



All about the 2008-2009 World Disaster Reduction Campaign

Welcome to the 2008-2009 World Disaster Reduction Campaign. The theme of the Campaign is Hospitals Safe from Disasters: Reduce Risk, Protect Health Facilities, Save Lives. During these two years the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) and the World Health Organization (WHO), with some support from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery of the World Bank, will partner with governments, international and regional organizations, non-governmental organisations and individuals worldwide, to raise awareness about why and how to redouble efforts to protect health facilities and ensure they can function during and in the aftermath of disasters.

This Campaign addresses Hospitals Safe from Disasters in line with the UN/ISDR secretariat's mandated focus on natural hazards. It does not address broader issues of hospital or medical safety, such as patient and staff infections, reduction in medical errors or the capacity to deal with mass epidemics; all of which are important in their own right and contribute to the overall safety of hospitals, but which fall beyond the primary scope of the Campaign.

As you read through this kit, you will find examples of what countries have done to reduce the vulnerability of their health facilities to disasters, either by applying lessons learned to build safer hospitals, identifying and correcting risks that threaten their ability to remain functional, or preparing and training the health workforce to act in emergency situations.

We invite you to take an active role in this Campaign. There are many ways to become involved. Learn more about making hospitals safe from disasters and visit the following web sites:
www.unisdr.org/wdrc-2008-2009 and www.who.int/hac/techguidance/safehospitals



What is a hospital safe from disasters?

Hospitals safe from disasters come in all shapes and sizes. All health facilities - large or small, urban or rural – are the target of this Campaign. Hospitals safe from disasters are about more than just protecting physical structures. Hospitals are safe from disasters when health services are accessible and functioning, at maximum capacity, immediately after a disaster or an emergency. A safe hospital ...

- ... will not collapse in disasters, killing patients and staff;
- ... can continue to function and provide its services as a critical community facility when it is most needed; and
- ... is organized, with contingency plans in place and health workforce trained to keep the network operational.

Ensuring that our hospitals and health facilities are safe from disasters requires strong commitment from the highest political level, and support and contribution from all sectors of society.

Why focus the Campaign on “Hospitals Safe from Disasters”?

Hospitals, health facilities and health services are a community’s lifeline in normal times and are especially critical in times of disaster. Yet time and again, they have been severely damaged or left unable to function in the aftermath of disasters. There are countless examples of health infrastructures — from sophisticated hospitals to small but vital health centres — that have suffered this fate.

The importance of hospitals and all types of health facilities extends beyond the direct life-saving role they play. They are also powerful symbols of social progress and a prerequisite for stability and economic development. As such, special attention must be given to ensuring their physical and functional integrity in emergency conditions.

The good news is that with current knowledge and strong political commitment, countries can reduce risk in hospitals and health facilities and make them safe from disasters by reducing their vulnerability to natural hazards.

What are the objectives of the Campaign?

The World Disaster Reduction Campaign on Hospitals Safe from Disasters aims to raise awareness and effect change that will:

- Protect the lives of patients and health workers by ensuring the structural resilience of health facilities;
- Make sure health facilities and health services are able to function in the aftermath of emergencies and disasters, when they are most needed; and
- Improve the risk reduction capacity of health workers and institutions, including emergency management.



How can we make this happen?

- Keep the spotlight on this important issue. Take every opportunity to raise awareness by including the topic on the agendas of high-level summits and technical meetings and documenting and sharing good practices of making hospitals safe from disasters.
- Take into consideration all key components of health service networks such as primary health care centres, blood banks, laboratories, warehouses and emergency medical services.
- Involve the widest possible variety of professionals - all health disciplines, engineers, architects, managers, maintenance staff and more - in identifying and reducing risk and building the resilience of communities.
- Identify health services' safety as a specific target for policy action and facilitate formulation of strategic action plans involving governments, health sector and any other actors to address it.

What are the key messages of the Campaign?

The most expensive hospital is the one that fails: Hospitals and health facilities represent an enormous investment for any country. Their destruction imposes major economic burdens.

Disasters are a health and a social issue: All disasters are a health issue, and damage to health systems affects every part of society and nations as a whole.

Protecting critical health facilities from disasters is possible: By including risk reduction in the design and construction of all new health facilities, and by reducing vulnerability in existing health facilities through selecting and retrofitting the most critical facilities.

The health workforce must be agents of disaster risk reduction: Health workers are central to identifying potential health risks from natural hazards and promoting personal and community risk reduction measures.

Who are we trying to reach?

- Policy and business decision makers in countries worldwide
- Health workers who provide critical services in these facilities and who should see themselves as agents of change in their communities
- Architects and engineers and other professionals who can contribute to ensuring that the health facilities they design are resistant to natural hazards
- Politicians at local and national levels who must be committed to providing the population with safe hospitals and effective health facilities in all circumstances, especially following disasters or emergencies
- Development banks and lending agencies that finance the construction, reconstruction or retrofitting of health facilities, which should push for the incorporation of disaster risk reduction (prevention, mitigation and preparedness) measures to ensure that hospitals and health facilities are as safe from disasters as possible.
- Donors and health development programs of a variety of funding and implementing agencies.



Who is organizing the Campaign?

The World Disaster Reduction Campaign is coordinated by the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO). Every two years, the ISDR system selects a topic that reflects one of the five priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. The theme of the 2008-2009 world campaign is Hospitals Safe from Disasters: Reduce Risk, Protect Health Facilities, Save Lives.

A wide range of activities will be carried out together by the UN/ISDR secretariat, WHO and their respective regional offices within the framework of the Campaign. Other ISDR system partners will be involved, in particular the World Bank, UNDP, WMO, UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF, FAO, ILO, WFP, IFRC and the various ISDR networks of NGOs, private sector, academic institutions, parliamentarians and local authorities. At the national level, the main responsibilities belong to the National Platforms for disaster risk reduction, which are focal points for the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Ministries of Health.

How long will the Campaign last?

The World Disaster Reduction Campaign lasts for two years, from January 2008 through December 2009. Although a number of countries are already undertaking risk reduction activities on health facilities, the momentum gained during this period will help sustain and mainstream disaster risk reduction into a broader array of health sector initiatives. Following the campaign, it is expected that a large number of governments will have developed strategic action plans to ensure that hospitals and health facilities will be made safe from disasters and that disaster risk reduction will be an integral component of health policies, with a view to facilitating the advancement of the goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action by 2015.

Where to go for more information?

Everything you need to know about the Campaign, including links to who is working on this issue in which countries, is on the UN/ISDR secretariat web site at www.unisdr.org/wdrc-2008-2009 and on the WHO web site at www.who.int/hac/techguidance/safehospitals