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to disasters

Making Cities Resilient: My City is Getting Ready!

World Disaster Reduction Campaign 2010-2011

Mexico City is getting ready!

Mexico City, Mexico

Population: 8,841,916 (2009)

Type of Hazard: Earthquakes and Floods

Located in the centre of the country, Mexico City lies atop of a high altitude plateau 2,240 metres above sea level. Towering high above the city's southeast side are two active volcanoes: Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl. The surrounding valley, known as the Valley of Anáhuac, is a lake basin with no natural drainage outlet for the waters that flow from the mountainsides, making the city vulnerable to flooding. While not on or near any fault line the City is situated in a very active seismic zone and is extremely vulnerable to earthquakes.

The 1985 earthquake, which measured 8.1 on the Richter scale, caused the deaths of about 10,000 people and caused serious damage to the Mexican capital; thousands of buildings were flattened and a quarter of a million people lost their homes. Health facilities were especially hard hit, with many hospitals and clinics destroyed. Nearly one-fifth of the schools in the city were destroyed or seriously damaged as well as water, electrical and telecommunications systems.

Disaster Risk Reduction activities

To prepare for future disasters, Mexico City installed a public earthquake early warning system in August 1991 – the Seismic Alert System or Sistema de Alerta Sísmica in Spanish – that provides alerts through media outlets and Internet applications when an earthquake is detected. The system is capable of generating warning signals of about 60 seconds when detecting strong earthquakes occurring 280 km away.

The Mexico City government recognizes that climate change is now the most serious threat to the planet, with unquestionable socio-economic consequences for the population, and the ecosystems.

The effects of climate change have already been felt in Mexico City with the modification of the intensity and seasonal nature of the rains, the elevation of average annual temperatures, and the increased frequency of widespread, high-impact weather phenomena. The failure to take steps to mitigate the climate-change-related GHGs and to adapt to their effects, will heighten the risk of severe damage to physical, chemical, and biological systems, with negative consequences for the society, the environment, and the economy of Mexico City and the world.

The Mexico City government understands that as a megacity with multiple risks, there is an urgent need for coming together in a campaign that will help us to share better ways to reduce urban risk and therefore save lives.



Marcelo Ebrard, Mayor of Mexico City