

PRESS RELEASE

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Building Safer Coastal Communities

Community development is the key to reducing the impact of natural hazards

The Indian Ocean tsunami demonstrated the high vulnerability and low resilience of coastal communities in disaster situations. In order to build safer coastal communities, Denmark is organising an International Workshop entitled, "Strengthening the resilience of local communities to cope with water related natural hazards", to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, from 16-18 November.

The workshop, co-organised with the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat, is a Danish contribution to the implementation process of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. In particular, it is supporting the Indian Ocean tsunami recovery and risk reduction activities.

"The workshop will promote a dialogue between national and local authorities and experts from the six countries worst hit by the tsunami. It will highlight lessons to avoid future disasters of a similar magnitude. The workshop will also aim to bridge the gap between long term development and humanitarian assistance," says Ulla Tørnæs, Danish Minister for Development Cooperation.

The workshop will bring together representatives from Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, NGOs working at the community level in these six countries, and international and regional experts involved in disaster reduction.

"The development in coastal zones around the Indian Ocean exacerbated the impact of the 26 December tsunami. Rehabilitation efforts should be aimed at building back better. While we all recognize this fact, practical guidance on how to incorporate sound environmental practices and disaster risk reduction into community efforts to recover from the tsunami is still no fully in place," says Salvano Briceño, director of the ISDR secretariat.

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The workshop objectives are to: enhance the integration of existing and effective community initiatives on disaster risk reduction into relevant national and sub-national policies and plans; promote disaster risk reduction as an integral part of coastal zone management and community development activities; integrate disaster risk reduction into ongoing recovery and reconstruction efforts in the communities affected by the tsunami

“Local solutions and participation are essential if we want to reduce human vulnerability to natural hazards in the future. Disaster risk reduction policies will only be successful if communities are involved,” says Salvano Briceño.

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