



AUSTRALIA

# IDNDR

# BRIEFING PAPER

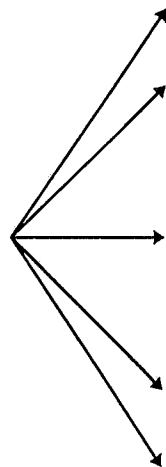
INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

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# The Australian IDNDR Campaign is about:



**I**DEAS

**D**EVELOPMENT

**N**EGOTIATION

**D**ETERMINATION  
AND ULTIMATELY

**R**ESULTS

# **INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION**

## **BACKGROUND**

More and more frequently the world's news media contain reports of disasters and the misery they cause to people going about their daily lives. Such natural events have been recurring since life began Earth and will continue to happen in the future. They are part of the environment in which we live; but as urbanisation increases they will inevitably take a steadily increasing toll unless all nations mobilise their resources to face them.

Scientific research has helped us understand the causes of natural catastrophes and modern technology can be applied to make mankind less vulnerable to them. However, full use is not yet being made of these scientific advances to provide better warning and protection for people and their property in areas at risk.

As a result of activity by the US National Academy of Sciences, and in an effort to draw attention to the need for greater emphasis in disaster reduction, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR).

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the Decade is to reduce, through concerted international action, especially in developing countries, the loss of life, property damage, and economic disruption caused by natural disasters.

The goals cover a vast range and are concerned with matters such as improving the capacity of each country to effectively mitigate the effects of natural disasters; assisting developing countries in the assessment of disaster potential; devising guidelines for applying existing scientific and technological knowledge; fostering scientific and engineering endeavours to reduce loss of life; and developing measures for education and training.

Each member state of the UN is to implement the Decade as it feels is appropriate, and if it believes it appropriate.

## **AUSTRALIA'S INVOLVEMENT**

The Prime Minister, in announcing on 21 April 1989 Australia's participation in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, announced the formation of an Australian Coordination Committee to be chaired by the Director General of Emergency

Management Australia. The committee includes government and non-government representatives, along with representatives of academic, scientific and community organisations. The committee, in line with the United Nations initiative, focuses on the South Pacific region and Papua New Guinea as well as Australia.

The Australian Coordination Committee liaises with various involved groups and individuals within Australia, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs and with the other international and national committees, exchanging information as well as developing and publicising activities and achievements that will enhance the objectives of the Decade.

Within Australia the Committee is specifically responsible for:

- . coordination of IDNDR activities of government and non-government organisations;
- . encouraging IDNDR activities at Federal, State, Territory and Local Government levels as well as at community levels;
- . collection, collation, and dissemination of information on IDNDR activities;
- . evaluation of proposed programs for IDNDR relevance and supporting funding requests for those considered appropriate; and
- . identifying and evaluating IDNDR activities which are not clearly the responsibility of any department or agency and seeking their implementation and funding if necessary.

## **WORLD DISASTER REDUCTION DAY**

As part of the Decade, the second Wednesday in October each year has been nominated World Disaster Reduction Day. On that day activities are organised to focus public attention on Disaster prevention/reduction and preparedness. Within Australia on that day, several public seminars have been held in Canberra and activities have also been organised in the States and Territories. To date the following seminars have been held:

- 1990 - Australia's Role in the IDNDR
- 1991 - Australia's Role in the South-west Pacific
- 1992 - Disaster Reduction for Sustainability
- 1993 - Education for Disaster Reduction
- 1994 - Disaster! Is your Community Prepared?

After each seminar a book is produced and published by the Australian National University, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies.

## IDNDR PROJECTS

As Australia has limited financial and population resources, it is essential that we be selective in our contributions both nationally and internationally. Thirty five projects have been successfully undertaken in the first half of the Decade. They cover all aspects of the IDNDR program including risk assessment, mitigation activities, warning systems and international cooperative projects with Australian's neighbouring South Pacific nations. Great emphasis has been placed on community awareness and preparedness, with all projects being directed to provide relevant information for emergency management, planning and training.

Towards the middle of each year submissions for funding of proposals are invited. Strict criteria exist for the assessment of proposals. Successful projects generally have applicability to Australia as a whole and frequently have application to our neighbouring nations.

They include:-

- . An ongoing project of a public awareness media campaign each year highlighting a different natural hazard. The first campaign highlighted that 'Cyclones are Serious', the second emphasised the dangers of bushfires 'Will You Survive' and a third campaign 'Don't Be Scared, Be Prepared' for the dangers of severe storms. A fourth campaign 'Floods Aren't Funny' is currently being developed to increase public awareness and preparedness for floods.
- . Development of a resource inventory of material and curriculum information in the area of natural hazard education currently available or in use for schools.
- . Development of software to operate on inexpensive robust personal computers to improve tropical cyclone analysis, prediction and warnings. Among other capabilities, it provides prediction of storm-surge, the probability of towns being affected by specified winds in a given time, and colour-coded cyclone tracks. In addition, the workstation will provide an easy means for new software to be adapted to the South Pacific and other cyclone basins throughout the world without the burden of maintenance support and high costs. So far the workstations have been installed in seven countries.
- . Provision of an Australian Emergency Manual series to other countries. This series of operations-skills reference manuals has been developed using the expertise of all emergency services throughout Australia and covers many facets of emergency operations and management.

