



## 4.5 Public awareness

*Increased public awareness about hazards is a vital element in any comprehensive strategy for disaster risk reduction. Public awareness campaigns can be conducted in schools, through the media and official, public, professional and commercial channels.*

*There is a responsibility for governments to promote public awareness of natural hazards and risk on a continuous basis. In order to create a culture of prevention, there needs to be a great degree of public participation and popular understanding.*

*The importance of public awareness in effective disaster risk reduction cannot be overstated and assumes different forms. These include:*

- *public awareness as a primary element of risk reduction;*
- *national public awareness initiatives;*
- *special events and major activities;*
- *the role of the media; and*
- *local community experience promotes public awareness.*

### Public awareness as a primary element of risk reduction

Public awareness and the creation of widespread understanding about disaster reduction have always been crucial elements in risk management strategies. The Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World of 1994 noted that particular attention must be given to improving awareness in vulnerable communities. Increasing public awareness is one of the four key ISDR objectives.

Public awareness conveys knowledge about hazards and existing solutions that can reduce vulnerability to hazards. To ensure political commitment for risk reduction measures, it is essential for all stakeholders to be aware of the hazards they are likely to face.

Government authorities have a basic responsibility to inform the public about hazards and the changing conditions of risk. However, in order to sustain public awareness, other sectors of society must be involved in disseminating information.

The inclusion of risk information in education and professional training is crucial. A successful programme must include professional and civic groups and national and local authorities. The

media also has a role to play. It is widely recognized that current tools and guidelines are inadequate, in part because of the limited exchange of information about global accomplishments.

Individual occasions or one-off public displays that are not relevant to daily livelihoods and social responsibilities of the public are unlikely to have an enduring effect. More strategic and ongoing approaches need to be conceived and supported.

#### Box 4.28

##### Basic principles of public awareness programmes

- They should be designed and implemented with a clear understanding of local perspectives and requirements with all materials reflecting local conditions.
- They should target all sections of society, including decision-makers, educators, professionals, members of the public and individuals living in threatened communities.
- Different types of messages, locations and delivery systems are necessary to reach the various target audiences.
- Sustained efforts are crucial to success, although single activities such as commemorative disaster reduction events and special issue campaigns can be useful if they are part of a larger, consistent programme.

At the same time, individual disaster events in neighbouring localities can provide a powerful impetus for sustained public interest. The timely and widespread circulation of lessons learned from disasters and the activities necessary to reduce risks in the future are more rapidly assimilated following a disaster event.

Having witnessed the damage to public infrastructure in California during the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989, the authorities in Seattle, Washington in the United States used the occasion to build public awareness.

They raised the necessary support for fixing roads, bridges and other public works at a cost of more than US\$ 150 million. When a magnitude 6.0 earthquake shook Seattle in 2001, there was only one fatality and the primary city infrastructure largely survived with only moderate damage.

Public discussions in the wake of disasters can also be catalysts for change. Following the major earthquakes in India in recent years, the public demanded the revision of outdated risk management programmes. The 2000 floods in

**Box 4.29**

**Disasters increase public awareness**

Experience demonstrates that there are great opportunities to mount public awareness programmes immediately following a major disaster.

The impact of the El Niño event in 1997-1998, Hurricanes Georges and Mitch (1998), followed by the losses from the earthquakes in El Salvador (2001), had such an enormous impact on public understanding that they far exceeded what any planned publicity programme could have ever accomplished in Central America.

Previously, public information typically focused on emergency preparedness and crisis response issues. Since these devastating events, the complex issues of risk have become associated with problems of poverty, social exclusion, lack of access to resources, and untenable use of land and unwise use of uncontrolled building practices.

There is now the recognition that values associated with risk reduction must be conveyed through wider public exposure and achieved by making permanent changes in educational curricula. The successful efforts to teach environmental consciousness through the formal basic education system in Costa Rica show what can be accomplished with a coherent and sustained strategy.

**Box 4.30**

**Strategies for awareness-raising**

**Awareness-raising as a policy tool**

In awareness campaigns, policy makers and other interested groups aim for behavioural changes based on new social norms and attitudes. However, a narrow focus on awareness-raising as a way to achieve specific goals set by politicians or researchers would be presumptuous.

**Awareness as an interactive movement**

Awareness-raising is an interactive movement in which different parties are engaged, each with their own roles, responsibilities and ways to make their voices heard and create social pressure. Awareness-raising is therefore inherently linked to knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

**Campaigns as means to influence and change behaviour**

All awareness campaigns aim to influence behaviour and, hence, they are useful to understand how communication influences behaviour.

