

# Can We Prevent Disasters?

We can't stop natural phenomena from happening. But we can make them less damaging if we understand better why they happen, and what we can do to prevent or mitigate them.

Since people are partly responsible for disasters happening, we have to change what we are doing wrong, in order to avoid or reduce the impact of natural phenomena.

Every community must get to know its own features and surroundings: the natural environment as well as environment built by human beings. This is the only way for a community to manage the hazards that surround it and to reduce its own vulnerability to these hazards.

Don't be scared, be prepared!

- ▶ Learn about the history of the place where you live. Ask your parents, your grandparents and your friends if they have ever experienced a disaster. What made it happen? What did people do that they shouldn't have? What did they do to make things better?
- ▶ Share and join in. Newspapers, radio and television can help you to learn more about disasters and disaster prevention. School activities can be useful too. Making drawings about what you have learned can help you to understand disasters and disaster prevention better and to explain them to other people. Talk to your family, friends and people you know about the way risks can be reduced in your community.
- ▶ Get ready. Get together with your family to spot safe places, convince your parents that your family should have an Emergency Plan (see page 16), and put together an Emergency Kit with them (see page 17).

## Did you know that...?

For indigenous communities, nature is sacred because it is inhabited by spirits whom they worship.

Indigenous peoples' belief in the sacredness of nature, of woods and lakes, helped to stop people destroying the forests and building in the wrong places. Today, we call this land-use management.

Land-use management is deciding what can and what can't be done, in any part of the territory.

*From: Wilches-Chaux Gustavo, Wilches Castro Simón. (2001)*

