

**Summary of national information
on the current status of disaster reduction,
as background for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction
(Kobe, Hyogo, Japan 18-22 January 2005).**

This document presents a summary of main trends, concerns, achievements, future directions and good practices in disaster risk reduction based on national information received from over 100 countries as part of the preparatory process for the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Hyogo, in January 2005.

The information provided by countries served as one of the main inputs for the “Review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World. The original national reports submitted by countries are available in the UN/ISDR website under country information. (insert weblink).

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I. Introduction

Background

At its 58th session, the United Nations General Assembly decided to convene the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, 18-22 January 2005). Based on resolution A/RES/58/214 of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and resolution A/RES/58/215 on Natural Disasters and Vulnerabilities, the involvement of national authorities was highlighted as crucial for making the Conference relevant for future disaster risk reduction policies.

National authorities and platforms on disaster reduction were therefore invited to provide information to identify needs and develop future policy recommendations for consideration at the Conference.

The preparation of the national information provided an opportunity to bring together stakeholders from governments, academic and other sectors dealing with disaster risk reduction. In many cases consultations were held with institutions specializing in disaster management including environmental planning and education departments, meteorological services, NGOs and other key domains.

To facilitate the preparation of the national information, guidelines were provided by the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) through various channels: permanent missions, United Nations resident coordinators' network, national platforms, regional offices, and official focal points. The guidelines were also posted on the ISDR website in three languages (English, Spanish and French) and later translated into Russian.

The guidelines provided a reporting structure based on the components and priority areas specified in the ISDR/UNDP "Framework for disaster risk reduction for guidance and monitoring"¹. The following themes serve as a core set of principles to understand, guide and monitor current status of disaster risk reduction and therefore provide a common basis for consolidated observations:

- Political Commitment and Institutional Aspects;
- Risk Identification;
- Knowledge Management;
- Risk Management Applications and Instruments;
- Preparedness and Contingency Planning;

Methodology

Information on the status of disaster risk reduction outlook, policies and activities was provided by 113 countries through August to December 2004.

¹ See ISDR website: <http://www.unisdr.org/dialogue/index.htm> ,
<http://www.unisdr.org/dialogue/word%20doc/Framework%20background%20doc%20IATF-8.doc>

As the guidelines illustrated clear indications on the structure of the reporting, matrix tables were used as internal means to analyse both the quantitative and the qualitative aspects of comments provided. Additionally, geographical groupings, including development aggregates, were used as a tool to index countries' comments and identify common patterns and challenges.

This paper provides an overall summary of countries' views and activities on disaster risk reduction, followed by more detailed preliminary observations based upon the five main components mentioned above. It also provides preliminary conclusions, and suggests possible matters of emphasis for further action to implement disaster risk reduction. The analysis is complemented by some selected good practices and elements and areas of particular interest raised by countries to address at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR).

II. General Analysis of the Information Received

The ISDR Secretariat's request for national information resulted in a significant response in the number and quality of material provided. In many cases, information was supplemented by annexes in the form of supporting documentation, additional publications and website addresses which provided elaboration to interested parties as well as promoting initiatives on the subject.

The quality of the documents is generally of a very good standard, although some difficulties have been encountered in interpreting data provided. In some cases, information was supplied in distinctive formats in terms different than those that the guidelines implied, which necessitated the ISDR Secretariat to extrapolate conclusions. Additional brochures or publications were provided relating to disaster risk reduction, 98% of the information was submitted in English, Spanish or French.

The geographical distribution of submissions is illustrated in figures 1 and 2, showing a well balanced distribution and African countries particularly well represented.

