

Disaster Risk Reduction: An Instrument for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals



Inter-Parliamentary Union



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

**Disaster Risk Reduction:
An Instrument for Achieving the
Millennium Development Goals**

“Reducing disaster risk and increasing resilience to natural hazards in different development sectors can have multiplier effects and accelerate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.”

Ban Ki-moon

Secretary General of the United Nations

“Recurring earthquakes, floods and similarly devastating disasters result in loss of life and cause long-term social, economic and environmental consequences. Parliamentarians bear their own share of responsibility for ensuring that national development plans are disaster resilient. As elected representatives of the people, they oversee government action and play a crucial role in mobilizing national resources for reconstruction and development in disaster-affected areas.”

Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab

IPU President

Foreword

Parliamentarians around the world play a pivotal role in today's historic effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals—clear, measurable targets for reducing poverty by 2015 that were set by Heads of State at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000. No responsible politician would want to spend millions on building schools that may collapse on children. No parliamentarian would want to see the vulnerable repeatedly knocked back into extreme poverty due to lack of human and financial resources for disaster risk reduction.

Disaster proofing development is one of the most cost-effective investments in poverty reduction that a country can make. Time and again, the poor fall victim to, or see schools, hospitals, homes and whole livelihoods destroyed by floods, earthquakes or other natural hazards. Yet this reversal and destruction of development gains is mostly avoidable. Wise investments in disaster risk reduction can largely protect both the population and the national coffers from such losses.

For just a few cents more on each dollar of investment, new health clinics can be built to withstand natural hazards so they can keep working in times of disasters, when they are needed most. New water pipes can be made to survive the next flood, preventing post-disaster outbreaks of water-borne diseases. Livelihoods can be protected from drought and floods so that children do not have to leave school to help their families survive.

This kit aims to assist members of parliament to oversee national progress and investments made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in their country, using disaster risk reduction. Goal by goal, it outlines priorities, steps and interventions needed to reduce or eliminate disaster risks. And, of course, this kit gives examples of the good work already done by many parliaments around the world.

Disaster risk reduction pays. Parliamentarians have the power and the duty to lead the way in protecting development gains from disasters.

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Introduction

What is the difference between a natural hazard and a disaster ?

There is no such thing as a ‘natural’ disaster. Many hazards are natural and usually inevitable, like cyclones, floods, droughts and earthquakes. They are ‘hazards’ in that they can potentially harm people, economies and the environment if they are not adequately prepared. A ‘disaster’ occurs when a hazard results in devastation that leaves communities or even whole nations unable to cope unaided, such as in recently earthquake-struck Haiti. But disasters are neither inevitable nor ‘natural’.

What is disaster risk reduction?

Disaster risk reduction is a broad approach, which includes all action aiming to reduce disaster risks. Action can be political, technical, social and economic. Disaster risk reduction takes forms as varied as policy guidance, legislation, preparedness plans, agricultural projects, an insurance scheme, or even a swimming lesson. The approach enables people to think and work across society, to make sure that everyone – from governments to individuals – makes the right decisions to reduce the risk and impact of disasters. By doing so, a coming storm or flood will not be able to turn bad weather into a disaster waiting to happen.

Everybody has a role to play in reducing disaster risk.

About this kit

This kit aims to equip parliamentarians with baseline critical priorities and practical steps to make disaster risk reduction an instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), goal by goal. It shows how disasters can derail progress made towards the MDGs and development, and why disaster risk reduction is so important to maintaining development gains. It also points out a few key interventions that should be undertaken in reducing disaster risks to accelerate the process of achieving the MDGs, and how parliamentarians can achieve policy and practical changes, at both national and local levels.

WHY *is disaster risk reduction important for sustainable development?*

85% of people exposed to earthquakes, cyclones, floods and droughts live in developing countries. The massive cost of disasters poses a significant threat to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially the first goal of halving poverty by 2015.

Direct disaster damage costs alone have shot up from US\$ 75.5 billion in the 1960s to nearly a trillion dollars in the past ten years (Munich RE 2002, CRED 2009.) Even these ballooning figures cannot capture the long-term cost to the people and communities that bear the brunt of disasters, paying with their lives, their livelihoods and their future development prospects.

Disasters threaten the food security of the poorest people worldwide. **Disaster risk reduction is vital for ensuring one of the most basic human rights—freedom from hunger.** Unless we start to use disaster risk reduction to adapt to climate change, responsibly manage growth and stop environmental degradation, disasters will continue to threaten more lives and livelihoods than ever before.

Put succinctly, disaster risk reduction protects development investments and helps societies to accumulate wealth in spite of hazards. Bangladesh, Cuba, Vietnam and Madagascar have been able to significantly reduce the impact of meteorological hazards, such as tropical storms and floods, through improved early warning systems, disaster preparedness and other risk reduction measures (UNISDR 2009.) China spent US\$3.15 billion on reducing the impact of floods, thereby averting losses estimated at US\$ 12 billion (DFID 2004.) Disaster risk reduction increases the resilience of community development; it helps the world's most vulnerable people become richer, healthier and more food-secure by protecting and enhancing their livelihoods; it frees up development resources by reducing needs and dependence on relief and recovery.

Investments in disaster risk reduction can yield long-term benefits, including progress on the MDGs.

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010

WHAT *must be done to make development disaster-resilient?*

5 priorities

1. **Integrating disaster risk reduction into socio-economic development planning** and programmes will safeguard development investments. This requires the transfer of funds, technology and knowledge to the most vulnerable communities, through multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary collaboration and partnerships at all levels.
2. **Making disaster risk reduction an essential part of poverty reduction strategies** and programmes will protect and enrich the poor and near-poor by increasing their disaster resilience, with particular attention to vulnerable marginalised minorities and communities.
3. **Making schools, health facilities, and water and sanitation infrastructure disaster resilient** will protect access to universal education, and primary health and emergency care. It will also help lower infant mortality, improve maternal health, and safeguard efforts to eradicate major diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.
4. **Empowering women in disaster risk reduction** will accelerate achievement of the MDGs. Governments need to secure women's active participation in policy and decision-making processes, especially for community development, natural resource management, drought-prevention, water management and subsistence agriculture.
5. **Curbing rapid and ill-planned urban growth** will decrease disaster risks. City infrastructure and construction must be built on the results of sound risk-assessments for fear that rapid socio-economic gains are suddenly lost in disasters.

HOW *can parliamentarians make change happen?*

5 ways forward

- A. **Parliamentarians are political leaders** with a unique role in representing and communicating local concerns to national governments, and campaigning on issues that affect people's daily lives and livelihoods. If parliamentarians facilitate and legislate for disaster-resilient development in constituencies, everybody wins.

