

GlobalISDR



Photo: L. Friedman

Knowledge is POWER

The United Nations' Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, adopted by 168 governments during the World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in January 2005, along with the 2006-2007 World Disaster Reduction Campaign, addresses the ever growing concern for disaster risk management. A cooperative effort has brought together organizations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to take action. The focus is to reach beyond infrastructure, the environment, and typical recovery planning to build awareness in communities, and specifically among children, establishing the critical knowledge necessary for disaster prevention and response.

School infrastructure is a vital asset in community development, in times of disaster and prosperity alike. However, in many communities, school buildings consist of the simplest structures fulfilling only the most basic of needs, yet, when disaster strikes, these structures are often the only viable gathering point. As part of the disaster risk reduction awareness campaign, the topics of emergency shelter development and post disaster response are essential in establishing a clear understanding among children that they too can take an active role in changing risk factors of their immediate surroundings; understanding that while natural phenomenon will occur, preventive behaviors can mitigate the damage and, repercussions experienced.

“Disaster Risk Reduction Begins in School”

Partnering organizations in Latin America and Caribbean devised a fun and creative action plan to captivate the interest of children around this imperative topic, culminating in the “Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School” Art Contest and Awareness Raising Campaign. Is this initiative the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Plan International and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) combined resources and know-how for implementation.

The campaign outreach effort was launched in August 2006 in Panama City with a press conference capturing children learning through fun with a giant size version of the board game Riskland, a significant tool used in communicating the campaign theme. Thereafter, local Ministry of Education offices and other community officials were approached, sponsors’ local offices met with school directors and promotional visits were made by sponsors’ local and regional offices. A campaign Toolkit, a concise compilation of the resources available to promote the theme and art contest, was distributed as part of this outreach effort. This toolkit includes promotional posters, brochures, contest rules, guidelines for presenting the topic and promoting awareness a Riskland game, and the Toolkit CD containing newsletters, worksheets, and informative materials to reach all levels in communities. These materials were produced by all the sponsors including the various games and worksheets for children of all ages.

Outreach efforts have continued with promotional visits by sponsors to Costa Rica, Panama, Trinidad & Tobago Grenada and Guyana. The visits included interactive presentations by sponsors to children in which using art materials provided, the children depicted their understanding of the theme by creating an artistic entry for the contest. Promotional visits to the Caribbean were funded by the UN/ISDR and facilitated by the IFRC to collaboratively offer communities on-site visits and promotional materials. The local Red Cross offices in Trinidad & Tobago, Grenada and Guyana provided strong and well organized logistical support. This outpouring of hospitality made possible a successful, well orchestrated effort resulting in presentations reaching over 500 children and 50 school teachers, directors and parents in a five day tour to these countries. As part of the visits, a promotional package was provided to the schools visited and/or were left with representatives of each Red Cross office for use in furthering the promotional efforts. Promotional packages include campaign banners, art supply kits with instruction guides, and the campaign Toolkit information folder and CD.

Furthering the promotional visits, various Central American countries also received these promotional packages through the sponsorship ECHO and facilitated by UNICEF while 12 other countries in the target area were presented with the materials courtesy of IFRC. Sponsors’ local office representatives facilitated the promotional visits.

As the closing date approaches, plans are in place for an official unveiling of the winners in three age categories: 0 to 5, 6 to 9, and 10 to 12 years of age. First, second and third place, as well as honorable mention winners will be selected in each age category for inclusion in the production of the 2008 Calendar and posted on the UNICEF, UN/ISDR, Plan International, ECHO and IFRC websites. The unveiling and awards ceremony culminating the successful awareness raising campaign effort is set to take place in a formal presentation in Panama City on October 10, 2007, International Day for Disaster Reduction.