Fig. 1. Distribution of national reports by regions

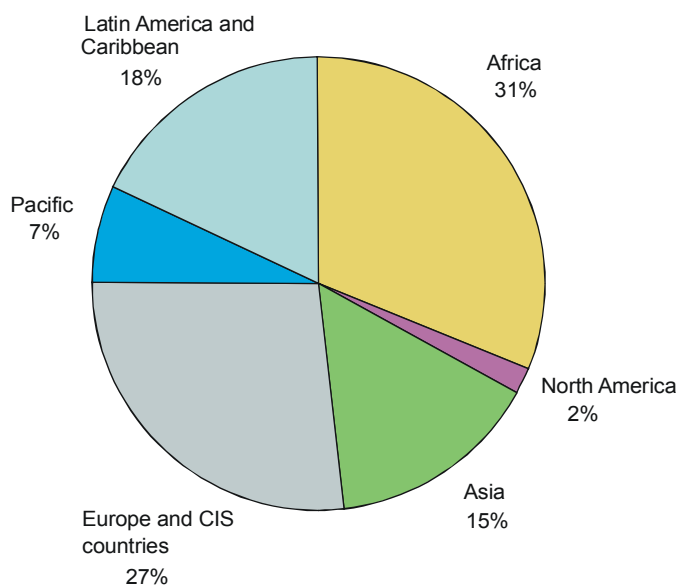
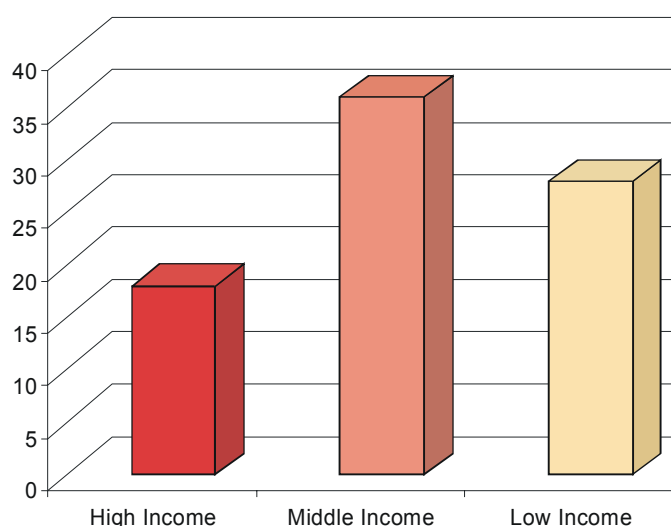


Fig. 2. Distribution of national reports by regions



III. Terminology and Underlying Aspects

The information provided a general positive picture in the indication of political commitment able to address the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World.

Information was very satisfactory in providing a comprehensive and detailed view of a long document in some cases, such as British Virgin Islands (which provided an individual report), Iran, Japan and Russia. In others like Kenya, Uganda, UK and South Korea, very valuable information was conveyed more succinctly.

There have been a variety of contributors involved in the preparation of the national information depending on countries' approaches. Some countries have privileged consultations with a large spectrum of players involved in disaster risk reduction. For instance, countries that have national platforms, such as the Czech Republic, Germany, Iran, Costa Rica, Philippines and Switzerland, among others, have produced a document based on a consultative process. In other cases (Austria, Bangladesh, Yemen, Senegal and South Africa) information resulted from the coordination efforts made by a ministry or a disaster management unit in consultation with other departments, NGOs and civil society. National efforts have been expressed together with the participation of the United Nations system in the case of Ethiopia, Haiti and Kenya, among others. Although there are a few exceptions, generally the documents have been of a high standard providing a full perspective in each component of the report. Clearly the broader consultations have represented a significant forum to discuss and jointly assess the country's development and challenges regarding the issues.

Information provided was candid and there was little apparent indication of responding in a manner to meet assumed expectations. The result offered the possibility of drawing a realistic map of needs, requirements and issues confronted by countries during the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World. The more specific expression of common issues and concerns are reflected in the analysis of the five main components indicated below.

Over three quarters of the national information identifies resource constraints (financial, technical or human) as the main impediment to realizing a more efficient approach to disaster risk reduction. Almost three quarters of the reports explicitly refer to financial resource, with Africa as the most concerned region.

Lack of sufficient national and intersectoral coordination is also regarded as a crucial problem limiting the number of actors taking part in disaster risk reduction efforts and in the wider implementation of national strategies.

Public awareness represents another major challenge where efforts need to be strengthened.

A consolidated review of the national information has highlighted some important inconsistencies. In some cases, there is a tendency to use various disaster-related terms in different ways with unclear meanings. Overall difficulties in translating the meanings of technical terminology between different languages may be an underlying cause.

However, in some cases the terms “disaster management” have been applied in the context of discussing “disaster prevention”. Similarly, the terms “disaster response” has been applied in situations where the subject under discussion was “disaster risk reduction.” Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a necessity to develop a broader understanding of common concepts and expressions associated with disaster risk reduction².

The shift in perceptions from emergency response and disaster management to the broader contexts of disaster risk reduction is still very much an ongoing process, and subject to various interpretations.

IV. Body of Indicative Experiences

This section provides more detailed preliminary observations based on five main components expressed in the ISDR/UNDP policy framework to understand, guide and monitor current status of disaster risk reduction. These common bases for consolidated observations also provide the structure for the “Review of Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World” and the series of drafts of the outcome document that evolved in the finally adopted “*Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.*”.

The overall quantitative indications are not easily attributable to any particular regional or sub-regional dimension, and figures reflect the totality of information received.

It should also be noticed that the review of the reports highlighted different degrees of specificity or elaboration attached to the responses. Caution is therefore necessary in assuming that favourable mention of the subject necessarily translates in fully realised capacities.

