



PRESS RELEASE

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100TH Anniversary San Francisco Earthquake “ Too many children are killed in schools when disasters strike”

As the United States commemorates the 100th anniversary of the San Francisco earthquake of April 18, 1906, one of the worst earthquakes in U.S. history, the director of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat (UN/ISDR) recalls the importance of education in disaster risk reduction policies.

“ After one hundred years, we have acquired a great knowledge of seismic science but this knowledge still needs to be better applied and shared all over the world. Too many schoolchildren are killed in school, when disasters strike” says Salvano Briceño, director of the UN/ISDR secretariat, who is attending the 100Th Anniversary Earthquake Conference in San Francisco until 22 April. “

At least 17,000 school children died when 6,700 schools were destroyed in Pakistan during the October 2005 earthquake and more than 200 children were killed in a school in the Philippines last February after a landslide buried an entire village.

Together with its partners, the UN/ISDR will launch in June a two-year campaign on education to sensitize the general public on school safety and the importance of disaster risk reduction at school. The ISDR system will mobilize Governments, communities and individuals to ensure that disaster risk reduction is fully integrated into school curricula and that school buildings are built or retrofitted to withstand natural hazards.

Many countries are already taking actions to promote safer schools. In Canada, The British Columbia committed 1,5 billion US Dollars to bring all BC schools up to acceptable life safety standards within 15 years. In Pakistan, the United Nations and ISDR are working closely with the government of Pakistan, NGO's, universities and associations of engineers and architects to promote safe building standards in the recovery efforts.

“Children are among the most vulnerable groups, it is our obligation to protect them when they attend school ” says Salvano Briceño.



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Knowledge is one of the five priorities of the Hyogo Framework for Action, agreed by 168 countries in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan in 2005. The ISDR campaign will contribute to build a culture of safety and make nations and communities more resilient to natural hazards.

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