



#### MESSAGE

Natural hazards are not new to the Earth systems. Like natural resources, they have been, and are, a part of biosphere and eco-systems. It is the human interventions, its endeavors towards development, that these hazards turn into disasters, causing enormous devastation to the life and property of the nations. The extent and frequency of damage, that is being caused by these extreme events, has raised concerns all over the world resulting into declaration of present decade (1990's) as **International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction**.

India with its vast territory, large population and variable geoclimatic conditions is exposed to multiple hazards. High levels of vulnerability have never been inevitable, but with present capability of advanced technology like remote sensing, computer technology and prediction equipment, there is large potential of reducing the risks. Infact, there is vast scope through disaster mitigation, preparedness, relief and rehabilitation efforts to reduce vulnerability of these regions. Such measures may not be viewed as discrete activities undertaken by specialist government agencies or nodal agencies but rather, these measures can be integrated into the development projects to enable build a **culture of prevention**.

Ministry of Urban Development has, already adopted its role in the process by not only extending its hand towards rehabilitation and resettlement efforts but also by promoting disaster resistant technologies through building centres and documentation. One of the major achievements of the decade has been preparation of **Vulnerability Atlas of India**. In all the recent disasters, it is well recognized, that the failure of buildings and lifelines of urban areas had become the route cause of mass killings, the recent examples being, the quake of Turkey and Taiwan. Therefore, it is desirable that buildings and shelters be strengthened to withstand the impacts of disasters.

Preparedness and prevention are the only ways to avoid hampering of development process of nations and that is how, this year's theme of IDNDR day has been **"Prevention Pays"**. I am very happy that HUDCO has taken an initiative to release this special issue of Shelter, where all the preventive actions have been highlighted. The adaptation of these actions into the development programs of the Government of India would surely lead Indians to **"Safer New Millennium"**.

Ashok Pahwa  
Secretary  
Ministry of Urban Development



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I am very happy to learn that HUDCO has taken the initiative to bring out a special issue of **"SHELTER"** on the theme, **"PREVENTION PAYS"**, on the occasion of World Disaster Reduction Day, 1999.

The impact of disasters on human life is multi dimensional affecting it in all aspects-domestic, social, economic and the like. Due to its geographical position, climate and geological setting, our country has been experiencing natural disasters year after year. On an average, these natural disasters take a toll of over 3600 human lives and damage 2.63 million houses annually. Past statistics reveal that about 80 per cent of human lives were lost only due to collapse of houses and buildings.

While occurrence of these natural disasters cannot be prevented altogether, their adverse impact can be reduced substantially -by undertaking various preparedness and mitigation measures by community involvement. Minimizing the loss of precious human life is the first priority in disaster management. Significant achievement has been made in designing of disaster resistant houses and inventing quality building material to withstand the fury of natural disasters. It is gratifying to note that HUDCO has given a lead by taking a number of initiatives to propagate these designs as well as materials among the vulnerable community besides imparting training to the artisans and masons through their building centres.

I wish all success to all HUDCO initiatives and endeavours for popularisation of resistant designs and material for such houses and buildings as can withstand the adverse impact of natural disasters and help save human life and property.

Bhagat Singh  
Additional Secretary  
Ministry of Agriculture  
Department of Agriculture & Co-operation