- B. **Parliamentarians are powerful policy monitors** who can influence national policies and spending through their national budget oversight roles, and through their membership of parliamentary committees for major development sectors, making disaster risk reduction an instrument for sustainable development.
- C. **Parliamentarians are national legislators** who have the unique power to pass new legislation, or amend existing legislation, creating a credibly enabling environment for achieving disaster-resilient development, poverty reduction and the MDGs.
- D. **Parliamentarians are natural campaigners.** With adequate information and knowledge on disaster risk reduction, parliamentarians can provide better advice and can tap into active expert networks on disaster risk reduction and development, to improve government knowledge on policy, procedures, training and guidelines.
- E. **Parliamentarians are high-level lobbyists** who can even influence heads of state, as well as international organizations working with parliamentarians, to strengthen political commitment to making disaster risk reduction a pre-requirement for development funding.

The 122nd Inter-parliamentary Assembly

Urges governments to assess all their critical public facilities, such as schools and hospitals, with a view to making them resilient to earthquakes, floods and storms, and to make disaster-risk reduction a part of poverty reduction and of all planning and programmes aimed at achieving the MDGs and the ensuing long-term welfare of the people.

Resolution adopted unanimously by the 122nd Assembly, Bangkok, 1 April 2010

Good practices

Senegal: A parliamentarian's network on disaster risk reduction

Under the guidance of the President of the National Assembly, Senegalese parliamentarians and senators established their own voluntary Network for Disaster Risk Reduction. They see disaster risk reduction as crucial for achieving sustainable development. Its membership includes 80 out of 250 representatives. Despite a minimal budget, they are able to advocate effectively, especially through strategic partnerships. They draw on the technical skills of parliamentarians and importantly on a high level champion, the President of the Assembly. The Network has managed to:

- Build partnerships with government ministries, gather information from local civil society associations, and work with international agencies like UNDP;
- Raise awareness within parliament, and, working with UNDP and the Civil Protection Ministry, organize a training seminar for parliamentarians focusing on their role as supervisors of government policies;
- Produce films and advocacy materials on the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation, collaborating closely with the Environment Ministry and IUCN.

Argentina: Local legislative leadership

The Provincial Senate of Mendoza has led by example, passing legislation and promoting DRR through its engagement with the Mercosur Parliamentary Union (UPM), and Argentina's National Platform for DRR. It has integrated risk management into land use planning law. It is also in the process of passing a bill for Risk and Emergency Management, and is discussing bills on climate change adaptation and local risk prevention. Other provincial legislatures, such as the Province of Neuquen, are following Mendoza's example.

- Locally, the Senate works with business, industry, civil protection and local government to reduce the vulnerability of local populations.
- The 2010 Chilean earthquake prompted legislators to work more closely with scientific institutes and universities in the area, leading to a presentation in the Legislature of proposals for the public sector by over 300 local scientists and professionals.
- The Senate also initiated cooperation with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) after the earthquake, to extend coverage of the DIPECHO programme for Safe Hospitals to their region.

Philippines: Regional and international champion

Inspired by a high profile disaster risk reduction champion within the Philippines Senate, the Philippines representative bodies have passed laws and ratified international agreements that mainstream DRR:

- The Climate Change Act of 2009 mainstreamed climate change adaptation into government policy, highlighting synergies between disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. It recognizes that effective disaster risk reduction will enhance climate change adaptive capacity. The Act was passed into law in October 2009 and made available to the Inter-Parliamentary Union as a legislative model.
- The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2009, which was notable for requiring gender-sensitive Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Ratification of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), a legally binding regional agreement for Disaster Risk Reduction. With the Philippines' ratification, AADMER entered into force in December 2009.

MDG 1

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

WHY *does poverty eradication require disaster risk reduction?*

The poor suffer the most from the impact of disasters and are most likely to lose their lives and livelihoods when floods, earthquakes and storms occur.

Disaster and poverty form a vicious circle. If a cyclone of the same magnitude were to strike both Japan and the Philippines, mortality in the Philippines would be 17 times higher. Yet Japan has 1.4 times more people exposed to tropical cyclones than the Philippines. Indeed, the mortality risk for equal numbers of people exposed in low-income countries is nearly 200 times higher than in OECD countries (UNISDR 2009.)

Disasters make food scarcer, and destroy the already limited means the poor have to make a living. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch caused losses of 31% of productive resources to the poorest households in Honduras, while wealthier households lost just 8% (Carter et al 2005.) Deeper poverty often forces the poor to live in disaster prone areas, yet they have no resources to reduce their vulnerability to the next disaster as they can hardly meet daily needs.

The constant practice of disaster risk reduction can break the negative cycle and help the poor become more disaster-resilient and food-secure. Reducing the cost of disasters also protects national finances, promoting growth, fiscal stability and the provision of state services, and saves relief funds for investment in development.

Disaster hits the poor hardest, wiping out food and income sources

- Losses from the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti are estimated at US\$7.9 billion, or over 120% of the country's GDP in 2009 (Haiti 2010.)
- Malawi loses an average of 1.7% of GDP yearly to crop losses in droughts and floods. Droughts alone increase poverty in Malawi by 1.3% (IFPRI, 2010.)
- Direct losses from Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar were 2.7% of the country's projected 2008 GDP, flooding over 600,000 hectares of agricultural land, killing up to 50% of draught animals, destroying fishing boats and sweeping away food stocks and agricultural tools (GoUM-ASEAN-UN 2008.)

- FAO predicts that intensifying drought, storms and floods will increase food insecurity, particularly in Southern Africa and South Asia. The IPCC warns that climate change may contribute to a global food crisis (FAO, 2008.)
- Rural poverty due to creeping drought and lack of rural development in vulnerable parts of Africa drives unsustainable urban population growth, and the rise in informal and non-secure work (UNISDR, 2008a.)
- In 2004, Hurricane Ivan destroyed 90% of Grenada's infrastructure, causing economic damage equivalent to 200% of the country's GDP (OECS 2004, ECLAC 2006.)
- 94% of all people killed by disasters from 1975-2000 were low income or lower-middle income people. The very poorest comprised 68% of all disaster deaths (UNISDR, 2008a.)

Good practices in disaster risk reduction for poverty reduction

Malawian farmers have mitigated drought, diversified income sources, improved food security and decreased poverty by securing water sources and planting drought-resistant crops with the support of Tearfund, DFID, Christian Aid and others. German Agro Action has worked with Kenyan communities to ward off drought through innovative rock water collection methods. Read about more good practices in disaster risk reduction and poverty reduction, many of which involve drought, water and flood management, in *Linking Disaster Risk Reduction and Poverty Reduction: Good Practices and Lessons Learned* (UNISDR, 2008a, www.unisdr.org/publications.)

