



Original paper

Updating the Indicators of Disaster Risk and Risk Management for the Americas

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Abstract In order to improve disaster risk understanding and disaster risk management performance in Latin America and the Caribbean a transparent, representative and robust system of indicators was developed by the Institute of Environmental Studies (IDEA in Spanish) of the National University of Colombia, Manizales. This system of indicators which is easily understood by public policymakers and relatively easy to update periodically, has been designed between 2003 and 2005 to communicate risk in the decision makers' own language and to allow cluster and comparison between countries. The indicators were developed with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Four composite indicators have been designed to represent the main elements of vulnerability and show each country's progress in managing risk. They are the 'Disaster Deficit Index', the 'Local Disaster Index', the 'Prevalent Vulnerability Index', and the 'Risk Management Index'. These indicators reflect the organizational, development capacity and institutional actions taken to reduce vulnerability and losses to prepare for crisis and to recover efficiently from disasters.

In this way, the system of indicators covers different areas of the risk problem, taking into account issues such as: potential damages and losses resulting from extreme events; recurrent disasters or losses; social and environmental conditions that make particular countries or regions more disaster prone; the capacity of the economy to recover; the operation of key services; institutional capacity and the effectiveness of basic risk management instruments (such as risk identification, prevention and mitigation measures, financial mechanisms and risk transfer); emergency response levels; and preparedness and recovery capacity.

In 2008 a methodological review and the updating of the indicators was made. Indicators were updated to 2005 and for the most recent date according to information availability (2007 or 2008). In addition, new countries were included in the program. This has allowed a systematic and quantitative benchmarking of the Americas countries during different periods between 1980 and 2008. This paper describes the current methodologies for each index and illustrates some results in each case.

Key words Indicators; Risk Assessment; Risk Management; Disasters; Vulnerability; Natural

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