



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Earthquake in Pakistan and India Schools and hospitals need to be better protected

The powerful earthquake that struck Pakistan and India over the weekend proved again how important it is to build safe hospital and schools in disaster-prone areas. Many schools were damaged during the earthquake with the result that children were buried alive under the rubble.

In this tragic moment, the ISDR secretariat shares the grief of Pakistani and Indian families affected. The earthquake was of an exceptional magnitude and the strongest in living memory in Pakistan, but the Himalayas are located on a tectonic plate and have long been identified as a region at risk by earthquake experts.

“Reinforcing building in disaster prone areas is essential. Loosing hospitals becomes a “double disaster” if they are not built to withstand earthquakes: a disaster in that they are destroyed, but also that their equipment and their staff are no longer available to rescue other victims. The destruction of schools, as has tragically happened last Saturday, means the loss of new generations. New constructions need to be built safe and old ones need to be systematically reinforced or retrofitted to avoid future disasters,” says Salvano Briceño, Director of the United Nations ISDR secretariat.

The earthquake had a significant impact also in Indian Kashmir where more than 840 people were killed and over 1,300 injured, according to Mr. Shankaran, the Indian Home Secretary. “Many buildings were destroyed but we are drawing lessons from this disaster. We will rebuild better like we did in Gujarat after the earthquake in 2001.” The Gujarat government was the first to establish a disaster management center in India after the aftermath of the 2001 disaster.

The government of Nepal and the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET) are currently working with local communities to strengthen school buildings in the event of a big earthquake in Kathmandu. “More initiatives like this one need to be encouraged by the international community if we want to reduce the impact of disasters on populations” said Salvano Briceño.

For more information, please contact:  
Brigitte Leoni, Media Relations  
[Inter-agency secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction \(UN/ISDR\)](#)  
Tel: +41 22 917 4968  
Email: [leonib@un.org](mailto:leonib@un.org)