Traditionally, campaigns focus on providing information and knowledge to influence individual attitudes. Knowing the results of behaviour and realizing the importance of doing so might convince one's own people to change their behavioural pattern.

There are other initiatives that can influence social norms. Here the goal is less to make an individual aware of a certain problem but rather to influence the subjective norm of a larger community.

Campaigns should focus on increased understanding of the problems and their solutions. The proposed changes need to be feasible and easy to carry out. Designing the whole campaign in a participatory manner can also help stay closer to the ideas, constraints and opportunities of the target audience.

Source: Adapted from Ideas for Water Awareness Campaigns by Wouter Schaap and Franck van Steenberg, produced in conjunction with the Global Water Partnership. <<http://www.collinsassoc.ca/water/contents.htm>>



Southern African resulted in political recognition of the need for regional discussion of the risks associated with recurrent natural hazards.

The challenge remains to sustain public interest in times of calm. It is the time between disasters when work in public awareness needs to be accomplished if future losses are to be avoided.

The aim of public awareness programmes should not be limited to conveying an understanding about hazards and risks to the public. It should motivate people to become involved in activities that can reduce the risks to which they are exposed.

Information needs to be consistent, with principal components repeated over a period of time. The subject must be incorporated throughout society, where people live and work, and by including it as a part of their daily personal or professional experience.

This is best achieved through encouragement and support for public information activities implemented at local levels. By drawing on earlier examples of local experience and traditional knowledge, communities can identify additional measures to promote a wider public appreciation of hazards or local capabilities to manage risks.

### National public awareness initiatives

Most countries with an effective national risk management authority are committed to increasing public awareness about hazards and disaster reduction practices. They usually proceed beyond occasional commemorative events or the use of posters, public announcements or handbooks, and often have national committees made up of stakeholders from all sectors of the society.

The government of Australia sustained an excellent public awareness programme in the 1990s. Many examples of their informative manuals, posters, pamphlets, community hazard maps, and descriptions of related activities are included in a comprehensive review, the Final Report of Australia's Coordination Committee for IDNDR.

The government of South Africa consulted with community groups to learn more about local

hazards and community risk issues prior to drafting a new national disaster management bill.

The National Disaster Management Office of Botswana conducted a survey and policy review late in 2001 to help in the development of a national public awareness strategy.

In the United States, both FEMA and the American Red Cross have provided extensive public information including links to many other organizations engaged in disaster reduction activities.

In Mozambique, the National Disaster Management Authority (INGC) uses disaster simulations as well as a variety of public forums to conduct awareness-raising programmes. A different location is chosen each year, usually a potentially vulnerable area near a provincial capital, and national leaders are invited to participate.

Televised panel discussions, public exhibitions, university seminars and presentations in schools are also conducted. At a more practical level and with a longer-term perspective, projects such as tree planting or the distribution of drought-resistant crops also take place. The activities are planned just before the rainy season when seasonal meteorological forecasts and updated emergency contingency plans are announced.

China has made widespread use of publications, media and other forms of publicity to raise the public consciousness about the importance of disaster reduction. In the past decade, more than 300 books have been published about the subject, and more than 20 different newspapers and periodicals have been created.

In addition, numerous international publications dealing with disaster risk issues have been translated into Chinese or adapted to Chinese conditions. In the future, the China National Committee for Natural Disaster Reduction (CNCNDR) plans to improve their public awareness programmes through greater use of broadcasting, video, and electronic means.

There are additional plans for CNCNDR to coordinate with schools to introduce new content on risk reduction in curricula, enabling youth to understand their own roles in reducing disasters.

Outreach campaigns have put the issue of disaster management on the public agenda. The China Association for Science and Technology has organized consulting services in disaster reduction for specific programmes. However, many activities have targeted urban populations. While a principal objective in most of these activities has been to influence policy makers and stakeholders at the national level, a challenge remains to instil a culture of prevention among poorer rural communities, those most likely to suffer during a disaster.

### Special events and major activities

Since the early 1990s, the IDNDR and ISDR Secretariats have organized an annual world disaster reduction campaign, whose overarching goal has been to raise awareness through an interactive process, to create social pressure and change people's perceptions about reducing the risks and vulnerabilities of natural hazards.