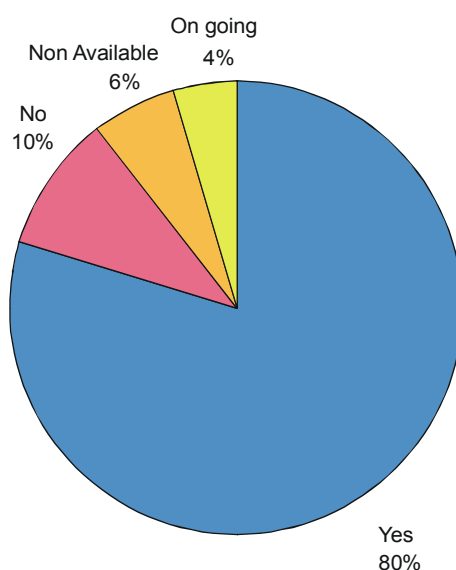
Political Commitment and Institutional Aspects

National Policies and Legislations

The role of political commitment as an essential ingredient for sustained risk reduction efforts is recognised by a significant number of countries. Existing legislation in form of decrees and laws, national policies or strategies were cited by over three quarters of the countries, although less frequently have these yet related in the context of National Policies.

² It might be useful in this regard to consult UN/ISDR basic definitions on disaster risk reduction available on its website and as annex to the UN/ISDR publication “*Living with Risk – A global review of disaster reduction initiatives*” United Nations, 2004.

Fig. 3. Percentage of countries reporting on decrees and laws, national policies and strategies



The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) is explicitly mentioned as a “turning point” for the creation of either national legislation or committees by Botswana, Iran and Morocco. All the other countries, among those responding positively, have created or updated their national policies or legislation since 1994. In many cases the process is still ongoing. Such an active level of political activities focusing on disaster risk reduction, with a very high presence of ongoing updates and developments, suggests that the issue is becoming increasingly recognised as a matter of national interest. Such evident interest in revising earlier policies or legal instruments may reflect a growing need for more coherent expression of disaster risk subjects among various government sectors prior to the formulation of a national policy or strategy.

Many governments, to their credit, have for some time recognised the importance of shifting from an emphasis on disaster management and response to the wider considerations of disaster risk reduction. However, many legislative initiatives and political mechanisms are still mainly focused on disaster management.

It is evident that the expression of political commitment to disaster risk reduction does not necessarily result in its implementation. In many cases lack of financial, human or technical resources and inadequate capacities are cited as tangible obstacles.

National bodies for the realisation of multi-sectoral coordination are very much reflected in the high majority of the countries’ information. A range of good practices was offered on this issue particularly from countries having a national platform and from Austria, Canada, Israel, Slovenia and Sweden.

Functional and well-established coordination bodies are found in Latin American and Caribbean countries, particularly in El Salvador, Mexico and Nicaragua. Their national engagement has been reflected in equally demonstrative regional institutional frameworks and policies such as the Andean Regional Programme for Risk Prevention and Reduction, the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Care as well as the Central American Coordination Centre for Disaster Prevention. In other cases, national committees have

become the driving institutions ensuring the presence of disaster risk reduction issues among governmental areas of activity, as has been the case for Iran, Japan, New Zealand and Switzerland.

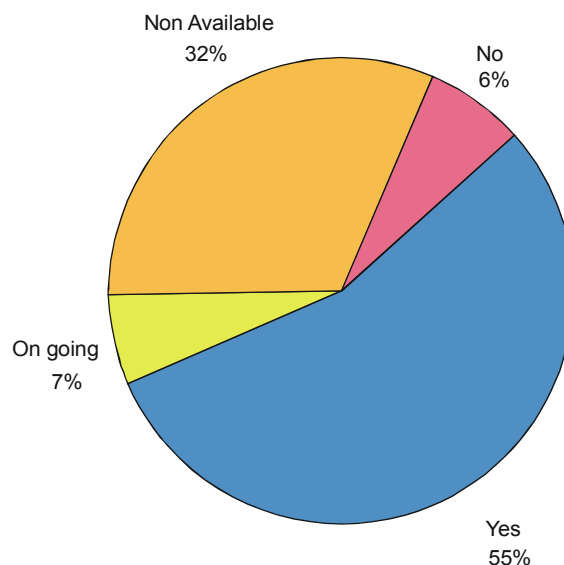
Decentralisation, of both budget and responsibilities, has been found, as an expression of successful approaches on disaster risk reduction, by a few countries. Good examples in promoting local government to be mainly responsible for the implementation of disaster risk reduction were provided by Finland, New Zealand, the Philippines and Russia. Other successful local level initiatives were presented by South Africa, which has Disaster Management Centres, and Disaster Management Advisory Forums at both provincial and municipality levels.