WHAT *must be done?*

5 priorities

1. **Apply disaster risk reduction in climate change adaptation** and development to protect the livelihoods and food sources of poor households and communities.
2. **Support farmers to integrate drought and flood risk assessment into their agricultural and land-use planning**, and make agriculture more drought-proof and flood-proof through better use of cropping strategies, crop strains, diversifying incomes and resources, and water resource management.

3. **Improve farmers' access to insurance and fair terms of credit for disaster-proofing their livelihoods**, such as subsidized interest rates for investing in water and soil conservation, expanding access to micro-insurance and social insurance against hazards that may destroy crops and income resources, and ensuring equitable land and property rights between men and women so that women can take more control of agricultural production and household income.
4. **Make agriculture environmentally sustainable through sound natural resource management.** This requires that research into food production focuses on drought resistance, adaptability to climate change and sustainable soil and water resource management.
5. **Support the urban poor's income generating activities to give them more disaster-resilient income.**

HOW *can parliamentarians make change happen?*

5 ways forward

- A. **Represent local concerns**
Give disaster risk reduction for poverty and hunger eradication a platform in the national parliament, with particular focus on regions vulnerable to drought, floods and storms.
- B. **Influence national spending, laws and policies**
Work with agriculture, climate change and environment committees, as well as foreign aid and development committees in parliament, to address concerns about disaster risk and the impact of climate change, focusing on drought and flood risk reduction, national funding for disaster risk insurance and investment in early warning systems. Working across sectors can be very effective, in close cooperation with established National Platforms or National Committees for disaster risk reduction.
- C. **Become a knowledgeable monitor and advisor**
Join the Parliamentarians' Network for disaster risk reduction and build knowledge of your local and regional priorities in order to advocate risk-sensitive programmes and project appraisal guidelines and take an active role in monitoring national programmes on poverty reduction, food security and drought risk management.

D. Influence international donors

Introduce disaster risk reduction methods in community poverty reduction and development, and foster good practices for securing international development assistance for disaster resilient poverty reduction and food security. There are a broad range of country-based entry points, such as working with donors and UN Country Teams on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs).

E. Raise awareness

Raise awareness of disaster risks and the impact of climate change among the local population through radio broadcasts, local meetings, newspapers and partnerships with community organizations and NGOs. Bring disaster risk reduction issues into established platforms addressing poverty reduction, food security, climate change and development, such as the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change, the Committee on World Food Security, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the African Union Heads of States summits, parliamentarian networks and the UN General Assembly.

The 122nd Inter-parliamentary Assembly

Urges all parliaments to foster the strong political will and allocate the budget funds needed to develop a national legal framework designed to ensure synergy between disaster-risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and between disaster-risk reduction and poverty reduction and socio-economic development, so as to protect the best interests of those vulnerable to geological and climate-related disasters.

Resolution adopted unanimously by the 122nd Assembly, Bangkok, 1 April 2010

MDG 2 Achieve universal primary education

WHY *does achieving universal education require disaster risk reduction?*

The goal of putting all primary aged children in school by 2015 represents “the biggest building project the world has ever seen” (World Bank et al, 2009.) However, building standards for schools are not providing an acceptable level of protection for children. Roughly one billion children aged 0-14 live in areas with high or very high earthquake risk. Should universal primary education be achieved for the 20 countries most vulnerable to earthquakes, 34 million *more* children will be put at risk, unless hazard-resistant school buildings are constructed (UNISDR, 2006.)

Too many schools are at risk

- The 2010 Earthquake in Haiti killed about 1,300 teachers and 38,000 school children, and destroyed or damaged more than 4,000 school buildings (UNICEF 2010.)
- The 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan, China killed more than 10,000 children in their schoolrooms. An estimated 7,000 classrooms were destroyed (Miyamoto 2008.)
- The 2007 Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh destroyed 496 school buildings and damaged 2,110 more. In 2006, Super Typhoon Durian caused US\$ 20m damage to schools in the Philippines. This includes 90-100% of school buildings in three cities and 50-60% of school buildings in two others (World Bank/GFDRR et al, 2009.)
- The Kashmir earthquake in 2005 killed at least 17,000 students in Pakistan schools and seriously injured another 50,000, leaving many disabled and over 300,000 children affected. Moreover, 10,000 school buildings were destroyed; in some districts, 80% of schools were destroyed (World Bank/GFDRR et al, 2009.)

The cost of achieving universal primary education is high, but the mass collapse of sub-standard and poorly built schools in disasters makes the cost much higher. Two thirds of the annual US\$ 6 billion cost of World Bank school

construction funding under its Education for All/MDG2 programme “*is to replace classrooms that are literally falling down*” due to poor maintenance and construction (World Bank et al, 2009.)

Poverty also keeps girls and boys out of school, at work, in homes, fields, streets and even factories. Disasters often make the denial of education worse, especially in the poorest populations affected by drought and flood. Disasters also disrupt education through the mass displacement of families and communities, where schools and basic educational facilities are not available at all. In some cases, the available schools are even used as temporary shelters during floods and tropical storms (thus the schools are closed for schooling.) Disasters pose a tremendous threat to the achievement of universal primary education in most disaster-prone countries.

Schools which are flooded diminish children’s education.
Persistent drought often provokes the displacement of communities to zones without schools.

Parliamentarians’ Plan of Action for Making Millennium Development Goal Programmes Disaster Resilient, Adopted at the Consultative Meeting for West African Parliamentarians, Dakar, 2 June 2010

WHAT must be done?

5 priorities

1. **Make all schools safer from disaster** by ensuring that all new school buildings are hazard-resistant and that all existing schools are risk-assessed in a nationwide survey and retrofitted if needed. Stamp out corruption in public and private construction, using the protection of schools as a rallying-point so that building codes can be enforced to a high standard. It is equally important to train and provide incentives for local builders to build to hazard-resistant standards.
2. **Teach disaster risk reduction** in all primary schools as part of the national curriculum so that children and teachers can protect themselves from natural hazards by knowing exactly what to do. Moreover, children can take the lead in educating families and communities about disaster risks that they live with.

3. **Ensure that schools in high-risk areas have developed and implemented disaster preparedness and contingency plans**, so that students will survive and continue their schooling in the aftermath of disasters. This can be started by implementing the Minimum Standards of the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE.)
4. **Increase disaster resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable children**, and mobilize resources to reduce their physical vulnerability to the impact of disasters. Development and education programmes should reach out to the huge number of children at work, living on the street, heading households, or who are registered at school but not attending regularly.
5. **Pursue disaster resilient poverty reduction strategies and programmes.** In this way, parents can send their children to school, rather than putting them to work during the post-disaster recovery period. Investing in disaster risk reduction can raise incomes and protect food security for the poorest disaster-prone communities (for 'how', see MDG1.)