- . Development of Regional Hazard Potential Mapping. This is the first attempt to provide a consolidated map depicting areas effected by natural hazards of the region.
- . Earthquake zonation mapping of urban areas. The aim is to develop a system for determining potential effects of seismic activity upon urban areas. A multi-disciplinary approach integrates such aspects as seismology, geology, engineering, insurance, emergency management and Local Government requirements, and socio-economic aspects. To date, Newcastle, Sydney and Brisbane and the surrounding south east Queensland area have been completed.
- . Development of the Australian Disaster Management Information Network (ADMIN). This is a computer-based information exchange system which will provide the Australian focal point and international gateway to enable access by various bodies to disaster-relevant information.
- . Modification of the ANUFLOOD computer package to assess building losses and to assist emergency services respond more effectively to tropical cyclone storm surge. It will aid with prediction of likely losses so that precautionary measures may be taken.
- . Production of guidelines for standardised assessment of economic benefits of disaster mitigation activities. This uses a standard criteria as a prerequisite for allocation of resources between competing activities.
- . Conduct of a South West Pacific Disaster Managers' Workshop in Solomon Islands-May 1992 . This was attended by Senior Disaster Managers of the various nations and specifically looked at training and public awareness. This was the first time practitioners of the region were drawn together to study subjects of their choice, gaining from the exchange of experience and ideas among their own group rather than from outside "experts".
- . Distribution of the International Newsletter "Stop Disasters" throughout the States and Territories Emergency Management Committees.
- . Conduct a conference of representatives of each IDNDR Committee within the South West Pacific and Papua New Guinea in Vanuatu in August 1993. The representatives met to discuss progress in the furthering the objectives of IDNDR. It provided an opportunity to exchange ideas and develop strategies as well as make arrangements for Regional representation at the World Conference in Japan in 1994.

- Produce public awareness material for cyclone preparedness for both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.
- On World Disaster Reduction Day October 1993, a pre-stamped envelope was released to the Australian public. Australia Post cooperated with the Australian IDNDR Coordination Committee in agreeing to promote public awareness through production of this pre-stamped envelope focussing on IDNDR.

Of special note is the major Australian contribution to IDNDR through the Pacific Disaster Preparedness Program (PDPP). Projects under this program are specifically designed to assist South Pacific nations to meet the IDNDR major goals. The PDPP package can contain assistance projects meeting a variety of needs including: hazard and vulnerability analysis, national policy development, counter-disaster planning, emergency operations centre development, training in Australia or in-country, emergency simulation exercise writing and organisation, needs and damage assessment, public awareness and public education, and equipment.

Australia, in support to the PDPP, has become a sponsor to a South Pacific Disaster Reduction Project. This program will be managed and coordinated through the South Pacific Program Office based on Suva, Fiji and is a major IDNDR initiative. The main objective of the project is to strengthen institutional capacities and develop human resources to enable countries to mitigate the impact of natural disasters, improve disaster preparedness and post-disaster recovery management, and thus reduce a major constraint on sustainable development.

The World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction was held in Yokohama, Japan 23-27 May 1994. Delegations from 155 countries and territories participated, together with a number of organisations from UN, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations as well as individual scientists. A large number of National IDNDR Committee members, including a delegation of ten from Australia, were among the official delegations or other participants. In conjunction with the Pacific Island Countries, Australia mounted a comprehensive exhibition and participated in various presentations.

The Conference adopted a Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, as well as a Message to the World. The main themes can be summarised as:

- The Decade should contribute to the development of "global culture of prevention", rather than simply focusing on response.
- Disaster planning should be integrated with all types of national planning - in particular plans aimed at achieving sustainable development. Environmental protection consistent with poverty alleviation is imperative here. "In all countries the poor and socially disadvantaged suffer most from natural disasters and are least equipped to cope with them."

- . “All countries should act in a new spirit of partnership to build a safer world based on common interests and shared responsibility ...”
- . “Appropriate technology and data, with the corresponding training, should be made available to all freely and in a timely manner...”
- . Much greater awareness of the potential benefits of disaster reduction is needed outside specialised circles. In this connection, education and training programs need further development.
- . Community involvement is “of the utmost importance to determine those things which favour and hinder prevention and mitigation or encourage or limit the preservation of the environment...”

Australia’s plans and targets for the second half of the Decade include:

- . The involvement of the media in a more active and constructive role for the promotion of IDNDR.
- . Seeking additional support from the private sector for the sponsorship of projects.
- . Increasing the involvement of non-government organisations and local government.
- . Giving more emphasis to the important role of our education authorities, teachers and students.
- . Broadening the scope and awareness of IDNDR project proposals to encourage a wider range of applications.
- . Assisting our South Pacific neighbours to identify and implement IDNDR projects.

During June 1994 a Senate Standing Committee released a report on Disaster Management. The report emphasises the need for EMA to refocus its role to provide leadership and support to the States and Territories in the critical areas of emergency management which include preparedness, planning, prevention/mitigation, training and recovery. The Committee recommends that EMA use the United Nations IDNDR to showcase the benefits of preparedness/mitigation by more actively seeking out projects and assisting their implementation. This recommendation will become a major objective for Australian IDNDR for the remainder of the Decade.



## YOUR INVOLVEMENT

Meeting Decade objectives should not be left to the Australian Coordination Committee alone. We all have a part to play in achieving these objectives. States and Territories should be developing a range of activities that will enhance the ability of our communities to either prevent or to be prepared for the impact of disasters. Individuals can assist by:

- . identifying appropriate areas where research would have wide-reaching benefit;
- . providing view input to the state/territory emergency/disaster committees;
- . assisting in the conduct of projects or research related to projects;
- . being actively involved in public awareness or education programs; and
- . contributing towards meeting Decade objectives as they apply to the entire community.

For further information concerning the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction please contact the Australian IDNDR Coordination Committee office on Telephone (06) 266 5408 or Fax (06) 257 1490. Alternatively write to the Committee at PO Box 1020, Dickson ACT 2602.

CANBERRA NOVEMBER 1994