



United Nations
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
Secretariat, Geneva

For more information
please contact:

Brigitte Leoni
Media Relations
Tel: +41 22 917 8897
leonib@un.org
www.unisdr.org

PRESS RELEASE

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“Adapt now to rising floodwaters”, says UN disaster prevention body

Millions of people are again affected by devastating floods in India. After massive flooding in the state of Bihar, thousands of villages in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh are now submerged as rivers burst their banks.

“Flooding is already on the rise due to increasing population living in flood plains, and climate change will make floods more frequent and severe, with a particular impact on deltas. The recent floods in Bangladesh, Nepal and India are glimpses of a future that we need to start adapting to now,” says Salvano Briceño, Director of the UNISDR in Geneva, the UN’s disaster prevention secretariat.

Worldwide nearly 200 million people today live in coastal flood zones that are at risk of the more intense storms and rising sea levels that climate change will bring; in South Asia alone, the number exceeds 60 million people, according to the IPCC.

“Risk assessments, evacuation plans, education and not building in flood prone areas, are some of the many cost effective and reliable ways to prevent flooding from turning into a disaster. Many non-structural measures are within the financial means of most countries although they do require strong community participation” says Salvano Briceño, Director of the UNISDR in Geneva.

Successful flood control systems are being implemented in a range of countries.

Vietnam has used mangrove reforestation to considerably reduce the impact of flood on coastal populations. China invested US\$3.1 billion in flood control between 1960 and 2000 that is estimated to have averted losses of about US\$12 billion.

“We need to take good practices that are already working, and implement them across the world’s most flood-prone areas. Asian countries are already regularly affected by monsoon flooding, but this familiar enemy is changing before our eyes” says Mr Briceño. “The international community and national governments must invest in disaster risk reduction policies to adapt to climate change.”