Good practice in school safety

Governments, schools and NGOs around the world are including disaster risk reduction in national school curriculae, sending out student 'risk ambassadors' to map out risk and educate communities, training teachers for school preparedness and developing guidance on safe school construction and retrofitting. Read more about these good practices in *Towards a Culture of Prevention: disaster risk reduction begins at school: Good Practices and Lessons Learned* (UNISDR, 2006.)

HOW *can parliamentarians make change happen?*

5 ways forward

- A. **Represent local concerns**
Bring the safe school issue for debate in national parliaments in order to secure an increased annual allocation of financial resources for making schools safer against disasters. Parliamentary debates can be supported by stories gathered from constituents about their experiences and the causes of inadequate school building standards.

B. Influence national spending, laws and policy

Introduce or advance legislation that guarantees all new schools be built to hazard-resistant standards, and that existing schools be assessed and retrofitted whenever necessary. Parliamentary Committees on Foreign Aid and Development should ensure that construction funding for schools includes programmes for sustainable local retrofitting and hazard-resistant standards. The Parliamentary Committee on Education should push governments for a national policy on compulsory disaster risk reduction education in schools from primary level up. Integration of disaster risk reduction knowledge through the educational system is a long-term solution to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters and climate change.

C. Become a knowledgeable monitor and advisor

Be familiar with local and national priorities in school safety and school education on disaster risk reduction, in partnership with experts or specialists like the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergency. Consultative meetings or subject-focused workshops have proven to be effective for equipping parliamentarians with the knowledge and information required in their active role in monitoring national programmes for school construction and supporting research and innovation for the most cost-effective retrofitting and construction.

D. Influence international donors

Introduce risk reduction methods and techniques for integrating disaster risk reduction into school curricula, and ensure that hazard-proof schools are built or sub-standard schools retrofitted. In particular, link education expansion funding to ensure that school infrastructure complies with hazard-resistant standards. Work in close cooperation with community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations, with the support of country-based UN and donor agencies, so that such initiatives can also build in international development assistance for achieving universal primary education targets.

E. Raise awareness

At local level, expose corruption that results in shoddy construction and lost lives. Take local stories to the national and international media and highlight the danger to which children are being exposed in disaster-vulnerable school buildings. At the higher level, bring disaster risk reduction issues into established thematic platforms addressing Education for All, such as the High Level Group organised by UNESCO.

MDG 3

Promote gender equality and empower women

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WHY *does gender equality require disaster risk reduction?*

Disasters affect men and women differently. Disasters knock backwards progress that women may have made toward greater equality with men, as they are on average more affected. Unequal access to assets, education, knowledge and power deprives women of the resources and capability to protect themselves, their children and their assets from disasters. National planning for disaster relief and recovery often excludes consideration of gender-based vulnerability and risks, even though women in developing countries bear the greatest responsibility for managing household resources. Poverty and disasters have a negative impact on education for girls, more than for boys. Disasters like drought often contribute to forcing poor and near-poor families to remove their girls from school, so that they can help work for household survival (UNISDR et al, 2009.)

In the most vulnerable communities, women are strategically placed to drive sustainable development through disaster risk reduction, being largely responsible for securing food, water and energy in many places, and being key natural resource managers and guardians of environmental knowledge. Women's earnings, emergency food sources, belongings and savings are often the fallback in struggling communities, when men's income in the formal economy has been disrupted by disasters.

Empowering women in disaster risk reduction consolidates investments in gender equality in development at both the national and local level. Strengthening women's knowledge and capacity for achieving community disaster resilience will not only reduce development losses, but will also help accelerate the development process, especially in the areas of agriculture, climate change adaptation, water resource management, and community food security (UNISDR et al, 2009.)

Women in West Africa play an important role for food security for their families. Disasters increase their stress and workload, depriving women of time to address the needs of their families and leading girls to drop out of school to help at home.

Parliamentarians' Plan of Action for Making Millennium Development Goal Programmes Disaster Resilient, Adopted at the Consultative Meeting for West African Parliamentarians, Dakar, 2 June 2010

WHAT *must be done?*

5 priorities

1. **Mainstream disaster risk reduction into women-focused development work.** Women's development initiatives and policies or legislation should include disaster risk reduction, especially when dealing with water management, agriculture, natural resource management, poverty-reduction, education and leadership.
2. **Integrate women's needs and concerns into a broad based community development agenda** in disaster prone areas. Governments should do more to promote women's participation and leadership in disaster risk reduction and the inclusion of the perspectives and knowledge of women and girls in disaster risk assessment, disaster management planning and preparedness.
3. **Make existing disaster risk reduction policies and programmes gender-sensitive.** More needs to be done to strengthen the disaster resilience of vulnerable women, harness women's capabilities and encourage women's participation in the policy and decision making process in building national resilience to disasters and climate change.
4. **Make sure disaster-vulnerable families can afford to educate their daughters.** In poor rural communities vulnerable to drought and the effects of climate change, the focus should be on such measures as income diversification, building drought resistance, micro-farming and micro-insurance, so that poor men and women can continue to prioritise their daughters' education (for 'how', see MDG1, MDG2.)

5. **Promote girls' participation and leadership in disaster risk education through school-based community learning and development projects.** This should be a part of a national curriculum (for 'how', see MDG2.)

Good practices in disaster risk reduction for gender equality

Women-headed households in Jamaica are learning risk mapping and construction techniques to protect their homes from hurricanes (CRDC.) In India, women's self-help groups are teaching children to swim and organizing community disaster preparedness (Caritas India.) Read more case studies of women's leadership and participation in disaster risk reduction for development in *Gender perspective: working together for disaster risk reduction* (UNISDR, 2007) and *Gender perspectives: integrating disaster risk reduction into climate change adaptation* (UNISDR, 2008, www.unisdr.org/publications.)

HOW *can parliamentarians make change happen?*

5 ways forward

- A. **Represent local concerns**
Learn from the experience of local women. This includes better understanding of their vulnerabilities, strengths, knowledge and insights through discussion and the collection of good practices, in cooperation with community based organizations. Official effort should be made in assessing the contributions women can make in building disaster resilience and then promoting their implementation.
- B. **Influence national spending, laws and policy**
Legislate for the integration of gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction into development spending and existing disaster risk reduction work. National policy and legislation should aim to empower women's leadership in disaster risk reduction and community development, and girls' participation in education on disaster risk reduction, with the active support of parliamentary committees for the development sectors, with ministries responsible for gender and education issues, in line with international agreements like CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration, and national human rights law and local policy.
- C. **Become a knowledgeable monitor and advisor**
Join networks of experts such as the Gender and Disaster Network to share experiences and gain knowledge, and partner with them to conduct capacity

building workshops for government workers and parliamentarians. To start with, the policy and practical guidelines jointly published by UNDP, IUCN and UNISDR in 2009, on making disaster risk reduction gender sensitive, can be used as an easy reference for integrating gender perspectives into training and programmes of disaster risk reduction.