By bringing together diverse experiences and initiatives taking place worldwide, more people learn about disaster reduction, which can ultimately lead to changed perceptions and behaviours. These can include the organization of educational community gatherings to design risk maps, school classes to explain what should be done in the event of a disaster, training opportunities for disaster reduction practitioners and the development of national disaster management policies.

The campaign builds momentum throughout the year, culminating in the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction (the second Wednesday of October), celebrated internationally by global organizations, regional institutions and local communities, alike. Celebrations of the day bring together representatives of all facets of society, such as national governments, local emergency volunteers, school children and journalists to showcase examples of successful accomplishments in disaster reduction. The primary message is that disaster reduction can benefit communities worldwide as an essential part of sustainable development planning by avoiding the devastating setbacks that natural disasters can cause.

This public awareness strategy seeks to call governments and local communities to action. It

urges governments to develop and enforce building codes and to exploit scientific and technical knowledge for minimizing exposure to risk. UN agencies and their programme partners are committed to carrying out this strategy by bringing people and expertise together in the search for solutions.

In 2001, the theme was "Countering disasters, targeting vulnerability". In 2002, the theme was "Disaster reduction for sustainable mountain development", coinciding with the International Year of Mountains. In line with the International Year of Freshwater, the 2003 theme focused on water-related disasters: "Turning the tide on disasters towards sustainable development".

### Case: Bolivia

Since 1998, disaster reduction has been promoted in Bolivia through two programmes. One programme has focussed on supporting the national system for civil defence; the other has emphasized measures that can prevent avoidable risks and increase public awareness about disasters.

In 2001, a new campaign called "Risk management: A new vision on disasters" was launched to further the objectives of ISDR. A workshop was organized in July 2001 by the Universidad Nacional Siglo XX de Llalagua to promote the campaign.

Another workshop was held the following month in the city of Santa Cruz on community-based disaster management, conducted within the framework of a pilot project of the Association of the Municipality of Santa Cruz.

One of the most important achievements of 2001 was the approval of a new law for improving risk reduction and disaster awareness. The law encourages the identification of risk reduction measures that can be employed in the course of implementing projects that further sustainable development.

To support this process, manuals were prepared to guide people in local communities to assess risks, formulate practical policies, and then to apply risk management measures that could be incorporated



in local development programmes. These manuals were then tested and evaluated in selected municipalities.

### **Case: Jamaica**

A variety of local activities were conducted in Jamaica in June 2001, the country's official disaster preparedness month. A national church service was held to launch the month, broadcast live on television and radio. The following day, a press conference was held to introduce the public to the themes of disaster preparedness month. These were emphasized in public information campaigns the rest of the year.

Specific issues were also presented concerning local planning. An evacuation sign was introduced, sponsored by Medigrace Jamaica, which can be used to guide people out of the Portmore area in the event of an emergency evacuation.

The intended use of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management's (ODPEM) GIS was explained, and related computer technology in the National Emergency Operations Centre was highlighted.

ODPEM emphasised their initiative to include elements of popular culture in conveying disaster preparedness messages effectively to the public. This included the participation of several popular music disc jockeys and the promotion of commercial sponsorship to broadcast these messages.

One day was devoted to disaster preparedness in schools. The ministry of education called for an island-wide observance of the subject, and many schools participated in disaster related activities.

A hurricane preparedness day for businesses was also held during the month with widespread support from the business community. Several companies organized exhibitions, conducted drills and invited speakers from safety-related organizations.

A major exhibition was held in which 20 disaster-related organizations presented exhibits that displayed their products and services. ODPEM

also displayed emergency supplies that people should use in the event of a hurricane.

Finally, a seminar on contingency planning directed to business organizations was held at the conclusion of the month. With the objective to raise awareness about disaster planning and preparedness, participants came from many different business sectors to learn about topics such as establishing a planning team for risk reduction and conducting vulnerability analysis.

### **Case: Costa Rica**

On the International Day for Disaster Reduction, Costa Rica's National Risk Prevention and Emergency Response Commission (CNE) organized a community exercise in disaster preparedness. It involved an evacuation drill based on a local river flooding and resulting in mudslides affecting four communities.

A massive public awareness campaign about earthquakes was also launched. The Inter-institutional Emergency Commission of the University of Costa Rica organized a forum on the role of the media in disseminating information on disasters.

### **Case: Uruguay**

In Uruguay, the ministry of education's Emergency and Disaster Commission organized a workshop with the support of OFDA/USAID, the National Emergency System, and the local government. The Uruguayan National Red Cross Society participated in the International Day for Disaster Reduction alongside representatives of civilian, political, and military organizations, school children and the media.

