

# **Past and Future Activities of WSSI for Earthquake Disaster Mitigation**

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- **The International Association for Earthquake Engineering (IAEE) is a non-affiliated worldwide academic organization in the field of earthquake engineering. IAEE has over 50 member countries, and it holds the World Conference on Earthquake Engineering (WCEE) every four years.**
- **In 1992, IAEE formed the World Seismic Safety Initiative (WSSI) as its new undertaking in support of IDNDR. I as Secretary General of IAEE, with the help of Haresh Shah (Stanford University), began to make WSSI a real working initiative to support IDNDR.**

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- The first major effort of the WSSI was to assess the status of earthquake mitigation policies and plans in place in the countries of the Asia Pacific region. We thought it most appropriate to compile a status of earthquake mitigation policies within this region where major urbanization and economic development has been taking place in the most recent decade.
- Participants requested WSSI to help raise public and government awareness of earthquake risk in the decision-making sector, in particular.

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- WSSI's activities have been most visible in Nepal and Myanmar.
- There was almost no earthquake preparedness in Nepal when WSSI held an HLM in 1993. However, changes since then were dramatic. Awareness for earthquake preparedness has so much increased that Nepal is the most advanced country in the preparedness efforts for earthquake disasters in the Central Asia.
- Myanmar is a more recent example. Our first attempt in 1996 to hold an HLM in Myanmar turned out to be an absolute failure.

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- When we heard that the Bhuj earthquake had hit the northwest region of the State of Gujarat, India, on January 26, 2001, we all knew that, like many earthquakes in recent times, numerous academic, professional, and humanitarian organizations in developed countries would send teams of experts to study to publish many reports which would focus individually on scientific, technical, economic and social issues. WSSI came up with an idea of assembling a unique reconnaissance team from developed and developing countries around the world with different interests and different professional backgrounds. WSSI's

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WSSI tries to trigger local high efforts, build on and encourage local resources, and to help identify and prioritize local actions. We also attempt to assist in developing local sustainability through local efforts, assist in adding credibility to local efforts, and to assist in national networking. Mutual confidence and strong personal ties between the local people and WSSI are extremely important.

We believe it is better to establish small, realistic, well-focused projects that bring people from developed and developing countries to work together. We are not going to be too ambitious, but we do not want to be a simple critic who knows the way but cannot drive the car.