Disaster reduction and development

Although statistical projections shown in Fig. 4 provide an encouraging indication of disaster risk reduction being integrated into development plans, a significant number of countries neither stated nor denied this integration process. While this may be interpreted as lack of holistic vision from the authority providing information, more likely this may indicate that the fundamental link between disaster risk reduction and development needs to be strengthened.

Some countries openly expressed their recognition of the challenges in proceeding to include disaster risk reduction into development planning process.

Fig. 4. Percentage of countries incorporating risk reduction in sustainable development plans of actions



There was a growing acknowledgment by an important number of countries that the risk of disasters is linked to environmental problems and unresolved issues essential for sustainable development.

Information was reported in several submissions including those of Haiti, Mongolia, Montserrat (which provided an individual report), Namibia and Pakistan, which illustrate examples of disaster reduction components associated with sectoral programmes mostly of environmental nature. These are related to such areas as, climate change and extreme weather events, environmental action plans and environmental polluting plans among many others.

A number of good practices, which relate disaster risk reduction to development activities, are provided by countries like Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Hungary, Ivory Coast, Mauritius, Romania, South Africa and Uganda. While they are expressed in different specifications, disaster risk reduction is part of their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP), Common Country Assessments (CCA), United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the Djibouti experience for instance, disaster risk reduction was identified as a priority issue in their CCA; included in the PRSP and considered as a cross cutting issue in the UNDAF. As the MDGs provide the overall objectives for sustainable development, they have been included as part of all the above-mentioned national strategies for development.

People-centred and community-based approaches.

Community actions and public participation are recognised as successful factors to advance risk reduction measures. Overall, national responses offered a good variety of success stories and initiatives. Local community involvement has succeeded in providing indispensable support to those needing help. Good examples of this were found in India, Iran, Turkey and in Latin America and the Caribbean after the occurrence of earthquakes and tropical cyclones.

Initiatives to convey common actions on disaster risk reduction continue to become evident. Good practices have been illustrated, like the creation of “memoranda of understanding” to avoid duplications of efforts to expand relationships among various actors despite their differing identities, structures and focus related to hazards and disaster risks.

Although coordination among governments, NGOs, academia, media and civil society is improving it still represents a challenge for some countries.

The private sector has generally been less involved in the national picture of disaster risk reduction compared to community initiatives. Nonetheless, Japan, among others, provided an example of integration of the private sector.

Risk identification, assessments, monitoring and early warning.

Hazard mapping, vulnerability assessments and monitoring.

It has been evident that in most of the countries risk identification is part of their current agenda. Very frequently the information provided has indicated the types and list of hazards.

Knowledge of potential risks isn't in many cases followed by the consequent creation of a systematic collection of data and mapping.

The positive outcome of the use of technology, of various degrees of sophistication, for hazard mapping and assessments was often mentioned, with Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping referred to as the predominant tool. Countries lacking access to technology have almost constantly highlighted such a disadvantage, indicating the continuing need of support to overcome such impediments.

Many countries stated that hazard mapping resulted from government collaboration with scientific agencies, academic and research institutions both at central and local levels. Vulnerability and capacity assessments were often mentioned as the result of joint efforts. Some national information particularly from African countries indicated that annual assessments are undertaken, often jointly by the Governments, United Nations, NGOs and in a few cases private sector. Many of them feature the attention of needs of local population.

Monitoring and risk mapping were a constant factor in countries' reported approaches to disaster risk reduction although different levels of implementation are currently being realized in various countries. In some cases, as in Nicaragua, national monitoring mechanisms are linked to regional ones by the use of sophisticated satellite technology. Some countries indicated the importance of expanded levels of monitoring and risk mapping from a national level to a regional one as a coherent development and improvement of national monitoring and risk mapping.

As possible interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions, the national reports have highlighted a concern towards emerging risks such as HIV/AIDS, SARS and Avian Flu. Among some of the countries referring to these emerging risks there have been Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mongolia and Uganda.

Systematic socio-economic and environment impact and loss analysis.

More than half of the countries reported efforts in the creation of socio-economic and environmental impact loss analyses. In many instances though such analyses were reserved mostly for major disasters and adhoc hazards, highlighting the necessity of applying a more systematic approach to the issue. Reports that have highlighted this necessity include those provided by Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Ghana, Macedonia, Madagascar, Montserrat, Romania and Turkey. South Korea has provided a good account of keeping its systematic information updated and widely distributed by publishing a yearly "*White Book*," which includes data and details on environmental impact and loss analysis.

While the technical collection of data and hazards mapping appears to exist in the majority of countries, the information is not often systematically distributed.

