

**Report of the May 20, 2003 Special Meeting of the  
SDR International Working Group**

**In attendance:**

Bill Hooke, American Meteorological Society  
Caroline Clarke, Inter-American Development Bank  
Bill Anderson, National Academy of Sciences  
Monique Hite, National Academy of Sciences  
Cheryl Bertoia, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration  
Dori Akerman, NOAA/ GRS  
Larry Weber, National Science Foundation  
Miriam Heller, National Science Foundation  
Wanda Ward, National Science Foundation  
Stephen Bender, Organization of American States  
Eric Falls, State Department  
Fernando Echavarria, State Department  
Larry Roeder, State Department  
Shauna Dillavou, State Department  
Syed Qadir, U.S. Coast Guard / National Response Center  
Bill Belton, U.S. Forest Service  
Benigno Aguirre, University of Delaware

The International Working Group (IWG) of the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction (SDR) accomplished the following in their May 20, 2003 meeting:

**1. Purpose of the International Working Group (IWG):** The meeting brought together a variety of organizations dealing with disasters in an international context. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange information about science and technology policies, programs and challenges, and to consider ways to coordinate and mutually benefit from each other's various activities.

**2. Presentations by Organizations:** Larry Weber, IWG Co-chair from the National Science Foundation, welcomed participants and noted the purpose of the meeting. Larry Roeder, IWG Co-chair from the State Department, gave a brief overview of the IWG. Invited presenters shared information about their organizations, received and answered questions, and facilitated a general discussion. The following individuals made presentations:

- Stephen Bender, Organization of American States
- Caroline Clarke, Inter-American Development Bank
- Benigno Aguirre, International Research Committee on Disasters, (International Sociological Association)
- William Anderson, National Academy of Sciences, formerly with the World Bank.

Representatives from the World Bank and the Pan American Health Organization also were invited to make presentations but, unfortunately, were not able to attend.

### **Organization of American States (OAS)**

The Organization of American States (OAS) began a Natural Hazards Reduction Program more than 20 years ago. Much of the coordination is done through the Inter-American Committee for Natural Hazard Reduction. Mr. Bender shared copies of the Committee's "Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Reduction," noting OAS' increased emphasis on "vulnerability" rather than on the disasters themselves. There is a mandate in place for member states to provide regular reports on vulnerability of infrastructure (e.g., transportation and communications) to natural disasters. The OAS Web site (<http://www.oas.org>) offers a wealth of materials related to hazards and vulnerability.

### **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) lends \$7-10 billion annually in Latin America and the Caribbean for activities related to improving productivity, enhancing the private sector, reforming state institutions, building infrastructure (e.g., energy and transportation), and for health, education and environmental management. To characterize the level of IDB funding related to disaster mitigation/reduction, Ms. Clarke reviewed \$21 billion worth of projects in Mexico, the Caribbean, and other countries in the sub-region over the 10-year period from 1990-1999. While only 5% of the \$21 billion was spent on disaster-related mitigation/reduction, this amount still represents investments of approximately \$1 billion. Of the \$1 billion, about 30% was for response and about 45% was for mitigation, infrastructure development, and so forth. Ms. Clarke provided a handout that summarized IDB's Action Plan, "Facing the Challenge of Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean," and highlighted related IDB policies, programs, cooperative arrangements, and studies/papers.

### **International Research Committee on Disasters**

While the International Research Committee on Disasters is a committee of the International Sociological Association, only about 15% of the Committee's 500 members also are members of the parent association. The objective of the Committee is to increase scientific knowledge and understanding of the social and behavioral aspects of disasters and mass emergencies. The Committee is multidisciplinary and multinational.

The Committee publishes both a journal, "The International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters," and a newsletter. Additionally, it supports the publication of disaster-related books, sponsors workshops, and organizes an international conference every 4 years (2002 in Australia and 2006 in South Africa). More information on the International Research Committee on Disasters can be found at <http://www.udel.edu/DRC/IRCD.html>. Dr. Aguirre also highlighted conclusions from a paper he wrote, "Vulnerabilidad y Resistencia en Latinoamerica," emphasizing the need to synthesize the concepts of vulnerability and resilience. Dr. Aguirre is working on translating the paper into English.

**World Bank**

Bill Anderson serves as Director of the National Academy of Sciences' Disasters Roundtable. Having worked at the World Bank until 2 years ago, he agreed to give a brief summary of their activities. (Note that Mr. Anderson made it clear that he did not represent the World Bank.) Since the 1980's, the World Bank has spent more than \$23 billion on disasters. World Bank leadership recognizes the need to integrate disaster funding with overall development, and there is increasing emphasis on pre-disaster activities. The Disaster Management Facility was established within the World Bank in 1998 and served as Secretariat for the Prevention Consortium, established in 2000 to facilitate sharing of information, expertise and money among approximately 30 member organizations. The secretariat function for the Consortium has now rotated to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in Geneva.