisms, raising community awareness and public education of hazards and

in high-risk communities and supporting disaster mitigation and reduction measures.

Structure

IFRC comprises 181 member Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a Secretariat in Geneva and more than 60 delegations strategically located to support activities around the world. IFRC supports both international programmes and the domestic activities of its member National Societies focussed on the four core areas outlined above. A National Society presence with a volunteer network in every country enables the Red Cross and Red Crescent to work with local communities defining needs and developing solutions from within, thus building capacity and reducing vulnerability. The Red Cross and Red Crescent aims to respond to all humanitarian disasters, whether large or small scale, with an estimated 90 million volunteers worldwide.

A growing number of National Societies are taking a more proactive approach to disaster reduction and are working at both the national level with governments to integrate risk reduction into humanitarian and development efforts and at the community level to identify risk and support local mitigation measures.

Technical support, policy guidance and programme coordination is provided by the Disaster Response & Preparedness Department in Geneva, which includes a team of 9 specialist officers, and some 29 regional and country Disaster Management Delegates who support National Society programmes in the field.

Activities

IFRC supports a diverse range of preparedness and mitigation activities, including contingency planning, disaster management services and systems, community vulnerability mapping, awareness raising and local environmental protection activities. Current priorities for IFRC

include the development of practical tools, such as vulnerability and capacity assessment, the documentation of good practice case studies (20 new case studies were published in 2003) and the application of a checklist for disaster preparedness planning and capacity building. IFRC also actively advocates for disaster reduction at a global level through its annual *World Disasters Report* and participation in key global fora, such as the ProVention Consortium and the ISDR.

For more information on IFRC's activities in the field of disaster preparedness, see: www.ifrc.org/what/disasters/dp/ ■

NEW PUBLICATIONS

ECLAC manuals

ProVention has recently published, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), a "Handbook for Estimating the Socio-Economic and Environmental Effects of Disasters". It is a four volume manual (in English and Spanish) which looks at methodological and conceptual aspects of damage and needs assessment and the impact of disasters on social sectors, infrastructure, economic sectors and overall effects of disaster damages. The different chapters of the handbook can be downloaded from the ProVention website at: www.proventionconsortium.org/toolkit.htm.

Building Safer Cities: The Future of Disaster Risk

Alcira Kreimer, Margaret Arnold, and Anne Carlin, editors. World Bank Disaster Risk Management Series No. 3. ISBN 0-8213-5497-3. 2003. 320 pp. \$35.00. Available from World Bank Publications, P.O. Box 960, Herndon, VA 20172-0960; (800) 645-7247; (703) 661-1580; fax: (703) 661-1501. The book can also be purchased on-line from <http://publications.worldbank.org/ecommerce/>; specifically, see http://publications.worldbank.org/ecommerce/catalog/product?item_id=2337355.

Disaster impacts are becoming more severe. Annual direct losses for weather-related events have increased from USD 3.9 million in the 1950s to USD 63 million in the 1990s. Moreover, a number of ongoing trends such as population growth, environmental degradation, climate change and its correlative effects, and globalisation have the potential to cause broader and more severe impacts than ever before. At the same time, relative to events in wealthier nations, disasters in developing countries can inflict massive casualties and cause major setbacks to economic and social development by diverting development funds to emergency relief and recovery. By empowering communities and individuals to implement effective disaster risk reduction strategies, families, communities, and entire countries can become more resilient when disasters strike. This volume, comprising papers presented at a 2002 meeting to promote awareness among development agencies regarding the urgent need to address urban vulnerability to hazards, presents a variety of perspectives on this topic.