



Scientific practices and social behaviors in managing landslide risks: comparing experiences between developing and developed countries

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A successful landslide risk reduction program requires that the society is aware and understand the landslide problems within the geographic area involved. Central organizations that manage national landslide risks should: a) create and systematically applied natural hazard laws/national landslide strategies, where roles and limits of responsibilities of federal, state, provincial, municipal and private entities are well defined; c) establish fruitful multidisciplinary and interinstitutional collaboration among scientists; d) provide good risk assessments in which landslide experts report transparently what is really known and the limitations of methods and tools used; e) share and systematically communicate their knowledge more effectively with all private and public stakeholders involved, paying attention to providing balanced information about risks and addressing inevitable uncertainties; f) support the mass-media in spreading correct scientific information; g) perform serious risk and cost-benefit analyses before mitigation measures are realized; h) assist local authorities in the application of land-use planning policies and g) built trust and confidence by means of a continuous contact and communication with the public and local authorities. However, this is not yet achieved, not even in developed countries where, in theory, more economical resources are available and people are better educated than in developing countries.

Herein I make some observations on how national landslide prevention efforts are being organized in two countries (Nicaragua and Norway), where I have been worked at governmental agencies as landslide expert in the last 10 years. I start describing similarities and differences between the countries and try to compare practices and experiences. The analysis was motivated by the following questions: Why after so many years of landslide mapping and investigations, landslide prevention is not good and effective as it should be? Is this because of wrong or inadequate scientific practices, unethical landslide experts, complex bureaucracy and hierarchy at governmental level, presence of non-scientific public officials and politicians with lack of long-term landslide risk management knowledge, often interposed between landslide experts and public, or, because of others human behaviors, or social or political aspects that make this difficult? Are there any differences or similarities in landslide prevention between developed and developing countries? Where is better achieved a good communication between landslide experts and public? Where the multidisciplinary and interstitutional cooperation among specialists gives the most fruitful results? Is it possible and how we can exchange knowledge and experiences learned in developing countries?