While the MDGs have galvanised international development efforts, progress has been slow and this has direct implications for global levels of disaster risk.[12] The most far-reaching opportunities for disaster risk reduction within the MDGs relate to MDG8 — developing a global partnership for development. This requires that developed countries meet their commitments to trade reform, debt relief and aid. The lack of consensus on international trade, particularly in agriculture that brought the World Trade Organization talks in Cancun in 2003 to a halt, shows the amount of work that still needs to be undertaken in building an international agenda for trade reform. Without such reform, developing countries will have little chance of generating higher economic growth. At the same time, however, because trade reform has such far-reaching implications for patterns of economic, social and territorial development, by definition it will change the distribution of disaster risk. Once again, the two-way relationship between disaster risk and development becomes apparent. Trade reform may stimulate more *risk generating* development, unless disaster risk reduction becomes an integral part of development planning.

Issues of environmental sustainability were discussed in the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation encourages public-private sector partnerships in managing environment and development challenges. The ways in which partnerships operate in terms of wealth generation and distribution, stakeholder participation and the environmental impacts of development, will also potentially contribute to the shaping of disaster risk. These need to be critically reviewed in the face of disaster risk, stemming from the ongoing degradation of the natural environment from deforestation, natural resource extraction (including oil), soil loss, biodiversity loss and growing concerns for access to water for drinking and agricultural use.

Alongside the use of the MDGs in focusing development aims, the international community is also changing its way of delivering development support. This too has implications for the shaping of disaster risk and the way in which strategies for enhancing security will need to be framed.[13] In particular, the use of national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) to better define priorities for public expenditure and the role of aid within these priorities. This rethinking of aid applies not only to governments, but also to civil society and the private sector.

With disaster risk increasingly recognised as one way in which economic poverty is felt or expressed,[14] PRSPs need to take this into account. They also provide an opportunity to bridge the ministerial and bureaucratic divides that have in the past so often resulted in disaster risk reduction falling in the cracks between development planning and disaster response.

1.5 A Changing Debate: Bringing Disasters and Development Together

A developmentally informed perspective on disasters lies at the intersection of work normally undertaken by two different communities: development planners and disaster risk reduction practitioners. This Report hopes to contribute by catalysing both communities to rethink their responsibilities. It follows previous initiatives that have paved the way for this argument. Important in this regard has been the United Nations International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 1990-1999 (IDNDR).

A number of very large-scale disasters occurred at the end of the IDNDR. The 1997-1998 El Niño led to flooding in East Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and South and Southeast Asia. It was followed by hurricanes Georges and Mitch hitting Central America and the Caribbean. These events were succeeded by mudslides and debris flows in Venezuela, a cyclone in Orissa, India, and earthquakes in Turkey, El Salvador and Gujarat, India. All this occurred in the four years between 1997 and 2001 and all contributed to a more articulated and serious consideration of the disaster-development relationship.[15]

The declaration of the IDNDR helped raise the profile of discussions surrounding the social and economic causes of disaster risk. In acknowledging this came the realisation that mitigating losses through technological and engineering solutions dealt with the symptoms rather than with the causes of the problem and that reducing disaster risk required a long-term engagement with processes of international development. The major disasters occurring at the end of the 1990s helped to galvanise support for this view.

As the successor to IDNDR in 2000, the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) was initiated to foster this agenda by focussing on the processes involved in the awareness, assessment and management of disaster risks. An important tool in the development of this agenda has been the ISDR Secretariat's publication *Living with Risk: A Global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives.*[16] The UN commitment to promoting sustainable development and mitigating disaster losses is brought together in this document.

BOX 1.3 THE EVOLUTION OF NATURAL DISASTER AS A DEVELOPMENT CONCERN

Both researchers and practitioners have been providing compelling evidence for many years that natural disasters are something more than just *acts of God.* While this is a broad generalisation of a very complex and heterogeneous process, one can say that until the 1970s a dominant view prevailed that natural disasters were synonymous with natural events such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and cyclones. In other words, an earthquake was a disaster *per se.* The magnitude of a disaster was considered to be a function of the magnitude of the hazard. As earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are not avoidable, the emphasis of national governments and the international community was on responding to the events and in the best of cases, preparing for them.

From the 1970s onwards, technical professionals, such as engineers and architects, began to focus on the fact that the same natural hazard had a varying impact on different kinds of structures, such as buildings. The characteristics of a disaster became more associated with its physical impact than with the natural hazard. Interest grew in the design and implementation of ways to mitigate losses through physical and structural measures to reduce hazards (for example, through building levees and flood defences) or to increase the resistance of structures. Unfortunately, the cost of physical mitigation meant that in many countries efforts to reduce risks by these means have been minimal.

