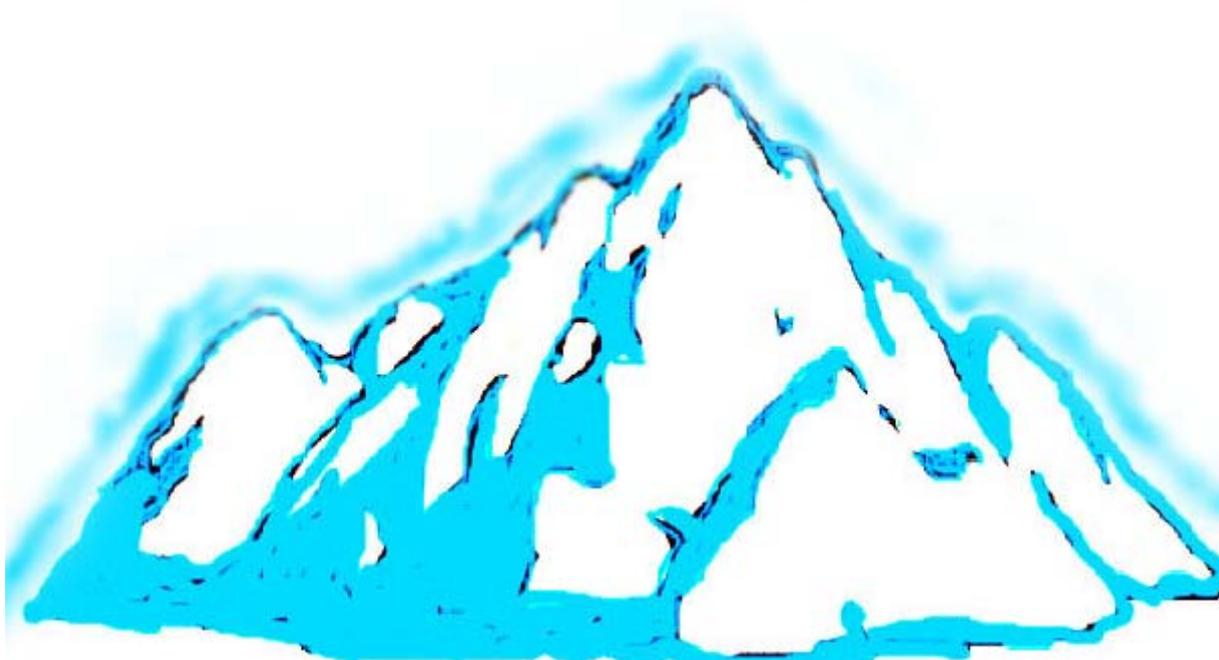


# Disaster Reduction for Sustainable Mountain Development

2002 United Nations  
World Disaster Reduction Campaign





## Disaster Reduction for Sustainable Mountain Development

### *The United Nations World Disaster Reduction Campaigns*

#### **The United Nations World Disaster Reduction Campaigns**

As every year since the early nineties, the United Nations is organizing a World Disaster Reduction Campaign, which culminates on International Disaster Reduction Day, the second Wednesday of October, 9 October this year.

The main aim of each World Disaster Reduction Campaign is to increase public awareness, worldwide and across all professional sectors, about the measures that can be taken to reduce risk and vulnerabilities of societies and communities to the negative impacts of natural hazards. The campaigns are based on a different theme every year.

The World Disaster Reduction Campaigns are organized by the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, located in Geneva, Switzerland.

Each campaign starts with the circulation of an announcement indicating the theme of the campaign, the planned support material and a call for contributions. Information material is then prepared and circulated worldwide, together with suggested activities to be undertaken at the international, regional, national and local level. Special events are held on the International Day for Disaster Reduction. The campaigns are organized in close collaboration with ISDR's partner organizations in all sectors.

Please see below for the 2002 World Disaster Reduction Campaign. Information on past campaigns can be obtained from the website of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Secretariat at [www.unisdr.org](http://www.unisdr.org)

#### **Mountains - A Stage for Natural Disasters**

Mountains are high-energy environments. This causes many challenges in relation to minimising the natural hazards that result from high rain and snowfall, variations in temperature, steep slopes, volcanic activity and tectonic movement (earthquakes). The risks associated with mountain environments are growing rapidly with increases in resident and visiting populations. While some processes are very rapid - lava and ash flows, rockslides, rock falls, debris flows - gradual processes such as soil erosion can also put the lives and livelihoods of mountain people at risk. Mountain people have extensive experience and are aware of the locations and likelihood of natural hazards. But such knowledge is not always used or recognised, especially in the case of slow-onset natural hazards. Also, catastrophic events such as glacial lake outbursts and debris avalanches related to volcanic eruptions may have long return periods or may have multiple

causes. They are therefore difficult to predict. Mountain areas are therefore a good platform to illustrate what has been done and what still needs to be done to reduce the socio-economic impact of natural hazards on populations at risk.

