



Workshop 4

ESD and disaster risk reduction: building disaster-resilient societies

Time: 31 March: 15.00 – 18.00 h (first part), 1 April: 11.00 – 13.00 h (second part)

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Learning to live with risk

Education for sustainable development
and disaster risk reduction

“More effective prevention strategies would save not only tens of billions of dollars, but save tens of thousands of lives. Funds currently spent on intervention and relief could be devoted to enhancing equitable and sustainable development instead, which would further reduce the risk for war and disaster. Building a culture of prevention is not easy. While the costs of prevention have to be paid in the present, its benefits lie in a distant future. Moreover, the benefits are not tangible; they are the disasters that did NOT happen.”

Kofi Annan

Former UN Secretary-General: “Introduction to Secretary-General’s Annual Report on the Work of the Organization of United Nations, 1999” (document A/54/1)

Introduction on Disaster Risk Reduction and Education for Sustainable Development

The occurrences of natural disasters are on the rise. Images of the devastating Myanmar cyclone and China Sichuan earthquake are painful reminders of the world’s increasing vulnerability. In 2008, 321 disasters killed 235 816 people, affected 211 million others and cost a total of US\$ 181 billion. Asia was the most affected continent. The death toll in 2008 was three times more than the annual average of 66 812 for 2000–2007.

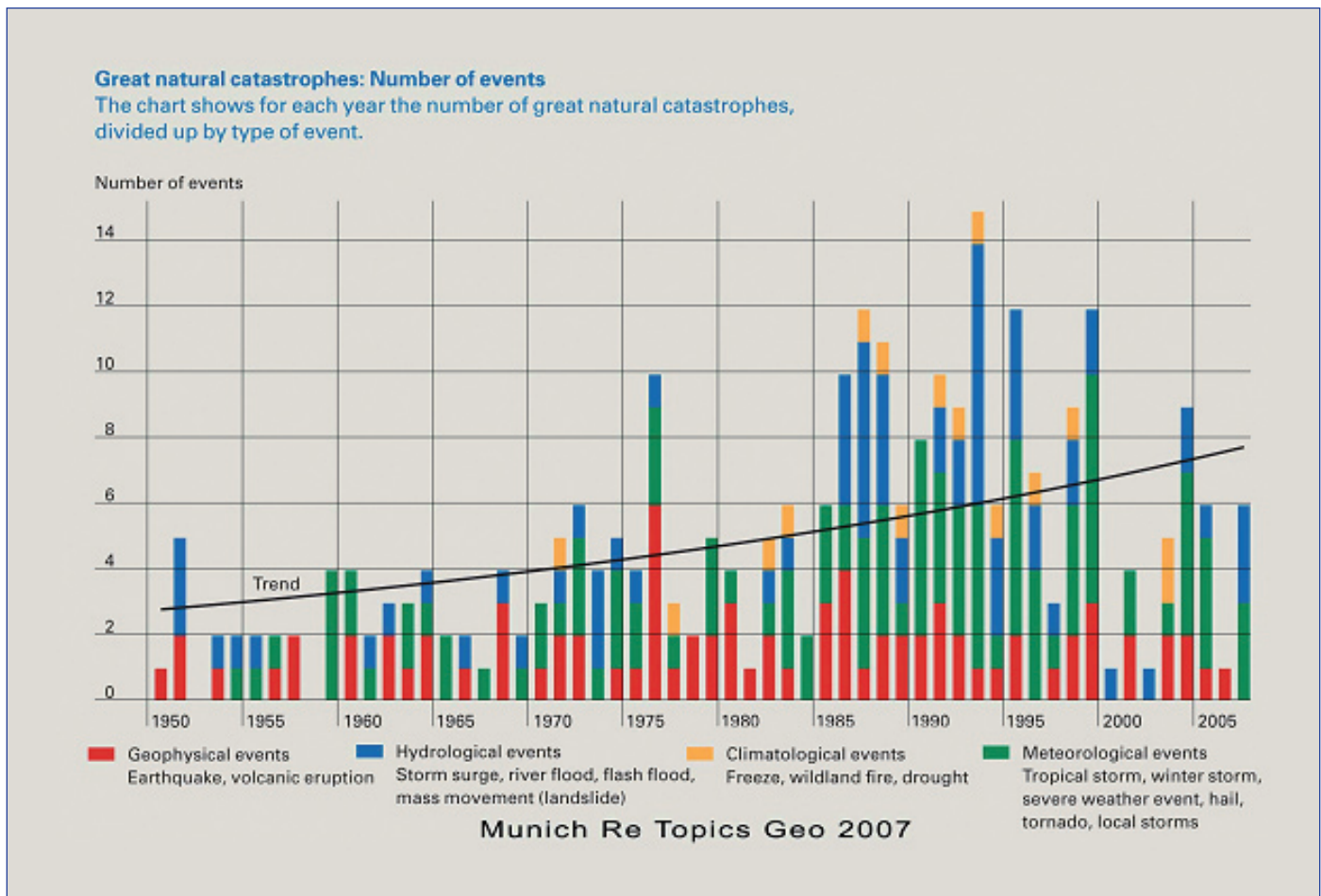
Hazards are part of nature but can turn into disasters as a result of human interactions. The continued failure to manage natural resources, the demographic pressure and human settlements in fragile ecosystems and the increased demand on environment, are among the main causes of environmental degradation and comes in addition to the threat of global climate change and rising sea levels. The IPCC studies predict that climate change – contributed to by human activities – will increase and intensify the extension of natural events and exacerbate the underlying risk many developing countries are already facing.

