

## **Preliminary Proposal for the Activities Program in the Social Disasters Area**

### **I. Introduction and Justification**

Natural disasters, both large, medium and small, constitute a permanent and growing phase in the daily life of thousands of Central Americans. Their incidence and impact clearly cannot be reduced to a problem of a natural world or to an adverse physical context, but to the very structure of society, to its social and economic condition, its political and administrative structures, its attitudes, perceptions and ideologies, besides other multiple factors of social order. The disasters are social and they derive in most cases from the degree of underdevelopment in society, contributing to maintain this very condition.

The social consideration towards natural disasters has scarcely been researched in Central America and what the government and its organizations carry out in the prevention, mitigation or attention to disasters is generally performed without the adequate knowledge or back up, leading to inadequate responses to the problem.

Dealing with research, it has been dominated by physicalistic points of view, belonging to the natural or exact sciences (geophysics, geology, geomorphology, meteorology, etc.) directed to the prediction of events as a production factor for disaster prevention. The efforts that have been carried out in these fields by national institutions have been reinforced during the last two years with the creation of the Prevention Center for Natural Disasters in Central America (Centro de Prevención para los Desastres Naturales en Centroamérica) (CEPRENAC), financed by the Swedish government, and recently by the Norwegian and Danish governments.

Due to the absence of socially supported actions, the basic science experts become the bearers of reason; the location of the epicenter, its depth, if there will be replicas and when, become the center and the solution to the problem. The people turn to these experts to find out the truth and when they're wrong or declare themselves incapable to predict, the people are reduced once more to an unprotected and irrational organism.

The absence of social research and that of prevention and mitigation actions adequately backed up in the Central American countries, was the starting point for the creation and execution of a regional research project, financed by CSUCA's Central American Research Program (Programa