#### **Disaster Reduction for Sustainable Mountain Development**

The first aim of the 2002 World Disaster Reduction Campaign is therefore to increase global awareness of successful disaster reduction efforts in mountain areas so that vulnerable mountain populations can benefit from already existing experiences.

The second aim of the 2002 Campaign is to raise awareness more generally on disaster reduction, so that past and new solutions in vulnerability and risk reduction can be explained and shared.

For communities worldwide to avoid the sometimes fatal set backs natural disasters can create, disaster reduction needs to be an essential component of sustainable development planning, a need which is particularly acute for mountain communities. Underlining and promoting this over-arching principle is the third aim of this year's campaign.

#### **Support material of the 2002 UN World Disaster Reduction Campaign**

The following items are in preparation and will be circulated worldwide as of May 2002 to help highlight this year's theme and prepare for the celebrations of the International Day for Disaster Reduction on 9 October 2002. All items below will be available in the official languages of the United Nations, namely Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

- Information booklet (facts and figures on mountains and recent disasters, examples of successful disaster reduction cases)
- Poster
- Sticker
- Children's booklet on Disaster Reduction and Volcanoes





## Disaster Reduction for Sustainable Mountain Development

### *2002 World Disaster Reduction Campaign Activities*

#### **Call for Papers**

The ISDR Secretariat is looking for input for the brochure which is being produced for the 2002 Campaign. The input should not be longer than one page each and should illustrate successful examples of disaster reduction efforts in mountain areas. These examples will be published in a brochure and sent world-wide and cross-sectorally to inform the widest possible audiences of the efforts made by community based organizations (CBOs), UN bodies, NGOs, technical and scientific institutions etc... to reduce risk and vulnerabilities to natural hazards.

Please send your material to Nicole Appel, Promotion and Public Awareness Officer, ISDR Secretariat, 52 rue des Pâquis, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland, Tel: +41 22 917 97 06, Fax +41 22 917 90 98 email: [appeln@un.org](mailto:appeln@un.org)

#### **Additional Information**

##### **Background**

The United Nations has proclaimed 2002 as the International Year of Mountains (IYM) to increase international awareness of the global importance of mountain life and its sustainability. The International Year of Mountains represents an important step in the long-term process initiated by the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. One of the major outcomes of this Conference was Agenda 21, a global blueprint for sustainable development into the 21st century. Agenda 21's Chapter 13, entitled "Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development", placed mountains as a key issue in the global debate on environment and development. Please check [www.mountains2002.org](http://www.mountains2002.org) for more information.

##### **Key Definitions**

###### ***What is a natural hazard?***

Natural hazards comprise phenomena such as earthquakes; volcanic activity; landslides; tsunamis, tropical cyclones and other severe storms; tornadoes and high winds; river floods and coastal flooding; wildfires and associated haze; drought; sand/dust storms; insect infestations.

###### ***What is a natural disaster?***

A so called natural disaster is the result of the impact of a natural hazard on a socio-economic system with a given level of vulnerability, which prevents the affected society from coping adequately with this impact. Natural hazards themselves do not necessarily lead to disasters. It is only their interaction with people and their environment that generates impacts, which may reach disastrous proportions. The ISDR encompasses technical and environmental disasters only when caused by natural hazards. A disaster is usually defined as a serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources (IDNDR/DHA 1992).

#### **DEFINITIONS OF CORE CONCEPTS**

##### **DISASTER REDUCTION**

involves measures designed to avoid (PREVENTION) or limit (MITIGATION and PREPAREDNESS) the adverse impact of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters.

##### **PREVENTION**

involves the outright avoidance of the adverse impact of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters. Good planning is an example of disaster prevention, i.e. the decision not to build houses in a disaster-prone area for example.

##### **MITIGATION**

involves measures taken to limit the adverse impact of natural hazards and related environmental and technological disasters. Examples of mitigation are the retrofitting of buildings or the installation of flood-control dams, training and legislation

##### **PREPAREDNESS**

involves measures taken in advance to ensure effective response to the impact of disasters. Preparedness measures include effective evacuation infrastructures or the regular testing of warning systems.





## Disaster Reduction for Sustainable Mountain Development

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#### **The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction**

The UN has established the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction as a global framework for action with a view to enabling all societies to become resilient to the effects of natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters, in order to reduce human, economic and social losses. It involves a conceptual shift from an emphasis on disaster response to the management of risk through the integration of disaster reduction into sustainable development. The implementation of the Strategy is premised on the establishment of partnerships between governments, civil society organizations, UN agencies, the scientific community, the media as well as other relevant stakeholders in the disaster reduction community. The four goals of the Strategy are to increase public awareness about disaster reduction, to obtain commitment from public authorities, to stimulate inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral partnerships, and to improve the scientific knowledge of the causes of natural disasters and the consequences of the impact of natural hazards. The UN General Assembly has mandated two additional tasks which are directly relevant to disaster reduction; the continuance of international cooperation to reduce the impacts of El Niño and La Niña and the strengthening of disaster reduction capacity through Early Warning measures.

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