



# MEDIA RELEASE

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Disaster Management

## UNDP and Government sign multi-million dollar disaster management deal

Earlier today, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Bangladesh signed an agreement to launch a USD 14.444 million initiative, aimed at substantially reducing the impact of natural and man-made disasters on the people of Bangladesh over the next five years.

UNDP contributed USD 6.340 million towards the initiative, while the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) gave a further USD 8.104 million through UNDP.

Bangladesh, one of the world's most densely populated countries, is prone to frequent disasters including, cyclones, storm surges, droughts, floods and earthquakes. According to the Emergency Response Division of UNDP, Bangladesh experienced more than 170 large-scale disasters between 1970 and 1998, putting the country among the most frequently hit in the world. These catastrophes are estimated to have killed half a million people and affected more than 400 million. Rapid urbanisation is now presenting new types of potential disasters; and rising sea levels, due to climate change, is threatening to inundate ten percent of the nation's already crowded landmass within the first half of this century.

"Through community involvement in planning and risk management Bangladesh has successfully reduced the impact of disasters. However, response efforts still focus largely on emergency relief, rather than steadily eliminating the risks and helping communities move from being vulnerable to resilient," UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner said.

Through the new 'Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme', the Government, UNDP, expert NGOs, and DFID aim to make comprehensive planning for disasters commonplace within community activities, the design of investment and development projects, and national policy. The programme is also aimed at improving response and recovery activities after a disaster, at village and national levels.

The programme is designed to achieve these goals through five components. Firstly, by 'professionalising' the nation's disaster management system; and integrating risk management into development and

investment projects; by raising public awareness; also supporting communities to design their own disaster action plans; and expanding knowledge and preparedness to cover new types of disasters resulting from rapid urbanisation and climate change.

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief will direct the programme. The first activity under the new initiative would be to establish a steering committee including representatives from the Government, UNDP, the donor community, and the NGO sector.

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