The objective was to strengthen local communities by creating awareness of social responsibility, identification of hazards, prevention and risk, especially directed at children. Workshop participants were asked to draw risk and vulnerability maps relevant to their surroundings. Another meeting was held three weeks later for the participants to share their information and experiences about the composition and presentation of their various risk maps.

**Case: Colombia**

In Colombia, the devastating volcanic eruption of Nevado de Ruiz in November 1985 killed more than 25,000 people and swept away entire villages. Every year, national exercises, school and media activities take place to commemorate the disaster and renew people’s awareness about the risks they face. Similarly, in Peru, the Cajon de Huaylas earthquake in 1970 is commemorated every year. Special activities take place to remember the 67,000 people who died and to teach people how they can reduce risk in the future.

**The United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction**

Together with the World Health Organization Sasakawa Health Prize and the UN Environment Programme Sasakawa Environment Prize, the United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction is one of three prestigious prizes established in 1986 by founding Chairman of the Nippon Foundation, Mr. Ryoichi Sasakawa.

The total approximate value of the Award currently is US\$ 50,000, shared between the Laureate and the recipients of Certificates of Distinction and Merit. In addition to the financial prize, the Laureate is presented with the valuable UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction crystal trophy.

Nominations for the Award are submitted to the ISDR Secretariat and agreed upon by the UN Sasakawa Jury, composed of representatives from five continents. The Award ceremony takes place on the occasion of the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, the second Wednesday of October.

Nominations for the UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction can be made by:

- former UN Sasakawa Award Laureates;
- representatives of institutions specializing in disaster reduction;
- UN specialized agencies;
- Resident Coordinators of the UN system; and
- Permanent Missions to the United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva.

**Box 4.31**

**UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction Laureates**



- 2003 Mrs. Tadzong, née Esther Anwi Mofor, Cameroon
- 2002 Sergueï Balassanian, Armenian Association of Seismology and Physics of the Earth’s Interior (AASPEI), Armenia
- 2001 Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Germany
- 2000 Fondo Para la Reconstruccion y el Desarrollo Social del Eje Cafetero (FOREC), Colombia
- 1999 Prof. Mustafa Erdik, Turkey
- 1998 Mr. Ji Cai Rang, China, Prof. Wang Ang-Sheng, China
- 1997 Observatorio Sismologico del Sur-Occidente (OSSO), Colombia  
Dr. A.S. Arya, India
- 1996 Dr. Ian Davis, United Kingdom
- 1995 No Laureate
- 1994 National Emergency Commission, Costa Rica
- 1993 Dr. Vit Karnik, Czech Republic
- 1992 Geophysical Institute of the National Polytechnic School, Ecuador
- 1991 Mr. Franco Barberi, Italy
- 1990 Mr. Julio Kuroiwa, Peru
- 1989 Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Ethiopia
- 1988 ESCAP/Typhoon Committee, Philippines
- 1987 Ratu Kamisese Mara, Fiji

Candidates for the UN Sasakawa Award for Disaster Reduction shall have distinguished themselves through outstanding and internationally recognized action in the following fields:

- The implementation, at international or regional level, of activities designed to strengthen people’s awareness of natural disasters;
- The launching of scientific activities contributing to technological innovation facilitating disaster prediction;



- The launching of scientific or social activities contributing to the strengthening of disaster prevention and preparedness;
- The promotion of preventive activities which reduce the economic impact of disasters and contribute to sustainable development;
- Any other activities recognized as essential in promoting disaster prevention and mitigation (land-use planning, seismic risk reduction, awareness-raising, education etc.); and
- The candidate shall not be subjected to any kind of discrimination on the grounds of nationality, religion, race, sex or age.

*“Professional newspapermen love disaster – it is their business – but don’t rely on them to be very different from the rest of the community. The independent commercial media survives and thrives by reflecting the community it serves. If a community is complacent, then there is a fair chance that its journalists too will take the placid line... If people don’t die in thousands, it is not a disaster, and therefore not news. The preparedness message gets only a limited airing.”*

*Source: T. Radford, The Guardian, 1999*

### The role of the media

The media is a greatly undervalued means for increasing public awareness and providing information related to disaster reduction. Media people have the opportunity to take the lead in encouraging public information in the media. Environmental, political, education and development journalists can network within and between their respective organizations, working together on a basis of information sharing and dissemination of the information to the community.