Early Warning Systems

As a result of understanding and mapping hazards together with monitoring and forecasting impending events, early warning systems are reported to be present, although in different forms and levels of efficiency in most of the national information received. In such countries as like British Virgin Islands, Ethiopia, Mauritius and some other small island developing states, accomplishments have been expressed regarding more effective early warning systems.

In many cases, early warning systems appear to be rather more simple alert systems, with limited capacities to collect, analyse and distribute information. Technical advancement and scientific improvement of early warning systems have been mentioned as being necessary or, if already realized, as having beneficial value. Others have specifically referred to the growing need and evident application for early warning systems in relation to technological hazards, in particular CIS countries and Europe.

Knowledge management

Information management and academic research as common links to national or local institutions.

Information management and consequently wider dissemination has been identified as crucial for ongoing research, national planning, monitoring hazards and in all aspects relating to disaster risk reduction.

Generally disaster risk information management was found to be part of the countries' *modus operandi*. Some good examples of information databases were indicated as being available at country level and internationally through the web, provided by, among others, Nicaragua, Russia and Switzerland.

Although progress with regard to information databases was found to be encouraging in many cases there is no systematic approach to the issue.

Trends show that such inadequacy can be overcome with a sizeable majority of countries planning or implementing the creation of a database. The interest in the creation of databases can also be interpreted as understanding the value of systematic data collection as the primary input for identifying trends in hazards and vulnerabilities. In some cases this difficulty was combined with only a small number of actors sharing information and inadequate cross-sector communication.

Dialogue between academic, research and national institutions appears to be evident especially where national committees have been established. In other cases such dialogue is restricted to formal events such as workshops. This form of collaboration and information sharing has in a few cases overcome the national boundaries and provided encouraging examples of international collaboration mechanisms.

Good examples are provided by, among others, in the CIS countries' Interstate Program of Joint Scientific-Technical Investigations and in the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency. In some cases information among countries is exchanged on a regular basis particularly in relation to certain hazards.

Education Programmes and Training

Somewhat more than half of the countries reported having some form of education programme related to disaster risk reduction in the school system. This overall encouraging situation is put into practice by a great variety of educational initiatives, although in many cases they simply express security procedures in the schools' immediate environment. Most

of the countries report having some form of schooling informative sections running from elementary school up to high school level.

In many occasions, disaster awareness was not specifically categorized as a subject in its own right but rather it was integrated into science subjects.

Quite a few countries are reporting currently undergoing an update review process in their educational material. The general perception of the ongoing revisions is that disaster risk reduction might be integrated with the often still predominance of specific emergency-related educational material.

In a few cases, disaster risk reduction oriented university degrees or a PhD, are available as in Morocco, Sweden and Switzerland. Educational material has been reported in a few cases as joint initiatives between ministries of education and specialized commissions dealing with disaster risk reduction issues. The number of actors involved in the preparation of educational material seems to be varying with the involvement of specific multi-agencies committee in a few cases.

In a minority of cases, legislation will specifically address public education strategies on the subject. In New Zealand, for instance, Civil Defence Emergency Management Public Education Strategy and a multi-agency Committee overviews the development of initiatives on the subject.

Different types of training programmes are reported as being available in the majority of the countries but the information has equally been matched by calls for strengthening training capacities. The Government and technical staff related to disaster risk reduction benefit from training in the subject both at national and local levels although training is still in need of more systematic approaches. In some cases National Disaster Centres and technical bodies organise training aimed at civilians with the involvement, occasionally, of NGOs and Local Government Unit. Overall it should be highlighted that training is almost exclusively focused on disaster preparedness and response.

Traditional indigenous knowledge

The importance of traditional knowledge is visible in the national information, however it is not systematically reflected in the use of traditional mitigation and coping practices as a means of achieving greater community self-reliance in dealing with disaster. Generally, traditional knowledge is widely mentioned by African, Asian and Pacific countries. In High-Income OECD countries, in Europe and in the CIS, traditional knowledge is acquired from training initiatives, consultation processes and the specific collection of information contrary to Africa, Asian and Pacific, circumstances in which traditional knowledge is, to some extent, still passed on routinely between generations.

National public awareness initiatives

The vast majority of the countries have reported some form of awareness initiatives relating to disaster risk reduction. Only a few have developed a strategy on communication and

awareness specifically addressed to the spread of a prevention culture like in the case of Nicaragua and Venezuela among others. Many national information reports provided some excellent examples and ideas on public awareness. Among others, Algeria, with its “*Caravanes*” disseminates messages to the most remote parts of the country by theatrical representations, and Finland promotes “Children’s Safety Olympics.”

It should be considered though that individual examples are far from demonstrating a coherent and well-structured national approach in awareness initiatives. Limited resources and the need to strengthen coordination have been mentioned as impediments to making a wider impact on national public awareness.

