

FINLAND
NATIONAL SUMMARY REPORT

I D N D R

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SECTION A: PROFILE

1. Composition of the National Committee

Ministries

Ministry of the Interior (Focal Point)	(2)
Ministry for Foreign Affairs	(1)
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health	(1)

Academic and Research Institutions

Finnish Academy	(1)
The Technical Research Centre of Finland	(1)

Private Sector

None

Public Services

National Board of Waters and the Environment	(1)
Helsinki City Rescue Department (FinnRescueForce)	(1)

Non-Governmental Organisations

The Finnish Red Cross	(2)
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Media

Helsingin Sanomat (Leading national newspaper)	(1)
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Insurance

None

Other

None

2. Internal organisation of the National Committee

The National Committee of Finland was established in 1990. It works under the Ministry of the Interior who is responsible for disaster prevention and organization of rescue work in the country. The main tasks of the Committee are

- a) to plan, coordinate and direct the Finnish IDNDR activities,
- b) to promote Finnish participation in natural disaster reduction in developing countries,
- c) to identify and define measures to be taken by Finland to achieve the goals of the decade, primarily in the field of information and preparedness, and as part of Finnish development co-operation, and
- d) to chart the relevant Finnish expertise and promote the use of Finnish technology, science and practical know-how in international disaster reduction.

The Committee has set up a working group to promote the project "Remote Sensing Methods and Workstation for Serious Natural Disasters". The project is described in more detail under paragraph 6.

3. Prevailing hazards

Finland belongs to a low risk area where serious meteorological and geological hazards do not occur except for some minor-scale forest fires and springtime floods along the rivers on the Western coast. However, the global climate change may cause unpredictable variations in the future weather patterns worldwide. It is estimated that, for instance, the frequency of storms, heavy snowfalls and winter time rains may increase significantly.

4. Recent natural disasters

None

5. National socio-economic conditions

* Population: 5.067.000 (1993)

* Gross-National Product: FIM 471.443 million (1993)

* Per-Capita Income: FIM 93.042 (1993)

6. Availability of assistance to other countries in the field of natural disaster reduction

(a) Operational preparedness

FINNRESCUEFORCE

FinnRescueForce (FRF) is a rapid task force for international rescue operations organized under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. It comprises Finland's five largest professional rescue units and is on continuous stand-by. FRF is included in the UN DHA-Geneva list of forces ready for mobilization in international rescue operations.

UNDAC STAND-BY TEAM

Three members of FRF are also listed as members of the UNDAC Stand-by Team for identifying and coordinating disaster relief in case of sudden on-set disasters.

WHO COLLABORATING CENTRE

The WHO Collaborating Centre in Finland (FinnPrep) is a joint activity of several Finnish institutions. The Centre performs research on disasters and their prevention and management and gives training on an international basis. The expertise field of the Centre is technological, especially chemical disasters. These may occur as a result of a natural disaster. FinnPrep prepares and updates a directory and network of back-up laboratories responding to environmental health disasters.

FINNCROSS RESERVE FOR PERSONNEL AND MATERIAL ASSISTANCE

The International Personnel Reserve of the Finnish Red Cross includes 605 professionals trained for rescue, relief and rehabilitation work. Furthermore, the Finnish Red Cross has blankets, tents and clothes in reserve for disaster victims, as well as an emergency unit for medical rescue and surgical operations, with the capacity for the treatment of approximately three hundred patients.

(b) Development co-operation

The Finnish development co-operation in the field of natural disaster reduction is described in section C, paragraph 3 below.

7. International assistance required for natural disaster reduction

No need for international assistance is anticipated. However, Finland stresses the importance of international co-operation, for instance in the field of research.

SECTION B: STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

1. Steps towards achieving the 3 main decade targets

- (a) Comprehensive national assessments of risks from natural hazards, with these assessments taken into account in development plans

On the basis of the national assessment made on natural disaster risks in the country, Finland can be defined as a low risk area.

- (b) Mitigation plans at national and/or local levels, involving long-term prevention and preparedness and community awareness

No separate plan for natural disaster reduction exists, but natural disaster preparedness is integrated in the national, regional and municipal emergency planning systems. The Rescue Department of the Ministry of the Interior has the supreme command, control and surveillance of the mitigation planning. In the provinces, the Provincial Governments are responsible for these activities. The municipalities are responsible for emergency planning and operations in their respective areas.

- (c) Ready access to global, regional, national and local warning systems and broad dissemination of warnings

The general alarm signal is given through an outdoor siren system. The system covers 80 % of the population. The outdoor siren system can be supplemented with mobile loudspeakers. The entire population can be reached through the radio broadcasting system or tele-text.

Weather forecasts and forest fire warning are distributed through the radio and television broadcasting systems.

2. Present national plan for natural disaster reduction

The preparedness system is described in the previous chapter.