Much more needs to be done to improve the role of the media in disaster management strategies. Current media coverage is overwhelmingly devoted to disaster events and the dramatic aftermath of damage and the provision of emergency assistance to survivors. With a few noteworthy examples, coverage about recurrent hazards or reporting about existing disaster risk management practices is much less in evidence.

### A professional’s viewpoint: What the media says and why

The media tends to reflect the mood of the community it serves. If there is already debate about the exposure to natural

hazards or concern about disaster awareness, then journalists are likely to amplify and focus this concern.

If there is no local interest in the subject, then a local newspaper, television or radio programme is unlikely to launch and sustain the discussion. There is, however, a moment to trigger such attention and to inspire media professionals to take an intelligent interest in the wider disaster subject. This moment is in the immediate aftermath of a disaster event.

Paradoxically, such moments also underscore huge cultural gaps that exist between journalists and the engineers, scientists, health teams and administrators who want to promote wider public understanding about risk.

The media wants the story. In the first bewildering hours after a catastrophe news is not always available. Instead there is silence. Roads are cut, communications are severed, water and power supplies are interrupted and the civic authorities and hospitals that should be the sources of information are themselves part of the disaster.

At such moments, reporters telephone frantically to find university or government-based specialists who might be prepared to speculate on what might have happened. When approached urgently, by often previously unknown questioners, these experts tend to worry about reputations for scholarly accuracy, mature judgement and political soundness. They often shrink from comment, apologetically promising to offer thoughtful analysis when firm information becomes available.

This is a mistake. News people have no choice. They must report on a disaster that has just happened even if they have only the sketchiest details. If an informed and thoughtful expert is hesitant to comment based on limited information, media reporters will go in search of a less-informed and less-thoughtful commentator who will.

It is at such moments that disaster risk management professionals have a golden chance to describe the pattern of loss and destruction. They can drive home the lessons of risk awareness and known procedures that can reduce those risks. They should seize the chance to do this, in vivid, clear and chilling language.

Once television cameras get to the disaster zone, images of injured children, weeping relatives and toiling rescuers begin to flood the public. The imagery and the grim statistics of suffering dominate the news. And then who will want to hear somebody talking in academic terms about monitoring hazards or mitigating future risks? Strong media networks allow for the development of resources towards increasing public awareness about hazards. Outspoken media reporting can provoke reaction by public officials and prompt incorporation of disaster reduction in local policies and planning. The media can also be utilized as an instrument for issuing early warning and hazard alerts.

With the objective of early warning being to provide individuals and communities exposed to disaster risk with accurate information about an impending hazard – thereby allowing them to act to reduce the probability of suffering losses – the media can play a most important function at the national and local levels by assisting in the provision of clear, consistent and timely messages to communities at risk.

There are some signs of change. Public reporting of disasters has begun to include references to human actions that have contributed to the severity of an event, particularly as they may relate to the loss of life and property.

Increasingly, questions are being raised about the responsibility of public officials in either contributing to, or tolerating hazardous conditions. Media reporting was outspoken about the inadequate quality of construction and placement of many houses that were destroyed by the Turkish earthquake in Izmit, in 1999.

In 1999, reporting about the extensive losses suffered in the Venezuelan mudslides queried why the informal settlements had been constructed in such potentially hazardous conditions. Reports also questioned whether extensive deforestation had contributed the disaster.

The extraordinary floods in Algiers in 2001 were reported as having been caused, in part, by unserviceable drainage systems. So far, such inquiry happens after the consequences of an unmitigated hazard become a political or newsworthy event.

In a more far-sighted outlook, some national officials seek to relate distant events to their own more immediate conditions. The response to the ISDR questionnaire by Western Samoa noted that one of the most important issues to be addressed was local media commitment to cover major world disasters.

Journalists were encouraged to describe relief responses in both the short and long term, so that the full coverage would influence their audiences to act with greater attention to disaster preparedness.

In Mozambique, an important objective of public awareness campaigns has been to develop the media as a better source of public information about hazards. INGC has made media relations a priority in improving public awareness.

The need for more accurate reporting was a recurrent theme expressed by journalists, district administrators and other local authorities. Now, disaster management officials are working together with technical specialists and journalists to involve the media more effectively as a means to issue early warning alerts.

Since the 2000 Mozambique floods, the media has played an increasingly valuable role in disaster management. At that time it served as an important catalyst for emergency action by the international community.