D. Influence international donors

Press for funding, programming and monitoring of this MDG to be linked to indicators for gender-disaggregated disaster impact. Use disaster risk reduction issues relevant to this MDG as leverage in negotiations over international development assistance funding for disaster resilient poverty reduction and education.

E. Raise awareness

Publicize local women's roles, responsibilities and potential for disaster resilient community development, and campaign through the local media, national media and even the international media against gender-based injustice and poverty and the lack of gender concerns in disaster risk reduction. Partnership with organizations focused on gender, disasters and development will be effective. Whenever possible, bring disaster risk reduction issues into established high-profile national and global forums already addressing gender inequality in development, including disaster reduction, such as ECOSOC and the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

MDGs 4, 5 & 6

Reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

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WHY *do child and maternal health, and major disease eradication require disaster risk reduction?*

A range of disaster risks must be reduced in order to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Diseases that cause the bulk of child mortality are heavily attributable to malnutrition, lack of clean water and sanitation, and insufficient medical interventions (Bryce et al, 2005), while a key requirement for improving maternal health and reducing maternal mortality is access to professional healthcare (UNDESA, 2008.) The battle against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases also depends on access to clean water, sanitation, strong public health systems and access to reproductive health education.

Health infrastructure is at risk

The most expensive hospital is the one that fails. Destruction and damage to health facilities, their contents and infrastructure alone represents very substantial loss of development investment.

The cost of losses to the health sector in the Kashmir earthquake in 2005 was equivalent to about 60% of the national health budget for the entire country of Pakistan (UNISDR et al, 2008.) In 2009, typhoon Pepeng damaged 30 hospitals and 100 health centres in the Philippines (UNISDR 2008.) Hospitals, primary health centres, and other health facilities are central to sustainable recovery from disaster, and to health-driven development goals.

Equipment and drug supplies are often the most valuable parts of a health facility, thus their destruction, even if buildings are still standing, can halt disease control efforts such as immunization programmes for childhood pneumonia

Climate related disasters affect not only hospitals, health facilities or critical medical centres, but also increase the risk of diseases such as malaria and cholera.

Parliamentarians' Plan of Action for Making Millennium Development Goal Programmes Disaster Resilient, Adopted at the Consultative Meeting for West African Parliamentarians, Dakar, 2 June 2010

Skilled public health and maternal health workers are at risk

Skilled health professionals, particularly those working in community outreach, are a key to lowering maternal mortality figures and improving maternal and reproductive health. However, the lives of health workers are jeopardized by health infrastructure expansion that is not built to hazard-resistant standards. Often, primary care clinics and community health workers that deliver the bulk of child and maternal healthcare are even less protected than hospitals.

The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami damaged 61% of health facilities in northern Aceh province, and killed around 7% of its health workers. Up to 30% of the region's midwives were either killed or lost their practices, causing a public health crisis in a region where 80-90% of maternal and neonatal care is provided by midwives. The maternal health system's recovery has required intensive investment (IBI/JHPIEGO, 2005.)

Water and sanitation is at risk

Existing water and sanitation systems are at risk of destruction if not built to hazard-resistant standards. Expansion of substandard water and sanitation infrastructure may not enable communities and countries to meet the MDGs since they are not disaster resilient and will eventually be damaged or destroyed in disasters. Health systems coping with disasters largely rely on this critical infrastructure. A far greater number than those initially harmed by the hazard will suffer the consequences of lack of clean water and sanitation:

- The number of people needing shelter after the Kashmir Earthquake in 2005 was approximately 700,000, but damage to the water and sanitation infrastructure required the provision of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation to 1.7 million people (WHO/PAHO et al, 2006.)
- After Hurricane Mitch in 1998, overcrowded sanitation services and limited availability of water were the principal causes of the first outbreaks of gastrointestinal illness (WHO/PAHO et al, 2006.) Indeed, in many developing countries such outbreaks of water-borne disease are common after floods and storms.

Nutrition and food security is at risk

Women, children and the poor are likely at increasing risk of malnutrition and disease, due to the rising impact of drought, floods and storms on food insecurity, particularly in Southern Africa and South Asia. Under-nutrition is an underlying cause of 53% of all deaths in children under five (Bryce et al, 2005.)

Women are likely to be more malnourished, poorer, less mobile, less prepared, and thus more likely to suffer and even die as a result of natural hazards than men. Pregnant women are less mobile and more vulnerable, as are young children. In general, pregnant women and young children are highly vulnerable to hazard impacts of all kinds.

Protecting health facilities is cost effective

For the vast majority of new health facilities, incorporating comprehensive disaster protection from earthquakes and weather events into their design, from the beginning, will add only 4% to the cost (WHO/PAHO 2003.)

Retrofitting non-structural elements of health facilities in most cases represents only about 1% of the overall cost while sometimes protecting up to 90% of the value of a hospital (UNISDR et al, 2008, WHO & NSET, Kathmandu, April 2004.)

WHAT *must be done?*

5 priorities

- 1. All new hospitals and health facilities need to be hazard-resistant, and existing health facilities must be assessed and retrofitted if necessary.** Governments should use hospitals as a rallying-point to stamp out corruption in public and private construction so that building codes can be enforced to a high standard. Small primary care clinics must be very specifically included in these standards. Train and provide incentives for local builders to build to hazard-resistant standards, which includes retrofitting substandard health facilities, carrying out risk assessments and legislating risk resilient construction.
- 2. Train and drill maternal and primary health workers and hospital workers in disaster preparedness.** In many communities, a high proportion of maternal care and reproductive health professionals are not clinic-based and they have little capacity to reduce their disaster risk, protect their equipment and be prepared for disasters.
- 3. Ensure safe, hazard-resistant water supply.** Countries should build all new water and sanitation infrastructure to hazard-resistant standards and assess and retrofit existing infrastructure. This action should be supported by sector-wide disaster preparedness and contingency plans which can be activated anytime. Integrating drought risk reduction and MDG work on increasing improved clean water sources, such as protected wells and springs, and effective rainwater storage, can contribute to the improvement of water and sanitation in the most vulnerable rural areas (for more on 'how', see MDG1 & MDG7.)
- 4. Reduce poverty and hunger in drought-vulnerable rural areas through drought risk reduction** focused on crop management, water management and income diversification. This can reduce migration to urban slums (for more on 'how', see MDG1 & MDG3.)
- 5. Increase women's disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction capabilities** through gender-sensitive education and community leadership (for more on 'how' see MDG2 & MDG3.)

Good practices in hospital safety

Hurricane-prone Grenada has retrofitted facilities for care of the aged using a 'check consultant' who checks the facilities. Earthquake-prone Nepal is carrying out preparedness drills. Mexico is applying the WHO/PAHO Hospital Safety Index. Pakistan's national earthquake reconstruction agency is making sure all new hospitals are built to disaster-resilient standards. For more details on these good practices, see: <http://safehospitals.info>.

