

The 10th of October: International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

Recently natural disasters have become calamities for nations. Every year natural disasters affect more than 200 mln. people. During the last decade the average losses were \$67 mln.

In 1989, the UN General Assembly designated the second Wednesday of October International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR) (resolution 44/236, 22 December 1989). UN declared 1990-1999s as International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. ISDR became the successor of IDNDR. The later maintained the observance of the IDDR (resolution 56/195, 21 December 2001), as a vehicle to promote a global culture of natural disaster reduction, including disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness. This year IDDR is marked by 2006-2007 world campaign under the theme of *Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School*. The Campaign led by the UN/ISDR was to last up to the end of 2007, but it will continue under the auspices of the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. It is in compliance with the Priority 3 of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-5015: *“Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels”*. The priorities were adopted by 168 Governments at the January 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction, to make the world safer from natural hazards. Among the representatives of the Republic of Armenia at the conference was Dr Alvaro Antonyan, President of the Armenian National Survey for Seismic Protection. To carry out the priorities UN/ISDR secretariat designated Armenian NSSP to be the National Focal Point taking into consideration the achievements of the Armenian NSSP, mainly the fact that NSSP has won the 1998 UN Sasakawa Certificate for Distinction, the founder of Armenian NSSP S. Balassanian became UN Sasakawa Laureate in 2002 and the fact that in 2001-2002 Armenian NSSP with the support of the Government sent a multi profile team to India and Georgia with a humanitarian mission to reduce the consequences in disaster affected areas. The activities performed was gratefully appraised by the Governments of India and Georgia.

Within the Campaign *Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School* Armenian NSSP together with Kobe municipality and the Asian Disaster Reduction Center carried out a program from July 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007, that was to contribute to the awareness raising at five schools in Syunik Marz and to the evaluation of the school vulnerability.



Duck and Cover Practice

Syunik Marz is located in the most active seismic zone. It has area of 4506 sq. km. and a population of 164.100 and here more than in any other place there was needed to assess seismic hazards, compile hazard maps, estimate the risks, to make plans for Disaster Resiliency and to include Disaster Reduction into the school curricula. The program *Knowledge, Education and Training for Earthquake Disaster Awareness and Preparedness in Schools in Syunik Marz* helped turn 375 school students, teachers and school principals into DRR trainers.

In November 2006 a Japanese delegation comprising four professionals arrived in Armenia. They conducted a five-day seminar and training and also gave materials based on their own experience.

The project is published in the UN/ISDR education compendium as one of the best examples of disaster related practice.