



Adaptation Needs of Disaster Management and Long-Term Changes

G. Tetzlaff

Universität Leipzig, Institut für Meteorology, Germany

The national platforms of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction pursue the enhancement of disaster preparedness. They usually are organized as legally independent societies, with a broad membership coming from the relevant sectors, ranging from governmental bodies, a multitude of non-governmental organizations, scientific institutions, private companies, and individuals. Therefore, the platforms are predestined to address the cross-cutting issues of disaster prevention and disaster preparedness. These range from technical and scientific aspects to societal aspects such as educating people with respect to disaster preparedness.

From the available experience it is evident that it is far more efficient to prepare beforehand than to respond to an extreme event. When preparing for a natural hazard it has to be considered that such events are rare and may not occur for some decades to come, but it has also to be kept in mind that hazards and vulnerabilities might change in the course of decades. This means to make sure the endangered population takes an active role in developing preparedness measures.

Disaster prevention took most design criteria from the lessons learned by failures in past events. These could happen, because people and infrastructure were insufficiently prepared for the occurring hazard. Immediately after a disaster struck, usually many activities try to reduce the risk of a repetition of the past disaster. Often these activities are short lived and only some part of the measures envisaged could be taken. The platforms try to keep up the overall attention and to make point out gaps in preparedness. The platforms also take efforts to draw the attention of the appropriate authorities to all available forecasts of long-term changes of hazards and vulnerabilities. This means to develop adaptation strategies allowing disaster reduction in changed levels of hazards and vulnerabilities. A deficiency encountered in developing long-term disaster reduction and preparedness plans is the sparse information on the quantification of the relation between hazard, vulnerability and adverse effects, the damage function. This also applies to the robustness of the long-term forecast information for local hazards and vulnerabilities. Therefore, quality controlled adaptation needs comprehensive information both on the past disasters and on the size of future hazards and vulnerabilities. The national platforms try to communicate the complexity of measures addressing the enhancement of long-term disaster preparedness and reduction.