

Media Release

UK boosts Bangladesh efforts to protect millions from disasters

08 May 2003, DHAKA: The United Kingdom boosted Government and UN Development Programme (UNDP) efforts to reduce the impact of natural and man-made disasters on the people of Bangladesh earlier today by contributing USD 8.104 million towards the nation-wide 'Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme'.

Following a rigorous programme design process, the partnership between UNDP and DFID to support disaster management, was officially sealed by the head of the UK's Department for International Development's (DFID) in Bangladesh, Paul Ackroyd, and the UNDP Resident Representative, Jorgen Lissner this morning at the DFID office in Gulshan.

The DFID contribution towards the Government/ UNDP initiative is specifically targeted to help Bangladesh handle shocks resulting from climate change by supporting research and developing activities to lessen the impact. In addition, the support will help to establish a Disaster Management Information Centre (DMIC) to facilitate improved disaster emergency response and better disaster management coordination and information sharing. Most of the DFID contribution, however, will provide critical assistance to broaden and strengthen communities' abilities to cope with natural and man-made disasters.

"I am very pleased to sign this important project today so that DFID can work in partnership with UNDP to strengthen the Government of Bangladesh's capacity to plan for and respond to reduce the impact of disasters on the people of Bangladesh," Mr. Ackroyd said.

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 17 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.

To meet this challenge, the 'Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme' (USD 14.444 million initiative) draws together local knowledge, Government resources, and international expertise and funds to ensure comprehensive planning for disasters becomes commonplace within community activities, the design of investment and development projects, and national policy.

The Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme is a five-year initiative that was officially launched in January 2003, and is directed by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief. It has been designed to help reduce the impact of natural disasters, but also to address emerging complications resulting from rapid urbanisation and industrialization. UNDP has contributed USD 6.340 million towards the initiative.

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UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.

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Pictured: UNDP Resident Representative, Jorgen Lissner (left), and DFID Head, Paul Ackroyd (right), seal a partnership between the two organizations to support disaster management in Bangladesh.