Also since the 1970s, but with increasing emphasis in the 1980s and 1990s, researchers from the social sciences and humanities have argued that the impact of a natural hazard depends not only on the physical resistance of a structure, but on the capacity of people to absorb the impact and recover from loss or damage. The focus of attention moved to social and economic vulnerability, with mounting evidence that natural hazards had widely varying impacts on different social groups and on different countries. The causal factors of disaster thus shifted from the natural event towards the development processes that generated different levels of vulnerability. Vulnerability reduction began to be advanced as a key strategy for reducing disaster impact, though this proved elusive to implement.

By the end of the 1990s, it was clear that development processes were not only generating different patterns of vulnerability, but were also altering and magnifying patterns of hazard — an argument that has gained increasing currency as evidence mounts regarding the impact of global climate change. Risk management and reduction has been advanced as an integral paradigm that builds on and incorporates all the previous strategies from the perspective that all development activities have the potential to increase or reduce risks.

In 1997, under the United Nations Programme for Reform, the General Assembly transferred the responsibility for operational activities on natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness to UNDP. Since then, UNDP has made considerable progress in developing capacity building programmes in disaster reduction and recovery. In doing this, UNDP supports the implementation of the ISDR agenda at the national and regional levels. This work is reinforced by partnerships with the Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other UN agencies and international organisations.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and the regional development banks have also began to engage with issues surrounding the relationship between disaster risk and economic development. Many considerations compelled IFIs to incorporate disaster reduction as a major part of their portfolio of activities. For example, the massive destruction of infrastructure that had been built with international loans from the IFIs, the setbacks to national economies and the mounting evidence that unless disaster reduction was factored into reconstruction, new loans following disasters might simply lead to the *rebuilding* of risk. The ProVention Consortium, launched by the World Bank as a global partnership of governments, international organisations, academic institutions, the private sector and civil society, has been active in promoting research and disseminating best practices in many aspects of disaster risk management.

Members of international civil society also have been instrumental in moving the agenda of managing disasters on from mitigation and preparedness, towards a deeper integration with development processes. Since 1992, IFRC has published an annual *World Disaster Report.*[17] The two most recent editions focused on disaster risk reduction and recovery. This new focus on the links between disaster and development shows the increasing awareness in major international development and humanitarian agencies about the importance of disaster risk reduction. As with *Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development,* the IFRC argument for a greater emphasis on disaster risk reduction building on established response mechanisms, is tied into the context of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.[18]

At the same time in recognising the growing international interest and commitment to reducing disaster risk, it is

important to recognise that this has been stimulated by the emergence of national and regional institutions dedicated to research, training and application in disaster prone countries. Many of the contemporary approaches to risk management and reduction, now being discussed and advocated at the international level, have grown out of disaster reduction research and application by developing country researchers and institutions. Since the early 1990s, a growing literature has emerged in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and Africa.[19]

The creation of regional organisations and networks manifests the growing maturity of this process. These organisations and networks now have an important influence on international policy.

1.6 Is Sustainable Human Development Achievable Under Natural Disaster Risk?

The UNDP emphasis on human development has informed the way in which development is conceived of in this Report. Human development is about more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about having space in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations.

Fundamental to human development is building human capabilities: the range of things that people can do or be in life. The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Without these, many choices are simply not available and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible. The stress and shock felt by those vulnerable and exposed to natural hazards will impact in myriad ways on the capacity of people to achieve and enjoy human development gains. Levels of human development will also shape people's capacity to be resilient in the face of hazard stress and shock.

UNDP Human Development Reports (HDR) recognise the role played by disaster risk in shaping human development. Disaster risk has been a concern of regional thematic works including: *El Estado de la Region* published in 1999 and covering Central America, *Building Competitiveness in the Face of Vulnerability*, published in 2002 by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean Sates, and *El Impacto de un Huracán*, published in 1999 in Honduras. More generally, given the close relationship between disaster risk and human development, the HDR series often discusses concerns relevant to disaster risk reduction though in a less systematic manner.[21]

BOX 1.4 MAHBUB UL HAQ ON THE MEANING OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and a sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.

Source: Mahbub ul Haq [20]

1.6.1 Disaster-development linkages

The primary focus of *Reducing Disaster Risk: A Challenge for Development* is on the relationship between human development and disaster.[22] In order to clarify the ways in which disaster and development interact, it is helpful to distinguish between the economic and social elements of human development. These components are interdependent and overlapping. Nevertheless, it is useful to think of the ways that these two elements, and their constituent institutional and political components, are shaped, retarded and sometimes accelerated by disaster. Similarly, one can analyse the ways in which economic and social

BOX 1.5 DISASTER RISK, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE MDGs

The interaction of **economic development** with disaster risk has direct consequences for the meeting of MDG 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), 6 (combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases) and 7 (ensure environmental sustainability).

The interaction of **social development** and disaster risk has direct consequences for the meeting of MDG 3 (promote gender equality and empower women) and 8 (develop a global partnership for development).