HOW *can parliamentarians make change happen?*

5 ways forward

A. Represent local concerns

Gain understanding of those most vulnerable to child mortality, poor maternal health and maternal mortality, and major diseases, and facilitate the integration of disaster risk reduction into work in the health, water and sanitation sectors in the poorest communities. Work in cooperation with community based organizations and local governments.

B. Influence national spending, laws and policy

Advance legislation to make hospitals and health facilities safe from disasters in line with the guidelines of the World Health Organization. Parliamentarians need to work in their health, development and disaster management committees to enforce nationally monitored post-disaster contingency plans, focusing on preventing or quickly containing the spread of water-borne diseases, and protecting health, water and sanitation facilities.

C. Become a knowledgeable monitor and advisor

Obtain knowledge and experience through the Health and Disaster Risk Reduction network (WHO-PAHO/UNISDR), WASH, and the Gender and Disaster network, among others, to advocate among parliamentarians and government representatives. With sufficient knowledge on the subject, parliamentarians can take an active role in monitoring national programmes for health, water and sanitation construction.

D. Influence international donors

Promote risk reduction methods and techniques used in health, water and sanitation and collect good practices from different communities in partnership with community based organizations and country based UN and donor agencies. Using success stories, parliamentarians should lobby for international development assistance for health targets—particularly linking health funding to requirements that health, water and sanitation infrastructure comply with hazard-resistant standards.

E. Raise awareness

Rally support of the local media and national media to the cause of saving hospitals (including facilities for care of the aged and primary care clinics), and other critical infrastructure. When hospitals and care facilities collapse during disasters, and health systems are unable to cope with the increased demand for health care and services in the aftermath of disasters, there can be significant negative blowback for political leaders. Parliamentarians should bring disaster risk reduction issues into established high-profile national and global forums addressing health and development, child mortality, maternal health, and water and sanitation, such as The World Health Forum and the World Water Forum.

MDG 7

Ensure environmental sustainability

WHY *does environmental sustainability require disaster risk reduction?*

Biodiversity and environmental protection

Disaster risk reduction is a major component of climate change adaptation.

It is also one of the best links to the human development agenda for promoting biodiversity and sustainable environmental resource management. Disasters like landslides caused by deforestation remind us that our own safety depends dramatically on common sense protection of the environment. Maintaining biodiversity, grasslands, forests, coastal wetlands, reefs and dunes is an important element of protecting human settlements from drought, desertification, landslides, floods, sea-level rise and storms—all of which are predicted to intensify due to climate change (UNEP & UNISDR, 2006.)

Water: Ensuring access to clean water requires disaster risk reduction more than ever. Environmental degradation and climate change are building upon each other to exacerbate drought. WEF projects that while 2.8 billion people currently live in areas of high water stress, this will rise to 3.9 billion by 2030, by when water scarcity could substantially cut world harvests (WEF, 2009.) The World Water Development Report notes that shortages are already beginning to constrain economic growth in areas as diverse as California, China, Australia, India and Indonesia (UNESCO, 2009.) Disaster risk reduction is crucial for securing water sources and agriculture, preventing desertification and increasing drought-resilience (see MDG4-6.)

Slum-dwellers: Reducing the disaster vulnerabilities of slum-dwellers is imperative for any sustainable improvement in their living conditions.

Slum-dwellers, their housing and their overall geographical locations are among the most vulnerable to earthquakes, landslides, floods and storms, and the disease outbreaks that come in their wake. Investment in improving their livelihoods can be all too easily swept away. Disaster-induced migration to cities and disaster damage to urban infrastructure increase the number of slum dwellers without access to basic services (DFID, 2004.)

More than 70% of flood deaths in the Mozambique floods of 2000 occurred in urban areas. The Luis Cabral slum neighbourhood in the capital city of Maputo was completely destroyed and water and sanitation services were disrupted, causing outbreaks of dysentery and cholera. That year, in sub-Saharan Africa, 71.8% of urban dwellers lived in slums (Ramin, 2009.)

WHAT *must be done?*

5 priorities

1. **Use disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation arguments to promote better environmental management.** The focus should be on maintaining and regenerating natural buffers to floods, droughts, desertification, landslides and storms, and carrying out large-scale reforestation and regeneration of wetlands in the most vulnerable and environmentally degraded areas. Funds and policies can be targeted at biodiversity and environmental sustainability by carrying out disaster risk reduction work under the rubric of climate change adaptation.
2. **Increase rural drought resilience.** Drought resilience requires reducing environmental degradation, better water management, introducing drought-resistant crops, drought-resilient farming methods and micro-insurance in drought-prone areas. This will protect livelihoods and the environment, and can reduce migration into urban slums (for more on 'how' see MDG1.)
3. **Pilot and roll out good practices in disaster risk reduction for urban slum-dwellers,** through local government-led partnerships for urban renewal, such as the Earthquake Mega-city Initiative: Mega cities partnerships. Disaster risk reduction can be used as an entry point for poverty-reduction, education, public health and gender initiatives targeted at slum-dwellers.
4. **Mainstream disaster risk reduction into urban development,** particularly focusing on land-use planning, construction and water and sanitation. Risk-sensitive land use, urban planning, safe construction and sound infrastructure will not only contribute to water management, but also protect the lives, assets and livelihoods of slum dwellers, thereby benefiting the whole city.
5. **Assess and, if necessary, retrofit water and sewage infrastructure to make it resistant** to earthquakes, landslides and floods, in particular.

Good practice in reducing deforestation

Women in Mali's drought-vulnerable Sahel region have been reducing deforestation and desertification by switching from their traditional trade in woodcutting, to more skilled and sustainable agricultural income sources. The reduction in woodcutting helps reduce desertification and the risk of drought and landslides. The project has been implemented by Mali-Folkecenter Nyetaa, with support from the Finnish government. *Read more good practice examples of disaster risk reduction for climate change adaptation and natural resource management in Briefing Note 2: Adaptation to climate change by reducing disaster risks: country practices and lessons (UNISDR, 2009a), and Gender Perspectives: Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction into Climate Change Adaptation (UNISDR, 2008, www.unisdr.org/publications).*

HOW can parliamentarians make change happen?

5 ways forward

A. Represent local concerns

Learn about the experiences of constituents in drought-prone areas, in coastal flood-zones, and in particular, the urban poor who often go uncounted and officially unrepresented. Become familiar with the environmental impact of unplanned or poorly planned development, and how this aggravates disasters' impacts on the poorest people.

B. Influence national spending, policies and laws

Lobby ministries responsible for the environment, water and climate change to invest in rural environmental management for drought prevention and environmental restoration of coastal areas for flood prevention. Push local governments and departments responsible for planning and public utilities to enforce risk-sensitive planning and hazard-resistant construction standards.