3. Legislation introduced and enacted in relation to natural disaster reduction

1. Fire and Rescue Services Act (559/75)
2. Preparedness Act (1080/91)
3. Dam Safety Act (413/84)

4. Disaster mitigation activities completed or underway

No specific disaster mitigation activities have been taken or planned. The national system is described in chapter 1.

5. Plans to fully achieve decade targets by the end of 1999

Finland is a low risk area with a well developed preparedness of disaster reduction and mitigation. Finland therefore recognises its responsibility to co-operate in disseminating information and know-how in order to build up a global preparedness for natural disasters, also taking into consideration the possible negative impacts of human activities. The forms of co-operation are described in more detail in section C paragraph 3 below.

SECTION C: INTERACTIONS

1. Publications on IDNDR-related subjects

(a) Handbook on Forest Fire Control

A handbook on Forest Fire Control was published in English in 1993. It is based on the experiences and views of experts both from developing and industrialized countries. The aim of the book is to help to save the tropical forest zone in developing countries by improving the quality of the management of forest fire control.

(b) Dam Safety Code of Practice

An English translation of the Finnish dam safety regulations and instructions was made in 1993 as an example case for developing respective national solutions. The basic idea of the Dam Safety Code of Practice is the fact that most dam accidents can be prevented, and even when an accident occurs the harm can be efficiently reduced. Regardless of differing circumstances, the regular inspection and safety requirements should be the same and only vary according to the magnitude of the risks related to an individual dam.

(c) The Stormy World -game

For the annual IDNDR day in 1993 the Finnish committee produced a board game "The Stormy World" for schools and youth groups aged 12 - 18 years. The main topics in the game are floods, forest fires, storms, droughts and earthquakes. The players answer questions and solve tasks related to natural disasters, preparedness, mitigation and the IDNDR.

2. IDNDR meetings and conferences held or planned

On the annual IDNDR Day both in 1991 and 1992, the Finnish IDNDR Committee organized seminars on various topics and projects connected with the IDNDR. The participants presented governmental and non-governmental organisations, private business and mass media.

The INSARAG European and African Group meeting and the INSARAG steering group meeting will both be held in Finland in June 1994.

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3. Current or planned partnership and co-operation related to IDNDR with other countries

By endorsing the UN General Assembly Resolution 44/326 Finland has demonstrated the political will to work both nationally and internationally for the reduction of the consequences of natural disasters in different parts of the world. At present, international co-operation is taking place or planned as follows:

(a) Development co-operation

The Finnish development co-operation comprises both bilateral and multilateral assistance. A number of bilateral co-operation programmes have involved disaster prevention and preparedness aspects. For instance, projects and programmes in meteorology, housing and urban development, forestry, telecommunications, and agriculture have directly or indirectly incorporated such aspects.

Increasing attention is paid to natural disaster reduction as an integral part of all country programmes drawn up together with Finland's development co-operation partners, as well as in humanitarian assistance. As a part of its IDNDR activities, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland commissioned a study titled "Possibilities and Methods of Integrating Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Aspects in Development Assistance". The study was completed in 1993. The study includes an analysis of the terms and aspects of disaster prevention as part of development co-operation and presents a set of operational recommendations for the future planning and implementation of projects and programmes.

(b) Finnish-Chinese Forest Fire Fighting Project

The objective of a proposed Finnish-Chinese joint project "Remote Sensing Methods and Workstation for Serious Natural Disasters" is to develop remote sensing techniques and workstation software which can be used to mitigate the effects of natural disasters. The

initial phase of the Finnish part of the project "Study on the use of remote sensing techniques in forest fire fighting" was initiated in 1993. The development of a prototype of a remote sensing workstation for forest fire fighting and monitoring is based on the use of AVHRR data of the NOAA satellites.

(c) Identifying fields of expertise

The National IDNDR Committee of Finland is responsible for, i.a., charting fields of relevant Finnish expertise. The Committee has so far focused on the following areas where this expertise is combined with identified needs:

1. Communication and early warning technology
2. Forest economics and prevention of forest fires
3. Prevention and rescue management of floods
4. Meteorology

5. Organizational development concerning preparedness and crisis management.

(d) International agreements and other arrangements

Finland has signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its ratification is expected in the near future. Finland has actively taken part in the negotiations for an International Convention to Combat Desertification.

Finland is also a party to a number of other international agreements and arrangements concerning environmental protection as well as mutual assistance and rescue operations in the case of disasters.

SECTION D: EVALUATION

1. Overall evaluation of national disaster mitigation programmes including, but not limited to, those initiated after IDNDR and achievements up to now

As described above, Finland is a low risk area where a specific national mitigation programme is not considered necessary. Finland has a well developed preparedness of disaster reduction and mitigation.

2. Review of the IDNDR

Finland considers the IDNDR a very important instrument in improving the global readiness and increasing the global knowledge of disaster reduction, especially in developing countries.

A more detailed analysis and review of the IDNDR accomplishments and projected measures will be possible on the basis of the results of the Yokohama Conference.