

Australia committed to investing in disaster risk reduction

July 2012

The Australian Government will work with international partners to provide A\$100 million to assist countries across the globe reduce their vulnerability to natural disasters.

Why disaster risk reduction is important

‘Over the last twenty years, it is conservatively estimated that disasters have killed 1.3 million people, affected 4.4 billion and resulted in economic losses of \$2 trillion. These are staggering numbers when you consider what it means in terms of missed opportunities, shattered lives, lost housing, schools and health facilities destroyed, cultural losses and roads washed away.’

Margareta Wahlström, UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, June 2012

Natural disasters are a stark reality for many countries, but they disproportionately affect developing countries such as small island states and poor and marginalised people. The impacts of poverty, rapid population growth and urbanisation, environmental degradation and climate change are predicted to intensify risk and vulnerability. For development to be sustainable it must be protected from the devastation that natural disasters can cause. More needs to be done to address chronic under-investment in disaster risk reduction.

Putting disaster risk reduction into practice

Investing in disaster risk reduction saves lives, livelihoods and assets. It also helps reduce the costs of responding to disasters and rebuilding after them, providing a smoother transition between relief, recovery and development.

Australia has sought advice from regions most affected by disasters on how additional support can best deepen and broaden partnerships to align with national and regional disaster risk reduction priorities. Consultations with a range of key inter-governmental regional organisations have identified the following areas for action:

Africa

Drought, floods, cyclones and landslides dominate the disaster profile of Africa. The continent’s regional disaster risk reduction framework, the *Extended Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (2006 -2015)*, is reflected in a number of sub-regional and national strategies and programs. With limited resources to implement at sub-national and local levels, priorities include:

- strengthening regional and sub-regional institutions and coordination mechanisms
- integrating disaster and climate risk management into national development plans and budgets
- bolstering early warning and monitoring systems, local disaster preparedness capacities of governments and communities, and the dissemination of information
- supporting long-term approaches to address risk factors, such as drought preparedness, ecosystem sustainability, and enhancing agriculture and livestock practices in the dry lands (e.g. Sahel and Horn of Africa)

- exploring the feasibility of financial risk pooling across the continent.

Caribbean

The Caribbean's low-lying coastal states are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather events and climate change. This heightens the risk of erosion, storm surges, water shortages and food insecurity. At the regional level, the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Management Agency helps countries develop their capacity to address disaster risk reduction; and the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre coordinates delivery of the *Regional Framework for Achieving Development Resilient to Climate Change*.

Countries are seeking support for:

- better coordination between regional disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation agencies to improve integrated risk reduction planning and delivery in key sectors at national levels (such as tourism, health, agriculture and nutrition)
- enhancing regional, national and community resilience and capacity
- protecting coral reefs and coastal areas that are central to food security and generating livelihoods from fisheries and tourism
- improved disaster risk reduction knowledge - including public awareness and education strategies targeted at children and youth.

Pacific

Pacific island countries are among the most vulnerable in the world. Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction need to be integrated into sustainable development policy both regionally (for coordinated advice and technical support) and nationally (for implementation). The focus must be to increase resilience regardless of the source of the hazard.

To this end, priorities of Pacific island countries include:

- increasing the availability of accurate scientific and technical information for improved understanding of island hazards and risks
- strengthening networks and institutions to monitor and assess natural hazards
- effective early warning systems
- better-informed decision making to integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into development planning and budgeting
- exploring regional risk financing mechanisms.

South Asia

South Asia is also prone to a great variety of natural hazards. With such diversity in topography, climate and socio-economic characteristics, sub-national and local approaches are critical to reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening resilience. Under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's *Comprehensive Framework on Disaster Management*, countries have highlighted the need for intensified action through:

- developing capacity at the state, province and district levels, with better tools and guidelines to help integrate disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into sub-national and local planning
- improving coordination mechanisms within and between government agencies at all levels, civil society, the private sector and the international community
- enhancing the use of science and technology, particularly in early warning and reporting systems, and information management and communication

- comprehensive disaster risk analysis, including hazard mapping, at sub-national levels to inform evidence-based decision-making.

South East Asia

South East Asia is a highly diverse region with varying levels of vulnerability and high exposure to hazards such as storms, flooding, earthquakes, landslides and volcanoes. There is growing recognition by countries of the need to move from reactive disaster management approaches to long-term disaster risk reduction planning and investment. The challenge is to translate plans into outcomes and integrate risk reduction into mainstream development by building on existing partnerships.

Under the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' *Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response 2010-2015* which provides a framework for cooperation, coordination, technical assistance and resource mobilisation, disaster risk reduction priorities for South East Asian nations include:

- supporting national governments to mainstream disaster risk reduction, especially in the education and health sectors
- assessing options for risk financing schemes across the region
- building capacity to better self-manage disaster responses
- learning from the experience of regional disaster risk reduction champions.

Disaster risk reduction needs strong partnerships

'Sustainability demands resilience... We must factor disaster and climate risk management into development policies and planning, and those most at risk – local communities – must be key partners in building resilience.'

Senator the Honourable Bob Carr, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the Occasion of the President of the United Nations General Assembly Thematic Debate on Disaster Risk Reduction, 12 April 2012

Australia's commitment to disaster risk reduction builds on international momentum. The UN Secretary General and the President of the UN General Assembly have made disaster risk reduction a priority. As co-Chair of the *Friends of Disaster Risk Reduction* group at the UN, Australia has worked to integrate disaster risk reduction into long-term development approaches.

Australia has strong domestic experience and expertise in risk reduction. Through the Australian aid program we are a strong supporter of regional and multilateral institutions, as well as a long-standing partner of national governments and communities engaged in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

Australian Assistance

Through ongoing consultations with regional institutions and national governments over the remainder of 2012, Australia will develop a program of support to implement their priorities. This program will be valued at A\$100 million over five years and will build on our already substantial disaster reduction assistance.

More information about the Australian Government's work in disaster risk reduction is available at: www.ausaid.gov.au

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) GPO Box 887 Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

Telephone: +61 2 6178 4000 Email: infoausaid@ausaid.gov.au