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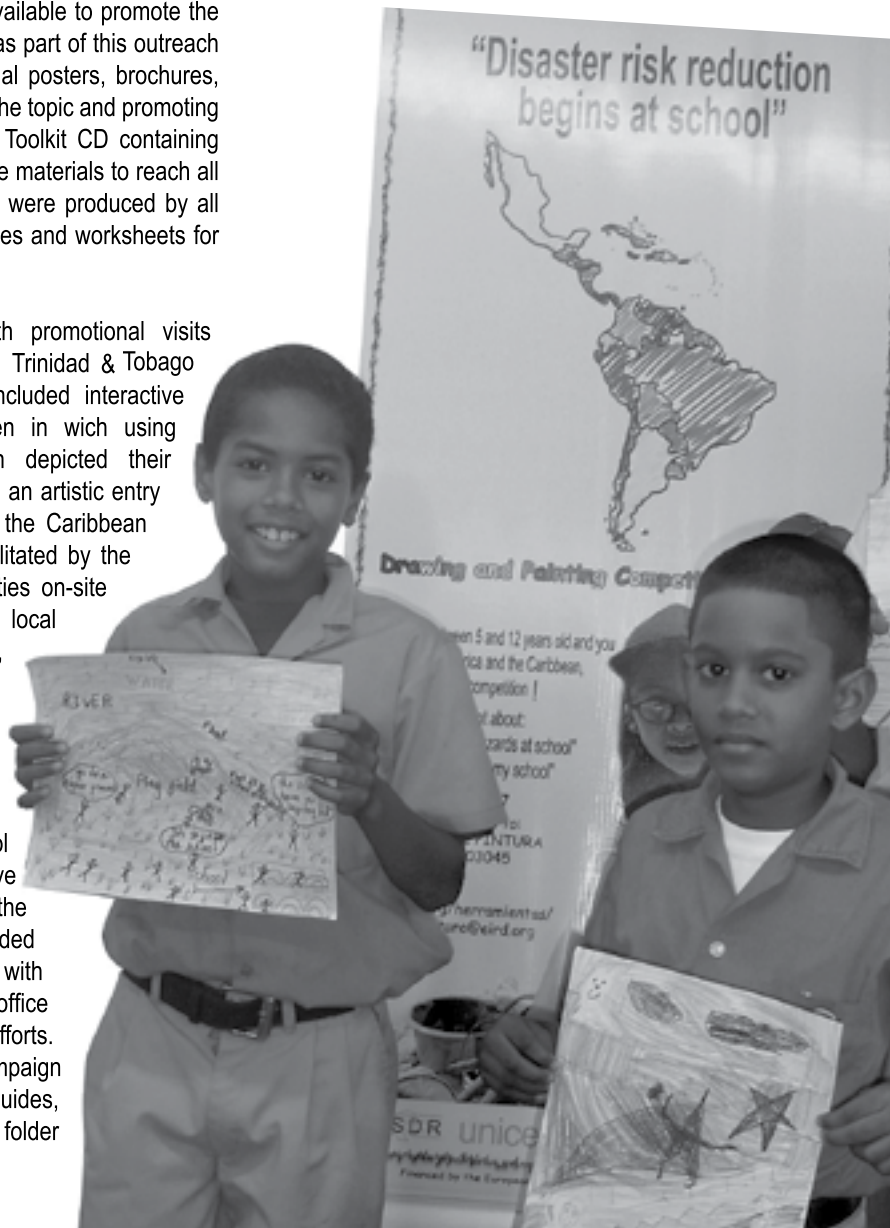
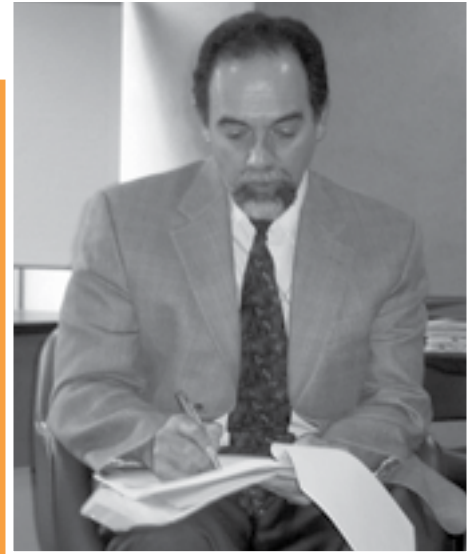


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Cooperation agreement

On Wednesday June 6 —during the first session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Geneva, Switzerland— the Organization of American States (OAS), through its Department of Sustainable Development, and the secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN/ISDR) signed a cooperation agreement to support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Americas.

The agreement was signed by Sálvano Briceño, Director of the UN/ISDR secretariat, and Pablo Gonzalez, Director of the OAS Department of Sustainable Development. This inter-institutional cooperation agreement is relevant at both political and technical level, and will contribute to advancing the creation of a regional platform to be incorporated into the strengthened UN/ISDR system.



