

Press Release

8 April, 2008

Global consortium calls for support to locally-driven investment in safety before disasters

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Mitch, providing a chance to reflect on how survivors have recovered from that disaster and subsequent efforts to reduce losses and save lives before disaster strikes. With climate change, persistent poverty, increasing urbanization and environmental degradation increasing the frequency and severity of natural hazard events, it is more important than ever to ensure that vulnerable communities have the capacity and support to protect themselves from disasters. The ProVention Consortium is organizing its annual forum in Panama April 08-10, 2008 to focus attention on why and how to support a bottom-up approach to reducing disaster risk, and how to ensure that global and national policy-making decisions are based on the priorities and realities of local communities.

The implications for Latin America and the Caribbean and many other areas in the world are startlingly clear. The international community and governments need to invest more in long-term capacity development of a range of actors, including national and local governments, NGOs, grassroots groups and academic institutions to lead initiatives to reduce disaster risks and make communities safer.

“For communities to be their own agents of change in the risks that they face, investment in community participation is the indicator that we should aim for” says Xavier Castellanos, Deputy Head of Americas Zone of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

This forum organized aims at gathering key actors from different sectors to look at crucial issues on disaster risk reduction.

This call for action was echoed by Maite Rodriguez, Director of Fundación Guatemala, “The basic principle of a holistic program of prevention and emergency response to disaster is to work with at risk communities integrating ethnic/cultural and gender perspectives. The communication must happen at all levels so there is a fluid relationship with affected communities.”

The forum will continue in Panama through 10 April. Moving beyond talk, the Forum is focusing on solutions and incentives to make communities safer and calling on key stakeholders in governments, international organizations, and local community organizations, to invest more resources in pro-active measures to prevent disasters and reduce social vulnerability. More than 150 experts from national governments, U.N. agencies, the Red Cross, the private sector, civil society organizations and academic centers from throughout Latin America and around the globe are participating in the event.

The ProVention Consortium is a global network dedicated to increasing the safety of vulnerable communities and to reducing the impacts of disasters in developing countries.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is hosting the Forum on behalf of the broader ProVention Consortium.

For more information visit the ProVention website at www.proventionconsortium.org or you can contact:

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