

# PRESS RELEASE

## ***“Disaster risk reduction begins in school”***

- The international campaign on prevention and disaster risk reduction 2006-2007 finalizes with prizes to the best drawings and paintings held by the Latin American and Caribbean drawing and painting contest.
- Boys and Girls from Latin American and the Caribbean commemorate today the “International Day on Disaster Reduction.”

**October 10, 2007** – Today the “International Day on Disaster Reduction” is commemorated with the selection of the best drawings and awards to the best twelve paintings received from the contest “Disaster Reduction begins in School 2006-2007.” The regional campaign is promoted by four international organizations, non-governmental organizations, Ministries of Education in the region with participation from national institutions working in disaster risk reduction, school teachers and children of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Research indicates that climate change will increase the quantity and intensity of natural hazards and its effects will be greater, due to other factors, like the persistence of poverty and non-effective management of natural resources. However, due to the fact that disasters affect both rich and poor countries, its negative impact is much greater on developing countries due to the lack of resources. Since the 90s decade, disasters have taken an average of 58 thousand lives each year affecting an average of 225 million persons.

The Latin American and Caribbean painting contest collected more than 2000 works from 20 countries in the region in different techniques and formats, motivating the participation of boys and girls from 5 to 12 years of age to paint and draw about the importance of knowing their risks of disasters in their communities as well as promoting their rights to continue their education under emergency situations. This activity is being sponsored by the United Nations, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat (UN/ISDR secretariat), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and Plan International.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, millions of children attend schools located in fragile structures or buildings that many times do not resist natural hazards, after being used as humanitarian aid centres temporarily and used again without doing the appropriate improvement works to the deteriorated infra-structures.

The “International Disaster Reduction Begins in School” campaign has been a joint awareness raising effort for the schools, children and communities about the importance of doing mitigation works with the objective reducing risk to disasters in schools. The initiative has allowed raising awareness in governments, school boards, community members, families and students about the need to incorporate risk reduction and prevention topics in the education training programs that accomplish safer schools and guarantee the welfare of boys, girls and adolescents in the region.



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The frequency and severity of disasters like flooding caused recently by Hurricane Felix in Nicaragua, with damage of 70% in houses and 100% in agricultural production; or the 7,9 earthquake on the Richter scale that destroyed more than 50% of Pisco, in the department of Ica in Peru show clearly that much more has to be done to guarantee the safety of people, prevent human loss and reduce the economic and social effects of disasters.

This activity is financed and supported by the European Commission, Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) in the framework of the disaster preparedness program (DIPECHO). With it, ECHO looks to ensure the response capacity in case of disaster in the most vulnerable communities in the world. Saving and preserving life in regions exposed to natural hazards, outside the European Union, is part of the humanitarian mandate of the European Commission.

The prizes consists of twelve complete art briefcases donated by FundaCRID (Regional Information Centre on Disasters) to be given to each of the twelve award winners, a cash prize destined towards improvement works that guarantee risk mitigation for each of the twelve schools which the award winning children attend as well as educational materials, information guides on disaster prevention and response on behalf of the sponsor organizations.

According to research done by developing countries, global investment in disaster risk reduction stands at a only four per cent of total humanitarian assistance. Other studies by the World Bank suggest that one dollar spent on prevention can save between US\$ two and 10 on recovery.

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