Photo: R. Custode

This is how the 2006-2007 campaign is being observed in the Americas

The UN/ISDR secretariat launched the 2006-2007 World Disaster Reduction Campaign titled "Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School." The issues included in the campaign reflect the five priorities set forth in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disaster. A number of countries throughout the region organized different activities at local and national levels to celebrate the International Day for Disaster Reduction, observed worldwide on the second Wednesday of October, 2006.



Central America

In **El Salvador**, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), jointly with the Service for Territorial Studies (SNET) and the Ministry of Interior, through the General Postal Service of El Salvador, introduced a new postage stamp. The purpose of this new stamp is to raise awareness among the population about the 2006-2007 World Disaster Reduction Campaign "Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School." In addition, a number of Salvadoran ecological and community organizations filed a petition to modify the Law for Disaster Protection and Prevention. Finally, the Ministry of Environment informed that the school emergency plan is being updated, as well as a disaster prevention module. The Ministry is also incorporating risk management into educational activities and its coordination plans with other bodies working on environmental education and mental health.

In **Honduras**, the Netherlands Red Cross, in coordination with the Honduran Red Cross, launched the campaign titled "By supporting education we improve our children's future". The project's main goal is to contribute to reducing drop-out rates and risk associated with natural disasters in 17 educational centers and communities by providing students with emergency related training, plans and related material.

In **Guatemala**, the Guatemalan Red Cross stressed the need to improve education, in order to plant the seeds for a generation prepared for disaster prevention. For their part, the National Disaster Reduction Coordinating Body (CONRED) emphasized the lack of technology needed to achieve an adequate emergency preparedness structure.

In **Nicaragua**, an official ceremony held by the the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports (MECD) introduced the Risk Management Education Methodological Guides and Workbooks for teachers.

In **Panama**, on October 11, an official act took place with participation of students from several schools in Panama City. Students watched the video "Lecciones de Vida" (Life Lessons) and learned by playing "Riskland" on a gigantic board. The activity was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Education, the National Civil Protection System of Panama (SINAPROC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Plan International, and the UN/ISDR secretariat, regional unit for the Americas.

In **Costa Rica**, some 80 representatives from schools across the country participated in a workshop titled "Information on disaster risk reduction management and the role of school libraries in strengthening safe schools." This event was organized by the National Commission for Risk Prevention and Emergency Response (CNE) and the Regional Disaster Information Center for Latin America and the Caribbean (CRID). The CNE also sponsored flood prevention activities to raise public awareness about related issues, such as pollution and solid waste.



Photo: R. Cusirode

South America



Peru celebrated this day with a street performance titled “The Carousel of Prevention,” organized by the National Civil Defense Institute (INDECI). In this context, activities were held at the Lima Zoo, with participation of hundreds of children, INDECI representatives, and delegates from various ministries, municipalities, and institutions that make up the National Civil Defense System (SINADECI). In addition, a press conference was held by the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and a number of NGOs and institutions involved in risk management in schools. OXFAM prepared press releases and held seminars in different regions of the country. SOS Vidas Peru made a presentation on the project titled “Safe Schools”, with implementation to begin in conjunction with the launching of a school evacuation manual. The regional office (ECHO) for Latin America of Practical Action (ITDG), through its program titled “Disaster Prevention and Local Governance,” decided on an action plan for 2006 to raise awareness in schools and among government authorities on the need to incorporate risk management into educational institutions. The plan also intends to enhance recognition of schools as social actors in promoting disaster reduction at the community level.

In **Bolivia**, the Bolivian Red Cross observed the International Day by disseminating the message that “it is better to prevent.” This activity is framed within the context of a regional project of the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) in Andean countries: “Risk Reduction for Safer and More Prepared Communities.”

In addition, Save the Children Bolivia stressed the importance of the agreements signed in the area of education for disaster reduction. To date, Save the Children has entered into agreements with the European Community Humanitarian Affairs Office, the Vice-Ministry of Civil Defense and Cooperation for Integrated Development (VIDECICODI), the National Education Commission, UNICEF and the “Sphere” Project. The primary goal of these agreements is to train Bolivian educators on issues surrounding disaster reduction.

In **Ecuador**, the National Civil Defense Office observed this day with the slogan “training is prevention.” Furthermore, a workshop on disaster reduction intended for journalists and mass media communicators is being planned. The importance of the project titled “Sustainable Cities” was highlighted in this context. The project will allow the development of risk maps and assessments with the purpose of fostering balanced growth of several cities throughout the country. In addition, the Regional Investigative Office of El Niño (EFREN) brought together various national and international actors such as the International Research Center on El Niño (CIIFEN), in order to forecast the evolution of this phenomenon and its effects on the Ecuadorian territory.



