

KNOW RISK



United Nations

OUT NOW



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In many parts of the world, disasters caused by natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, landslides, drought, wildfires, tropical cyclones and associated storm surges, tsunami and volcanic eruptions have exacted a heavy toll in terms of the loss of human lives and the destruction of economic and social infrastructure, not to mention their negative impact on already fragile ecosystems. Indeed, the period between 1960 and 2004, witnessed a significant increase in the occurrence, severity and intensity of disasters, culminating with the quake-triggered tsunami of 26th December 2004 that has devastated much of the coastline of South Asia. Bearing in mind the disproportionate effects that these catastrophes have on developing nations, where economic and human costs rise to as much as five times higher per unit of GDP than richer nations, this trend poses a major threat to sustainable development. Natural risk reduction needs to be addressed by the international community with a sense of urgency.

While natural hazards will continue to occur, human action can either increase or reduce the vulnerability of societies to these hazards and related technological and

environmental disasters by focusing on socio-economic factors determining such vulnerability. For example, population growth as well as changing demographic and economic patterns, which has led to uncontrolled urbanization and widespread poverty, have forced large numbers of people to live in disaster-prone areas and sub-optimal shelters, thus increasing vulnerability.

On the other hand, there is considerable scope for the reduction of risk through the application of disaster prevention and mitigation efforts based, for instance, on modern forecasting technology in terms of the development of early warning systems as well as improved land use and settlement planning, and safer building practices, provided that societies ensure the application of these in a manner consistent with the needs of sustainable development.

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) aims at building disaster resilient communities by promoting increased awareness of the importance of disaster reduction as an integral component of sustainable development, with the goal of reducing human, social, economic and environmental



Kofi Annan, Secretary General, United Nations

“Disaster reduction is a responsibility of all of us. Let us reaffirm our commitment to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, and let us bring even more resources – political, technical and financial – to this vital cause. Together, we can protect lives and livelihoods today, and build disaster-resilient communities for tomorrow. In that spirit of partnership, I recommend *Know Risk* to a global audience.”



Jan Egeland, Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, United Nations

“*Know Risk* will undoubtedly contribute, in a substantive manner, to the body of knowledge in this field. I look forward to its wide dissemination and use by experts and practitioners working for building resilience in disaster-prone communities.”

losses due to natural hazards and related technological and environmental disasters.

Tudor Rose and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) have collaborated in a unique public-private partnership to advance their shared commitment to reducing disaster risk through the release of this landmark book.

Know Risk is a fully illustrated, 376-page book with over 160 authors relating their work in disaster reduction at international, regional, national, municipal and local levels. Their commentaries draw upon experiences around the world to reflect how people are living with natural and related environmental and technological risks, and how they are making their own efforts to reduce their exposure to disasters. *Know Risk* reflects the progress in this field over the past ten years, highlighting good practices and drawing on the ISDR coordinated review of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World (1994). By focusing on the experiences and livelihoods of people in vulnerable human habitats, *Know Risk* emphasises the benefits of experience leading into future actions and institutional commitments to disaster reduction.

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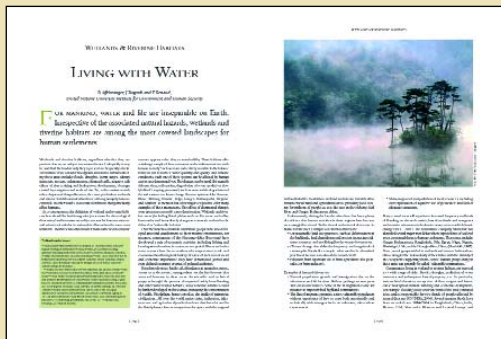
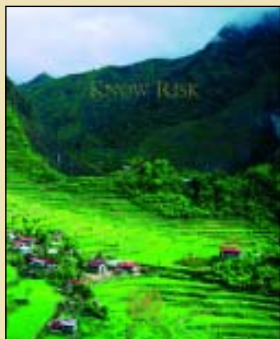
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