Risk Management Applications and Instruments

Linking Environmental Management to Disaster Risk Reduction

Information provided suggests that instruments for risk management have proliferated especially with the recognition of environmental and natural resources management. Countries frequently provided examples on linking environmental management and disaster risk reduction. Wetland and watershed management to reduce flood risks, deforestation to control landslides, and the control of drought via ecosystem conservation appear to be the most common applications.

Risk management application is provided in national strategies or legislations as well as in the form of expanded partnerships, community-based and networking experiences. Examples of the creation of national strategies or legislation are provided, among others, by Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Germany, Namibia and South Korea. Community-based, networking experiences and partnership initiatives were mentioned by Austria, El-Salvador, India, Thailand, Uganda and generally from Latin America and Caribbean countries.

In a few cases, there has been expression of the links between environmental management and disaster risk reduction at regional levels. A good example is set by the Green Corridor projects, where the governments of Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldova and Romania have set up the rehabilitation of wetlands and forestation on the lower Danube water course.

Financial Instruments

Financial instruments are increasingly recognised as useful means for reducing risk and self-reliance in recovery. Forms of insurance, calamity funds, catastrophe bonds, and micro finance are overall utilized by more than half of the countries providing information.

The use of insurance as a tool to spread the burden of risks appears to be difficult to implement in low-income countries, particularly in Africa. Cash compensation and distribution of seeds has been adopted as a form of recovery trying to produce a temporary alternative instrument to insurance policies.

In some cases insurance programmes have been identified as urgent but their implementation is challenged by financial constraints.

Technical measures or programmes on disaster risk reduction.

A large number of countries provided examples of technical measures or programmes on disaster risk reduction. Technical measures such as flood control techniques, foreshore projects, soil conservation practices and earthquake resistance are among the most common examples offered.

Advanced technologies are found to be in widespread use or, when missing, regarded as a necessary tool to improve risk management. Techniques related to remote sensing, information and communication technologies are mentioned quite often.

Although building codes on disaster resistant constructions are recognised and in existence, it is widely known and accepted that, for a variety of reasons, they are often not enforced or adhered to.

Preparedness and Effective Response

Disaster contingency plans

Effective contingency planning and response capacities have been recognised as a useful instrument to reduce fatalities both from direct and indirect effects.

The majority of countries' information refers to the existence of disaster contingency plans at both national and local levels. Civil protection seems to play an active role especially in disaster preparedness requiring specialized skills and public mobilization. Community participation in disaster preparedness and response is proved to be recognised while NGOs involvement is more predominant in low-income countries.

A systematic update and review of contingency plans has been highlighted in most cases as the common challenge to more efficient preparedness and response mechanism.

Government emergency funds and facilities

Some forms of emergency funds or facilities are indicated in almost all the national information received. The degree of their presence is coherently expressing income criteria. It is equally evident that low income countries have difficulties providing both emergency funds and facilities, but they express a higher presence of solidarity funds.

A wide variety of specifications on the subject have been provided by national information. In a few cases as in some CIS countries, there have been specifications on solidarity funds expressed by a prescribed compulsory part of income from private sector. These funds, maintained on special companies' accounts and other legal subjects are annually transferred to solidarity funds and used in the cases of loss from hail, droughts and storms among others.

The prevision of government emergency funds are, in a few cases, explicitly mentioned as overcoming national dimension. Annual allocation for regional emergency management and disaster response appears to be standard practices in a few cases, among others New Zealand for the Pacific region and the Russian Federation for CIS countries.

Actors responsible for Coordinating Disaster Response

National information shows a growing recognition that a well-organised disaster management system will be expressed by units representing multiple actors responsible of coordinating disaster response.

An encouraging level of decentralisation, expressed by local autonomy, has been indicated in many of the reports submitted.

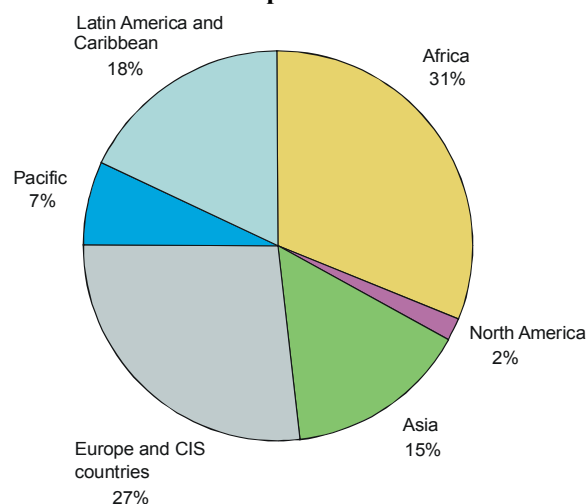
A number of constraints have been highlighted in coordinating disaster responses. The most commonly mentioned are both financial and human resource limitations. The need to strengthen capacities for improved coordination mechanisms represents also a common challenge.

