



Above: Embankments are part of a proactive flood preparedness strategy in Bangladesh



Above: a cyclone shelter in Bangladesh that has protected the lives of hundreds of vulnerable rural people living along the coastal Bay of Bengal

The International Federation in a joint initiative with the Jamaica Red Cross, Royal and Sun Alliance and the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association is developing a disaster and safety management program to address the unique needs of hotels in the region. This innovative program enables the National Society to raise awareness of disaster preparedness methods with hotel industry staff, and to generate resources from the provision of services to support the funding needs of the Red Cross.

For the Federation and National Societies, the development of national capacities is an important process to better

serve the needs of the most vulnerable. With a long history of development in disaster response, National Societies are acutely aware that greater attention has to be paid to preventive strategies aimed at saving lives and protecting resources and assets before they are lost. In essence, this task will include the continuous collection and analysis of relevant information and activities such as

- predictable hazards — identification and mapping of key hazards
- assessing the geographical distribution of threats — geographical areas vulnerable to seasonal threats
- who and what are the most vulnerable

to threats — households, groups and communities at greatest risk

- assessing the most vulnerable groups' capacity to respond to threats/disasters — strengths and coping mechanisms to local hazards
- determining the other players in disaster preparedness and response — development of a network to support a comprehensive program
- assessing the capacity of National Societies to mitigate and respond to disaster threats — on-going capacity assessment of both response at the time of national or local disasters and initiation of interventions to mitigate the consequences of such disasters for people at-risk
- define gaps in national/local preparedness plans — advocate to policy makers to ensure plans have been developed to reduce the impact of disaster episodes on vulnerable communities

National Societies in disaster-prone nations

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, with a long history of initiatives dating back to 1920, provides a clear example of a National Society that has begun to balance disaster preparedness activities between maintaining a strong response capacity and defining and initiating successful mitigation initiatives. With an average annual death toll of 44,000 attributed to disasters from 1987 to 1996, Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone nations in the world. To add to its vulnerabilities, Bangladesh is confronted