C. Become a knowledgeable monitor and advisor

Partner with expert networks and organizations to share knowledge and experience of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and natural and environmental resource management—such as with the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and with urban disaster risk reduction specialists such as the Earthquake Mega City Initiative: Mega cities project.

D. Influence international donors

Focus heavily on disaster risk reduction requirements in negotiating climate change adaptation commitments.

E. Raise awareness

There are a range of platforms from which to publicly advocate for the interlinked issues in MDG7 – for example:

- Push the need for climate change adaptation through disaster risk reduction,
- Advocate the right to water, and focus on promoting development that tackles drought mitigation and environmental sustainability,
- Advocate for the maintenance and regeneration of lifesaving mangroves and coastal wetlands in cyclone and hurricane-prone regions,
- Advocate for the unrepresented urban poor, lobbying for their right to equal protection from hazards, and if necessary, promote their enfranchisement or representation in local authorities.

We parliamentarians will review our laws and legislation related to climate change adaptation, environment and disasters to make sure that they are complementary to each other and take necessary action to foster synergy between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Parliamentarians' Plan of Action for Making Millennium Development Goal Programmes Disaster Resilient, Adopted at the Consultative Meeting for West African Parliamentarians, Dakar, 2 June 2010

MDG 8

Develop a global partnership for development

WHY *does global partnership for development require disaster risk reduction?*

Investments in disaster risk reduction represent value for money at a time when far more overseas development assistance is needed to achieve the MDGs. The World Bank has estimated that for every dollar invested in disaster risk reduction, between four and seven dollars are saved in the long run. In Peru, incorporating risk reduction into development investments led to a cost-benefit ratio of 1:37 (UNISDR 2009.)

Sophisticated partnerships today can bring together representatives of governmental, non-governmental and private sector organisations, as well as of beneficiaries or other groups such as faith based organisations, working together for disaster risk reduction across a whole society.

Development investments without disaster risk reduction are like expensive purchases without insurance. The risks of wasted aid are a disincentive to invest. Disaster risk reduction can make increased aid budgets a surer choice for both donor and recipient countries.

Successful international partnership frequently benefits from the special expertise and knowledge of developing countries, whose solutions are often easier and less costly to apply.

WHAT *must be done?*

5 priorities

1. **Get political momentum behind binding international targets on disaster risk reduction,** using climate change adaptation targets already set in agreements of the Framework Convention on Climate Change.
2. **Target direct and multilateral development aid towards investment in disaster risk reduction** in order to get the best value for the development dollar.

3. **Mobilize broad partnerships that bring together many sectors, developing and developed countries alike**, garnering their political support for a proactive disaster risk reduction approach to national development and to international aid partnerships. Pay particular attention to building capacity and transferring knowledge through South-South partnerships.
4. **Transfer technology from governments and private enterprises to vulnerable countries and communities** so as to support the best early warning systems and hazard-resistant construction methods, and other innovative low-cost solutions.
5. **Initiate dialogues between developed and least developed countries on debt swaps for investment in disaster risk reduction.**

The IPU 112th Assembly

Considers the importance of international cooperation, solidarity and partnership, as well as good governance at all levels, in strengthening disaster reduction activities.

Resolution adopted unanimously by the 112th Assembly, Manila, 8 April 2005.

HOW can parliamentarians make change happen?

5 ways forward

A. Represent local concerns

Secure necessary support for local-capacity building required for achieving the MDGs, by facilitating South-South and South-North cooperation through existing regional and global parliamentary networks and Assemblies.

B. Influence national spending, policies and laws

Influence national positions in the development or amendment of global conventions regarding issues that require global cooperation such as on the MDGs, sustainable development, climate change and disaster risk reduction by lobbying high level government officials and engaging parliamentary assemblies and networks from developing and developed countries.

C. **Become a knowledgeable monitor and advisor**

Get actively engaged in development issues where global problems require global solutions, through partnership with organizations that deal with issues and through South-South and South-North parliamentary forums and networks.

D. **Influence international donors**

Initiate or organize dialogue among parliamentarians from developing and developed countries and build sustainable networks with parliamentarians from developed countries for making progress towards all MDGs' initiatives disaster-proof.

E. **Raise awareness**

Promote information sharing and raise awareness among fellow parliamentarians on the links among disaster risk reduction, development, climate change and the MDGs, and encourage fellow parliamentarians to join national parties for climate change negotiations to advocate the need for achieving MDGs in a disaster resilient and climate proof manner.

We cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals without addressing disaster vulnerability, risk and the impact of climate change. Disaster Risk Reduction should be an integral and essential part of our strategies and programmes, aiming to avoid the creation of additional risks of disasters and climate changes' effects in the development process.

Parliamentarians' Plan of Action for Making Millennium Development Goal Programmes Disaster Resilient, Adopted at the Consultative Meeting for West African Parliamentarians, Dakar, 2 June 2010

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Annexes



Inter-Parliamentary Union

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN STRENGTHENING THE SOLIDARITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TOWARDS THE PEOPLE OF HAITI AND CHILE IN THE WAKE OF DEVASTATING MAJOR DISASTERS, AND URGENT ACTIONS REQUIRED IN ALL DISASTER-PRONE COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE DISASTER-RISK ASSESSMENT, PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 122nd IPU Assembly
(Bangkok, 1 April 2010)*

The 122nd Inter-Parliamentary Assembly,

Acknowledging the growing evidence that both disasters and climate change hit poor nations and communities the hardest, and that disaster-risk reduction for immediate climate change adaptation is a strategic step towards sustainable development,

Considering that in recent months a devastating earthquake hit Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, and that another struck off the coast of Chile, causing considerable damage to both countries,

Further considering that more than 200,000 lives were lost in the earthquake in Haiti, which caused damage and losses amounting to an estimated US\$ 7.8 billion (US\$ 4.3 billion in physical damage and US\$ 3.5 billion in economic losses), or the equivalent of more than 120 per cent of Haiti's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009, and that the earthquake in Chile caused damage and losses estimated at between US\$ 15 and 30 billion, or the equivalent of 15 per cent of Chile's GDP,

Considering that Haiti, the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, is also facing severe problems of food security as a consequence of the disaster,

Acknowledging that the growing frequency, intensity and impact of disasters pose a significant threat to people's lives and livelihoods, and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),

Mindful of the different ways such disasters can affect each country depending on its vulnerabilities, but convinced that international humanitarian action must reach all those who have been affected, while taking account of local initiatives to provide relief,

Recognizing that the poor account for the majority of all people killed in disasters, and that it is the combination of hazards such as floods and tropical storms, with an exposed, vulnerable and ill prepared population or community, that causes disasters,

Stressing that the international community and governments urgently need to establish frameworks and measures to help poor countries and communities adapt to climate change while continuing to engage in debate and negotiation on climate change mitigation,