V. Examples of Good Practices

About three quarters of national information provided examples of good practices with a quality that illustrates enriched social, technical, organisational and capacity patterns. These important contributions express a desire to share information for the benefit of a wider audience involved in disaster risk reduction. Similarly, the ISDR Secretariat's broader use of dissemination of good practices advances its international information clearinghouse role.

As represented in the graphic below, there is an even distribution of good practices conveyed in the five main components of disaster risk reduction. These comprehensive practises suggest that accomplishments in disaster risk reduction are being pursued throughout the core principals reflecting the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World.

Fig. 5. Good practices provided by countries according to main components



A similar balance is reflected in the geographical distribution and income aggregates.

VI. Primary Areas which Need Attention at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction

While providing information about the current state of disaster risk reduction implementation, countries also conveyed areas of particular interest which they anticipated would receive further attention at the WCDR.

They are summarized here under the headings which correspond to the primary themes of the conference and related documentation derived from the policy framework for understanding, guiding and monitoring disaster risk reduction.

Political Commitment and Institutional Aspects

- Overcoming the challenges of integrating disaster risk reduction into national development planning policies
- Maximising and increasing resource availability and distribution (financial, human and technical)
- Raising awareness of disaster risk reduction among primary development actors
- Increasing community action and participation
- Strengthening political commitment and ensuring accountability

Risk Identification, Assessment, Monitoring and Early Warning

- Improving the application of risk identification procedures
- Standardizing data collection and information to reduce risk
- Expanding access and use of new technologies
- Reviewing hazards such as drought and famine, floods, water pollution
- Becoming more attentive to emerging risks such as HIV/AIDS, SARS, Avian Flu, climate change and to technological risks
- Improving early warning mechanisms

Knowledge Management and Education

- Assessing the role of disaster risk issues in the formal education system with a view to its wider incorporation into existing curricula.
- Strengthening the formal and informal training system at national, local and community levels.

Risk Management Applications and Instruments

- Motivating and strengthening community actions in applied risk management at local level.
- Developing financial instruments to spread or transfer risk particularly focused on impoverished and under served populations.
- Implementing land-use planning
- Including gender issues in disaster risk reduction strategies

Preparedness and Contingency Planning

- Improving the effectiveness of disaster response
- Increasing prevention, preparedness and response capacities with respect to environmental emergencies
- Strengthening capacity for risk reduction and response especially in developing countries

Implementation Arrangements

- Strengthening international and regional collaboration
- Mobilizing more financial, human and technical resources to support national disaster risk reduction efforts.
- Creating and reinforcing information networks and mechanisms related to wider access and use of databases, good practices and lessons learnt
- Strengthening institutional capacities to enable more systematic approaches to address natural and technological risks at local, national and international scale
- Developing capacities to improve sustainability of disaster risk reduction programmes

VII. Preliminary Conclusions

The following preliminary conclusions drawn from the variety of experience of expressed limitations convey the benefits of more widely shared information.

Accomplishments

- A recognition that disaster risk is linked to environmental problems and unresolved development issues was indicated by an important number of countries as being crucial to achieving sustainability;
- Political commitment has been highlighted as a fundamental requirement for success of any disaster risk management activities;
- Governments have recognised for some time the importance of shifting from an emphasis on emergency response and disaster management to the wider considerations of disaster risk reduction;
- Countries provided some excellent examples of good practices and initiatives;
- The significant response and amount of information provided indicates that there is an encouraging interest to expand the implementation of disaster risk reduction in many countries;
- The large spectrum of players involved in the preparation of the national information demonstrates a growing understanding of the need for more holistic approaches to be adopted in disaster risk reduction;
- The participation of the United Nations System and in particular the United Nations Countries Teams in the preparation of some of the national information demonstrates their commitment to support countries in their efforts to implement disaster risk reduction strategies;

- The preparation of consolidated national information stimulated discussion and assessment on the issue of disaster risk reduction at a country level.

The overall affirmative nature of comments provided a positive sign of countries' engagement in future endeavours to expand disaster risk reduction. However, it is also important to note that such encouraging observations are very often followed by various challenges. There is frequent expression of the need for improvement and difficulties in implementing the policies which are espoused. This underlines the importance of national and international future engagements to accomplish goals related to disaster risk reduction. Crucial challenges for the future follow.

