

thousands of people. Because the country is prone to a variety of natural and man-made disasters, including floods, cyclones, droughts, earthquakes, landslides, and chemical disasters, emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation have a long tradition in India. The Government has organized disaster preparedness activities at district, union and state levels. The military plays a major role in disaster relief. The Government, UN agencies and NGOs support emergency preparedness activities ranging from construction of cyclone shelters to development of early warning systems. Over the past six years, WHO has worked closely with the Ministry of Health to strengthen emergency preparedness capacity in the health sector. (For specific EPR activities conducted in India in 1993, and funded by

WHO, FINNPREP and the Government of India, see section on "WHO Collaborating Centre in Calcutta, India" in Chapter 6)

### Workshops, conferences and meetings

#### Asia-Pacific Workshop for National Health Emergency Managers

(22-26 February 1993, Bangkok, Thailand)

Regional cooperation in emergency management for the health sector took a step forward in 1993. For the first time national health emergency managers of countries in the Asia-Pacific region identified common challenges and outlined solutions to deal with them. The workshop, which was held at the Asian

#### Extracts from: the Bangkok Declaration on Emergency Preparedness for the Health Sector in the Asia-Pacific Region

##### ★ Participants declared they would:

- intensify efforts to strengthen national capabilities to prevent and mitigate disasters;
- commit themselves to provide training opportunities for national and subnational emergency health officers for disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response;
- work to increase cooperation between the health sector and other sectors involved in emergency management, including civil defence, other emergency-related government departments, nongovernmental organizations and private voluntary organizations.

##### ★ Countries were urged to:

- build efficient emergency preparedness programmes, institutionalize them and incorporate them in national socioeconomic development plans, drawing upon the vast amount of emergency management experience around the world, as well as upon existing UN resolutions on emergency management;
- identify a full-time coordination entity within the health sector that ensures: (a) maximum utilization of the many different health-related disciplines, expertise and subsectors needed during emergencies; and (b) full collaboration with the national coordinating agency for emergencies;
- provide the above-mentioned entity with the necessary technical and financial support from regular sources, in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of emergency preparedness activities.

##### ★ International, regional and bilateral organizations were asked to:

- coordinate their efforts in assisting countries of the

Asia-Pacific region to build their emergency preparedness and response capabilities;

- allocate more resources to emergency prevention, preparedness and mitigation programmes at national and subnational levels;
- increase participation of the health sector in the IDNDR, and ensure that health issues are given due consideration in the IDNDR agenda and events, including the upcoming 1994 IDNDR World Conference;
- encourage the transfer of technologies and know-how related to emergency prevention, mitigation and preparedness for countries vulnerable to disasters in the Asia-Pacific region.

##### ★ WHO was requested to:

- increase technical and financial support for emergency preparedness and response to Member States, both through regular country budgets and extrabudgetary resources;
- identify full-time focal points within the regional offices and encourage regions to develop intercountry and interregional training programmes, as well as databases;
- establish a centre of excellence within the Asia-Pacific region along the lines of the WHO Pan-African Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Africa (health sector) and the Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre in Asia (multisectoral), working in close collaboration with the latter;
- further develop new strategies dealing with large population movements, and provide opportunities to implement related programmes in the Asia-Pacific region.