In October 2001, the National Meteorological Service inaugurated a television studio equipped with professional media equipment provided through Finnish development assistance. In this way, the country was able to increase its own capacity to provide better public information about the weather and potential weather hazards.

The most important medium for social communication remains the local language radio network of Radio Mozambique. This service





broadcasts information regularly about risk reduction measures, as well as communicating alerts at the time of imminent hazards.

INGC works with WFP to conduct training seminars for journalists in order to improve the quality of reporting, and an annual prize has been proposed for the best disaster reporting.

### Local community experience promotes public awareness

Some of the most effective public awareness measures take place at the local community level with the added advantage of involving a cross-section of the local population.

The Community Action Group for Floodwater in the Old Community of Rodenkirchen was founded in Cologne, Germany, after the severe flooding of the Rhine River in 1993 and 1995. This group advocates the interests of more than 4,000 residents in matters of local flood protection.

In 2001, the community action group sailed the boat Pegellatte up the Rhine from Cologne to Basel, Switzerland. The group staged events and conducted discussions in 18 towns and cities together with other community action groups and representatives of local authorities.

In 2002 the group took their floodwater campaign boat downstream from Cologne to the Rhine delta. Promoting greater awareness about flood issues is not limited to their community or country alone. The group's trips also go through parts of France, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The group cooperates closely with the German Committee for Disaster Reduction and the Rhine Emergency Floodwater Organization.

### Case: South Africa

A number of public awareness projects are currently underway in South Africa covering a variety of communities at risk. Ukuvuka: Operation Firestop aims to reduce the risk from wildfires in the Cape Peninsula. The campaign was launched in the Western Cape Province in February 2000 after fires burned land along Table Mountain behind Cape Town.

#### Box 4.32

##### Tsunami in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is highly susceptible to tsunamis because of its topographical conditions and the frequency of earthquakes and volcanic activity in the surrounding seas.

In 1998, an earthquake measuring seven on the Richter Scale occurred, with the epicentre only 30 kilometres from the coast of north-west PNG. The resulting tsunami struck coastal villages of the Aitape region almost immediately claiming more than 2,200 lives.

While tsunamis are not new to PNG, lessons learned from previous experiences were not passed on to new generations. People knew little about the imminent threat of tsunami hazards. Many residents who felt the earthquake did not seek refuge from the tsunami immediately and this contributed to the many casualties.

At the request of PNG authorities, the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) in Kobe, Japan agreed to transfer Japanese experience to local communities in PNG. ADRC produced posters and pamphlets in English and local languages with many pictures and illustrations. They distributed them to residents and school children living in coastal areas.

The information was also used and distributed by the PNG Red Cross. The lesson to beware of tsunamis following an earthquake and to seek refuge on higher ground has since spread to more people in the country.

In 2000, an earthquake measuring eight on the Richter Scale occurred off the PNG coast. While it created a tsunami that destroyed thousands of houses, there were no deaths. ADRC continues to work in this area following its commitment to provide guidance to neighbouring countries with similar problems.

Source: ADRC, 2001.

The Ukuvuka campaign has a four-year mandate. Its goal is to transfer lessons learned about conservation and biodiversity and to pass on these lessons to other communities. The primary objective is to protect the land and vegetation by controlling alien plant species and by rehabilitating fire-damaged areas.

Elsewhere in South Africa, the Tshwane Metropolitan Council embarked on a risk reduction campaign in urban communities. The campaign targets local risks including informal settlement fires, floods, extreme weather conditions, pollution and the spread of disease and HIV/AIDS.

The Western and Eastern Cape Provinces jointly implemented an innovative I-SPY awareness campaign. This programme involved the distribution of information boxes. These small cubes had magnifying lenses placed on either end. Information about reducing community hazards could be seen by looking through the magnifying lens. As the information was depicted in pictures, the messages crossed language barriers.

#### **Case: Nepal**

Nepal is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world. As both access and communications are difficult in much of the country, information from the central government about hazards is often difficult to convey. People in remote areas

are not easily provided with sufficient knowledge to reduce their immediate risks.

The government of Nepal is now training local leaders to disseminate disaster management information. In 2001, government officials, ADRC and local NGOs conducted training courses for local village chiefs, teachers, scouts and women leaders from 30 villages in ten of the most disaster-prone districts of the country.

The courses addressed the national disaster management system, knowledge about hazard-prone areas and possible countermeasures to reduce risks. Also, a radio broadcast service was utilized for the first time to disseminate disaster preparedness information.