Challenges

- International support is required to overcome financial, technical and human resources constraints representing the main challenge to the implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies.
- There is a need for international synergy in order to:
 - Strengthen international and regional collaboration;
 - Create and reinforce information network mechanisms on databases, good practices and lessons learned;
 - Support and strengthen institutions and building national capacities;
- Reallocation of national funds to meet national disaster reduction challenges has been mentioned as an important factor to determine an impact;
- Lack of national and intersectoral coordination;
- Integrating disaster risk reduction into national development strategies;
- The need to revise existing legislation on the subject to make it more coherent and relevant to all government sectors if it is to lead to the formulation of a national policy or strategy;
- A gap between the knowledge of potential risks and an actual systematic collection of data and mapping needs to be overcome;
- Although coordination among governments, NGOs, academia, media and public society in disaster risk reduction efforts is improving it still represents a challenge for some countries;
- The varied and inconsistent use of technical terms related to disaster risk reduction highlights the need for a more systematic approach to facilitate a common understanding of the subject. It also suggests widely ranging perceptions and at times uncertain understating on the respective roles and functions of emergency response or disaster management to the broader consideration of disaster risk reduction and in relation to national development sectors.

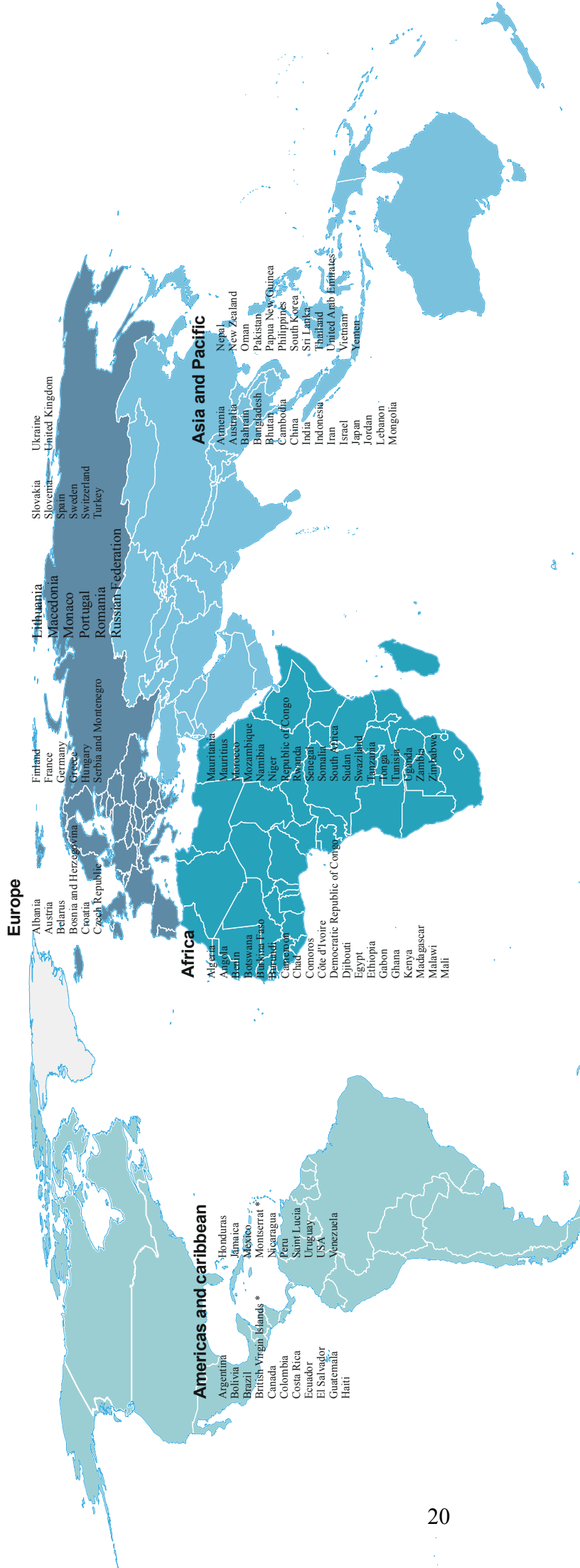
ANNEX

The following countries have provided information which informed the preparation of this report. At the time of writing some additional information continues to be received by the ISDR secretariat which will contribute to further refinement previous to the WCDR.

Countries that have provided national reports

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarous, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, British Virgin Islands (produced a separate report), Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Cameroon, Chad, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Côte d'Ivoire, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Monaco, Montserrat (produced a separate report), Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of Congo, Saint Lucia, Serbia and Montenegro, Somalia, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Romania, Rwanda, Russian Federation, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Tonga, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Countries that have submitted national reports for the WCDR



*: UK overseas territory, produced a separate report

Base map: UNEP/DEWA/GRID-Europe, November 2004
 Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.