Recalling that the resolution on natural disasters adopted unanimously by the 112th IPU Assembly (Manila, 2005) proposed that nations further strengthen their cooperation in disaster-prevention efforts, and recognizing that the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 2015, which was endorsed by 168 governments at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005, lays the groundwork for the implementation of disaster-risk reduction and specifically identifies the need to promote the integration of risk reduction into existing climate variability and future climate change strategies,

1. Commends the efforts made by the national authorities of Haiti and Chile to cope with the disasters, welcomes the outpouring of solidarity towards their peoples in the wake of the devastating disaster, and requests governments to contribute further to it and promote continued mobilization of civil society for the benefit of those countries, taking account of the needs expressed by the Chilean and Haitian authorities and, in the case of Haiti, of the added complication of the almost total destruction of the country's infrastructure;
2. Reaffirms the need for the disaster assistance currently being received by the Haitian Government to be followed up with aid for as long as is necessary for the long-term reconstruction of the country and establishment of a self-sufficient State that is able to provide its people with better living conditions;
3. Calls upon governments to take both urgent and structural measures to make disaster-risk assessment an integral part of post-earthquake recovery and reconstruction planning and for programmes to protect people from future disasters;

4. Urges governments to assess all their critical public facilities, such as schools and hospitals, with a view to making them resilient to earthquakes, floods and storms, and to make disaster-risk reduction a part of poverty reduction and of all planning and programmes aimed at achieving the MDGs and the ensuing long-term welfare of the people;
5. Also urges governments to pay close attention to the protection of women and children in post-disaster situations, which can leave them particularly vulnerable to abuse, including trafficking;
6. Also urges governments to further coordinate their international relief, reconstruction and recovery activities, among themselves and with humanitarian bodies, and to take concrete action to enhance people's understanding of and capacity to address the impact of climate change and disaster-risk reduction through public awareness, education and training;
7. Also urges all parliaments to foster the strong political will and allocate the budget funds needed to develop a national legal framework designed to ensure synergy between disaster-risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and between disaster-risk reduction and poverty reduction and socio-economic development, so as to protect the best interests of those vulnerable to geological and climate-related disasters.



NATURAL DISASTERS: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN PREVENTION, REHABILITATION, RECONSTRUCTION AND THE PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 113th Assembly
(Geneva, 19 October 2005)*

The 113th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Expressing deep concern at the recurrence of natural disasters and their increasing impact in recent years, which have resulted in massive loss of life and long-term adverse social, economic and environmental consequences throughout the world,

Recalling the resolutions adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on natural disasters at its 108th Conference, held in Santiago, Chile and at its 112th Assembly, held in Manila, the Philippines,

Aware that it is essential to ensure human safety, and also that there is an urgent need to continue developing and using existing scientific and technical knowledge to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, and emphasizing the need for developing countries to have access to related technologies so that they are able to deal effectively with natural disasters,

Distressed that over 50,000 people were killed in South Asia as a result of a major earthquake which took place on 8 October 2005, and which has left thousands with serious injuries and has resulted in massive loss of property,

Also distressed at the loss of life and destruction of property in the wake of the hurricanes that hit several states of the United States of America and the typhoons that affected Japan in August and September 2005, and the hurricanes that ravaged Mexico and some countries in Central America in early October 2005,

Also distressed at the loss of life and destruction caused by famine and other natural disasters in parts of Africa,

Expressing sincere condolences to the bereaved families as well as to the people, parliaments and governments of the affected countries,

Appreciating the efforts of the affected nations to respond to the destruction caused by the earthquake, and the cooperation extended by the international community in relief and rescue efforts,

Also appreciating the role of the United Nations and its specialized agencies and international organizations in providing humanitarian assistance to the victims,

Emphasizing that disaster preparedness and management, including the reduction of vulnerability to natural disasters, is an important element that contributes to the achievement of sustainable development,

Stressing the importance of the Hyogo Declaration and Framework for Action 2005 - 2015 of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan from 18 to 22 January 2005, in developing effective disaster reduction strategies at the national level, and also stressing the importance of capacity-building to achieve this objective,

Recognizing that women, children and other vulnerable groups are seriously affected by natural disasters, and that there is a need to pay special attention to alleviating the pain and suffering of these persons in post-disaster situations,

Emphasizing the need for psychological assistance and counselling to eliminate mental trauma, particularly among children affected by natural disasters, through various kinds of support provided by governments, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs),

Also emphasizing that the commitment of the international community, including States and international organizations, is vital in helping States to build their disaster management capacities and is crucial in rehabilitation and reconstruction in post-disaster situations,

Stressing the need for continued commitment by the international community to provide assistance for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas and communities in South Asia affected by the earthquake,

Expresses its solidarity with the people and communities affected by natural disasters, particularly those affected by the devastating earthquake that struck South Asia on 8 October 2005;

1. Affirms the need for an effective international disaster reduction strategy, as well as for commitment and efforts to assist in rescue, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in post-disaster situations;
2. Calls upon all Member Parliaments of the IPU and relevant international organizations to consider establishing databases of the human and material resources that are available to countries to effectively deal with natural disasters;

3. Calls upon parliaments to urge their governments to build capacity through the establishment of early warning systems, setting up evacuation centres and disaster prevention measures to facilitate quick and efficient disaster reporting mechanisms;
4. Stresses the need for timely, concerted and focused rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of disasters to mitigate the suffering of the affected populations;
5. Emphasizes that parliaments can play an important role in mobilizing national resources for reconstruction and development efforts in disaster-affected areas;
6. Also emphasizes that international assistance can effectively supplement national resources in rehabilitation, reconstruction and development efforts in disaster-affected areas;
7. Emphasizes that relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts should place particular emphasis on projects devoted to the care and development of women, children and other vulnerable groups;
8. Appreciates the important contribution made by NGOs in relief and rescue work, as well as in the long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction phase in disaster-affected areas;
9. Calls upon States to recognize the interrelationship between the various climatic phenomena throughout the world and environmental protection, and the responsibility of all countries to carry out actions and global programmes to reduce environmental impacts such as those caused by high emissions and the release of pollutants into the atmosphere and water bodies, deforestation and the wasteful use of natural resources;
10. Expresses support for the endeavours of the Senior United Nations System Coordinator for Avian and Human Influenza, and urges Member Parliaments to play their part in ensuring that the necessary funds are made available and that information and guidance is adequately disseminated among populations;
11. Also calls upon States to recognize the importance of developing an international framework to govern the provision of humanitarian assistance in accordance with the principles of neutrality and impartiality, and with full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States;
12. Invites all Member Parliaments of the IPU to take urgent action to follow up on the recommendations contained in this resolution.

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Disaster Risk Reduction: An Instrument for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Advocacy kit for parliamentarians

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