

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

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Nationwide Public Awareness Campaign Launched to Ensure Lives are Saved in the Face of Disaster

Male', December 26, 2009: A nationwide public awareness campaign for disaster risk reduction, early warnings and response actions titled ***“Rakkaavethibiyya – Dhivehiraajje” (be aware | be prepared)*** was launched today by the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) and Maldives Meteorological Service (MMS) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The launch coincides with the fifth anniversary of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the global initiative for climate change adaptation as tabled at the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen earlier this month.

“Rakkaavethibiyya – Dhivehiraajje” (be aware | be prepared) is the first public awareness campaign for disaster risk reduction in the country. The campaign contributes to the goals in the sector of disaster risk management as outlined in the government’s Strategic Action Plan launched last month, which stresses on *i) ensuring that the Maldives is safe and resilient from all disasters and, ii) creating awareness and building an institutional framework for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.*

With a view that disasters undermine and jeopardize the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the campaign is a step toward renewing commitments to achieve the MDG’s by 2015 and sets out concrete plans and practical steps for action to respond to disasters.

The campaign aims to increase public knowledge in preparing and responding to likely natural disasters in the Maldives, such as sea swells, flooding and tsunamis. Following the tsunami, public awareness and preparedness is crucial. Climate change will further exacerbate the impacts of these disasters in the country, which, being small and low-lying is extremely vulnerable to coastal threats.

Posters, calendars, website, and web applications as well as print and online media will be utilized to continuously disseminate disaster risk reduction knowledge to the public.

With the aforementioned view that individuals have to be empowered with the correct knowledge to prepare them for life threatening situations, UNDP together with the Ministry of Education is also supporting the integration of disaster risk reduction into the school curriculum to ensure children are primed in the event of a disaster.

Even though disaster risk management is increasingly recognized as a crucial element of any development strategy, these activities are yet awaiting practical and operational guidance, to be fully mainstreamed with climate change adaptation activities. UNDP’s Officer-in-Charge, Arun Kashyap, has highlighted the need to build knowledge base and sets of skills ranging from diagnostics and assessment of local and national vulnerability to climate change, physical and natural disasters and socio-economic exposures to “what works” and identifying participatory adaptation solutions.

UNDP will continue to provide support in assessing measures that governments and people can take to build resilience to disasters and examining approaches that communities can use to adapt to the adversities of climate change.

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UNDP is the UN’s global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, including the Maldives, helping identify and implement solutions to global and national development challenges.