



International Day for Disaster Reduction

Traditional and indigenous knowledge is the indispensable information base for many societies seeking to live in harmony with nature and adapt to disruptive weather events, a warming globe and rising seas...On this International Day, let us recognize the efforts of communities, large and small, who put their wisdom to use in reducing disaster risk and sharing their precious "knowledge for life". – Ban Ki-moon

In 1989, the UN General Assembly designated the second Wednesday of October as International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. This day was to be observed annually during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990-1999). Later, in 2009, the observance was renamed 'International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR)' and would be celebrated annually on October 13.

IDDR has been celebrated under various themes in the past such as 'Resilience is for Life' in 2014. This year's theme 'Knowledge for Life' focuses on the traditional, indigenous and local knowledge which complement modern science and add to an individual's and societies' resilience. Every year, the observance seeks to raise awareness of how people are taking action to reduce their risk to disasters.

Much of the world at some point in history, has been affected by either slow or fast onset disasters such as droughts, heat waves, storms and floods. Guyana itself is no stranger to floods and drought. These disasters are known to affect the livelihoods of many local populations and communities. This year recognizes the vast communal experience and wisdom gained over many centuries which can be passed on from generation to generation to aid preparedness and response across societies.

During March 14-18, 2015, the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. At this conference, The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 was adopted and then endorsed by the UN General Assembly. This Framework represented unique opportunities for countries with a people-focused and action-oriented approach to disaster risk reduction related to small and large scale disasters caused by man-made or natural hazards and their related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks.

Some of the direct references to the need for a strong focus on communities and indigenous peoples in the Framework are highlighted below:

“While recognizing their leading, regulatory and coordination role, Governments should engage with relevant stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, poor people, migrants, indigenous peoples, volunteers, the community of practitioners and older persons in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards.”

“Ensure the use of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices, as appropriate, to complement scientific knowledge in disaster risk assessment and the development and implementation of policies, strategies, plans and programmes of specific sectors, with a cross-sectoral approach, which should be tailored to localities and to the context;”

“Empower local authorities, as appropriate, through regulatory and financial means to work and coordinate with civil society, communities and indigenous peoples and migrants in disaster risk management at the local level;”

“Indigenous peoples, through their experience and traditional knowledge, provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms, including for early warning; ”

This year’s observance hopes to foster greater global awareness and appreciation of the stores of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge and practices which can be garnered to aid disaster risk reduction. In addition, this highlight will promote changes in attitude and behavior towards the inclusion of indigenous people and community consultation for DRR development.

Additional information can be found at:

<http://www.un.org/en/events/disasterreductionday/index.shtml>

<http://www.unisdr.org/2015/iddr/documents/IDDR15ConceptNoteFINAL.pdf>

Share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com.