Disasters are among the biggest obstacles to achieving the UN’s Millennium Development Goals for poverty reduction. Thus, reducing disaster risks and their impact has become an important development issue



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→ in its own right. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992, disaster reduction has been recognized as an integral component of sustainable development (Chapter 3 of Agenda 21). This conclusion and the cross-cutting nature of disaster risk reduction were once again underlined in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The international implementation scheme of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) in fact sees disaster preparedness and

mitigation are critical issues. In this regard, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, highlighted the significant role of education in improving the capacity of individuals and communities to reduce the risk of disasters: “anticipating, educating and informing are the keys to reducing the deadly effects of such natural disasters” (3 January, 2005).

This goal is supported by the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005 – 2015: “Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters”, as adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 2005, Kobe, Japan, which highlights the importance of education and learning as part of its priorities for action, using knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.



Therefore Education for Disaster Risk Reduction (EDRR) as part of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) has to be inherent with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and supports the frameworks of ESD in three important ways:

- Education for Disaster Risk Reduction is interdisciplinary. Therefore, important consideration is given to the impacts on, and relationship between, society, the environment, economy and culture.
- Education for Disaster Risk Reduction promotes critical thinking and problem solving and other social and emotional life skills that are essential to the empowerment of stakeholder groups threatened or affected by disasters.
- Education for Disaster Risk Reduction supports the Millennium Development Goals. Without considering Disaster Risk Reduction in development planning, all efforts including, decades of development initiatives could be destroyed in seconds.

The conference workshop 'ESD and disaster risk reduction: building disaster-resilient societies'

The goal of this workshop is to re-examine the notion of education for disaster risk reduction and its contributing role in the Decade by successfully confronting disaster risk as a key sustainable development challenge. In correspondence with one of the major thrusts of ESD to reorient curricula towards sustainable development, as identified in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, the participants of the workshop will review achievements made so far in disaster risk education and identify mechanisms and activities to further promote and strengthen education for disaster risk reduction in formal and non-formal settings in the second half of the Decade. The workshop will build around the following five strategic themes, to be introduced through best practices and challenges at international, national, regional, and local level.

Strategic theme 1: 'Advocacy to policy makers'

The incorporation of disaster risk reduction in education for sustainable development is a legitimate matter of public policy at the highest national levels for three main reasons. The first one is public safety and the protection of human life. The second is the protection of the nation's resource base and productive assets (infrastructure and private property or investments) to ensure long-term development and economic growth. The third is that States, as duty-bearers, shall undertake appropriate policy, legislative and administrative measures to facilitate the implementation of the children's rights recognized in the International bill of human Rights and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Strategic theme 2: 'Capacity Building'

Capacity building is the process and means through which national governments and local communities develop the necessary skills and expertise to manage their environment and natural resources in a sustainable manner. Institutions and communities, which execute policy decisions, must be educated and trained on how to locally optimize disaster reduction measures in order to handle such risks.

Strategic Theme 3: 'Formal education'

To create a culture of safety, disaster risk reduction and environmental issues, have to be integrated within all levels of education, from the pre-primary to the advanced university levels. The following three complementary elements are important for long-term sustainability in mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in formal education: (1) Curricula and school integration, (2) Teacher training, (3) Assessment of learning. These three elements furthermore need to be aligned to ensure coherency. One of the major challenges relies in making the complex cause-effect chains between human behaviour and environment comprehensible to children and youth, and to ensure that they are and will, as future citizens be able to make sound decisions and act upon these in their lives through increased life-skills and knowledge.

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Strategic theme 4: 'Non-formal education'

Non-formal education can be the rapid entry point for disaster risk reduction education. This can take many forms, offering fun and engaging ways to introduce important knowledge, skills and competencies for students of all ages. Within recent years more interest has been generated in the understanding of indigenous and traditional knowledge and the realisation of its potential to improve disaster risk reduction policies, especially through the linkage with disaster education and early warning systems.

Strategic theme 5: 'Educational infrastructure'

A safe education facility is that which is either located in a danger-free zone or has been built to be resilient to an extreme natural event. Educational infrastructure can be made resilient through measures such as land use planning, structural reinforcement and emergency plans. Older school buildings should also be made resilient and to that end, should benefit from effective retrofitting programmes.

Guiding questions and workshop methodology

The workshop intends to address the following guiding questions:

- Why is it imperative to incorporate Disaster Risk Reduction into Education for Sustainable Development?
- Which are the key issues that need to be considered when incorporating Disaster Risk Reduction into Education for Sustainable Development?
- How can we create synergetic effects between the Disaster Risk Reduction and Education for Sustainable Development community?
- Which elements of Disaster Risk Reduction seem universal and transferable from industrialized countries to developing countries, or by south-south exchange?
- Where can I find additional information on this topic?

Recommendations and action items for the next five years of the decade are developed and discussed in a participatory manner with the audience and resource experts from the field of Education for Disaster Risk Reduction. A policy document linking education for disaster risk reduction and education for sustainable development will be shared and discussed with the participants.

In the workshop a variety of formats are used like presentations, group discussions, panels, expert consultations, and other dialog formats that allows the entire group to participate in the discussion, including collaboration with other conference workshops being intended.