Photo: INDECI

In **Venezuela**, the nation’s agencies emitted the declarations of Jan Egeland, UN emergency relief coordinator, stating that little has been done in the past to reduce disaster risk and prevent the loss of lives, livelihoods and communities. Mr. Egeland, however, underscored the importance of the partnerships developed by a number of countries and the ISDR in the field of risk reduction, as well as the recent partnership between the UN/ISDR secretariat and the World Bank’s Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery.

In **Chile**, various national economic publications referred to the World Bank’s message aimed at raising awareness among government authorities about the serious consequences of disasters worldwide during 2005 and 2006. A study launched by the World Bank on October 11 brings to light the fact that 3.4 billion people world wide are exposed to some type of hazard or risk, and announced a new fund that will help low and mid-income countries incorporate prevention policies into their national development strategies.

In **Argentina**, ActionAid International called upon governments to invest more in education for risk reduction, with the purpose of preventing disasters. Under the slogan “Education can save lives,” ActionAid conveyed this message, stating that “for each Euro invested in prevention, seven Euros in humanitarian aid could be saved”. In addition, in Mendoza, the “Los Andes” newspaper published an article, which was also covered by the Channel 9 news.

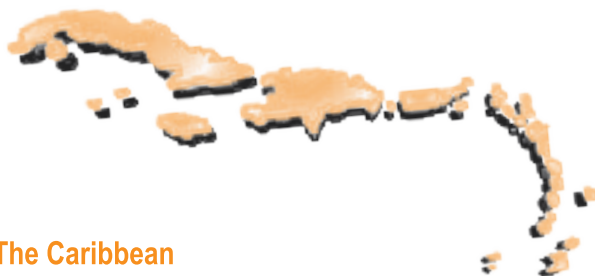
In **Brazil**, on October 11, the Technology Research Institute (IPT) led an activity to celebrate the International Day, under the slogan “The present with more education; the future with fewer disasters.” Children were the main actors of this activity. They wore uniforms of the Sao Paulo Civil Defense Office and participated in evacuation drills.



North America

In Mexico, the Emergency Administration of the National Water Commission (CONAGUA) launched its Operations Manual, as a methodological and strategic tool to be used in coordinating with other administrative bodies, before and after extreme hydro-meteorological events. The manual has been distributed to 30 CONAGUA state management offices and 13 regional management offices. In addition, ActionAid called upon governments to foster children's education in emergency prevention.

In the **United States**, the media echoed the declarations of Mr. Jan Egeland, UN emergency relief coordinator, who underscored the importance of disaster prevention and adequate planning. Mr. Egeland also called attention to the disparate effects of natural disasters in rich and poor countries.



The Caribbean

In the **Dominican Republic**, in the context of its efforts to raise public awareness, Oxfam carried out five evacuation drills on October 11. These activities aimed at showing participants how to identify and use evacuation routes, and how to manage international emergency shelters.

In addition, a drawing contest aimed at raising awareness about risk reduction among children was brought to a close on October 11.

In **Jamaica**, the State Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) broadcast a radio message from its office and visited a number of schools as a means of interactively engaging students in disaster preparedness activities, highlighting basic actions to minimize the loss of human lives and damages.

In the **British Virgin Islands**, students and teachers of a primary school in Capoons Bay were visited by the governor to commemorate the International Day. Radio and television programs developed by the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry of Education to include risk reduction in school curricula, as well as presentations made in various schools to address this issue.

In **Cuba**, in celebration of the International Day for Disaster Reduction, authorities referred to the significant progress achieved in risk reduction, with the strong support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other UN agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP). The Cuban Civil Defense Office has also adopted risk reduction as a strategy at the local level. Finally, an approach to climate change adaptation is being applied, as there is scientific evidence that human activities are provoking environmental changes and increasing risks. In this context, a number of studies are being carried out to address vulnerability and adaptation, as well as prevention and control of forest fires.

Organizations

UNESCO, CRID, the ISDR and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) concur on the importance of an informed population and educational initiatives in schools.

According to Omar Darío Cardona, advisor to the World Bank, "disasters generate poverty, but poverty also generates disasters." Governments must be aware of the need to reduce risks.

Safe Schools (CRID)

In the near future, CRID will develop a specialized information resource on "Safe Schools" as a contribution to the 2006-2007 Campaign of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) and its partners. The slogan of the campaign is "Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School".