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## IN THIS ISSUE

### FOCUS: TOOLS FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

#### Foreword

by Yasushi Akashi,  
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs ..... 3

#### Stories from the Field

Reducing Volcanic Risks in Argentina  
by D. Zupka ..... 5

Guiding Disaster Response in the  
South Pacific  
by J. Chung ..... 7

Cooperation for Disaster Response  
by S. Metzner-Strack ..... 10

Humanitarian Aid Provided by the Swiss  
Confederation  
by C. Raedersdorf ..... 11

Honduras Floods: A Swift Response  
by C. Pereira ..... 13

#### Special Contribution

After the Emergency: Community  
Peace-Building in Bosnia  
by I. Guest ..... 14

#### New Tools/Response Tools

Training as a Tool for Disaster Reduction  
by K. Westgate & Michael Svantner ..... 19

Speeding up the Delivery of Aid  
by D. Balabanov ..... 22

Learning to Build Safe Roofs:  
UNESCO's Role ..... 24

Marching in ...  
Civilian and Military Assets Join Relief Operations  
by M. Elmquist ..... 26

DHA Pisa Warehouse  
by A. Veronese ..... 27

A Catchy System for Supplies  
Management  
by C. de Ville de Goyet ..... 28

#### Medical and Social Care

Women Refugees  
by D. Pierotti ..... 31

The Doctor's Role in Times of War  
by the Norwegian Medical Association's  
Committee on Human Rights ..... 35

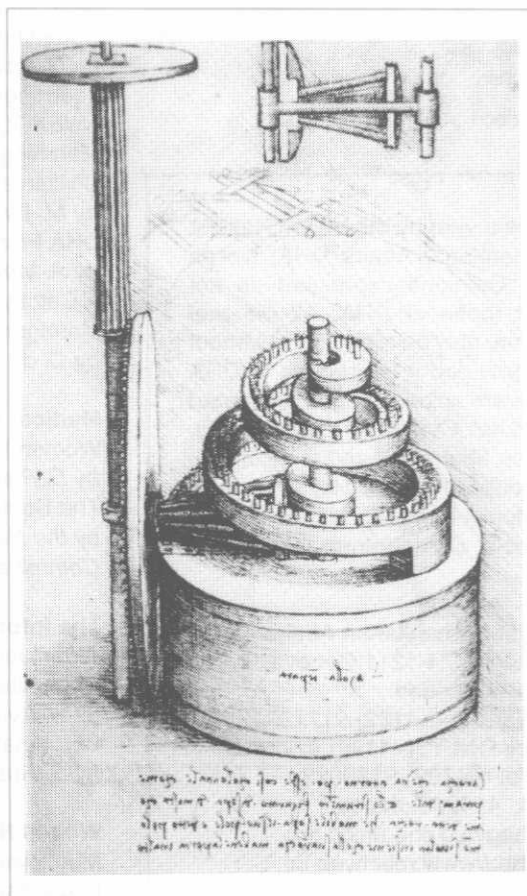
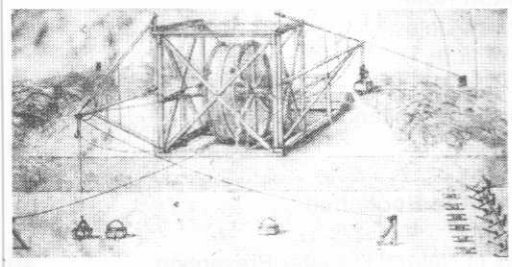
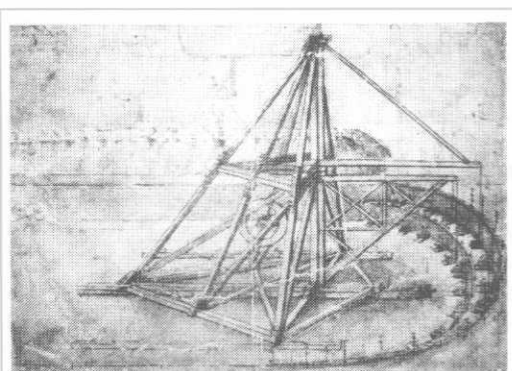
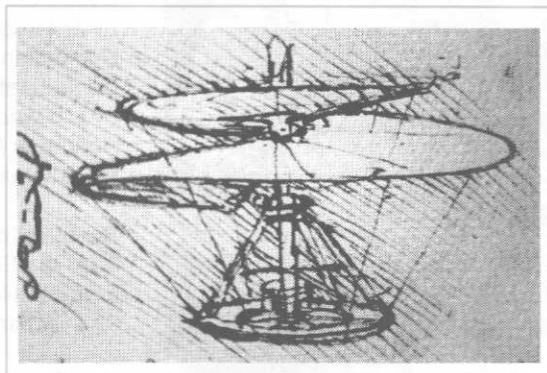
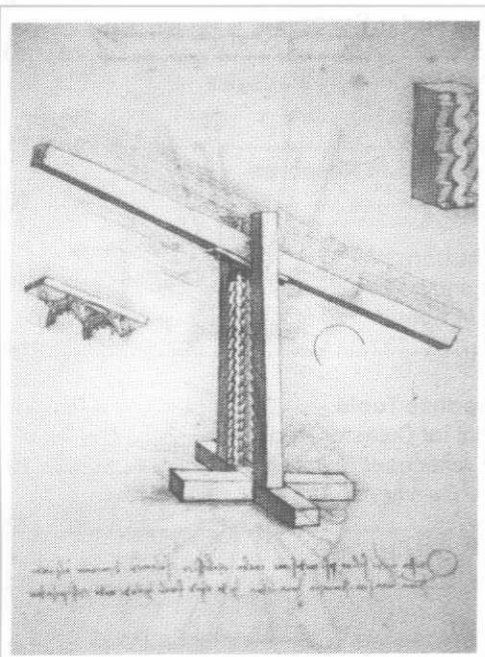
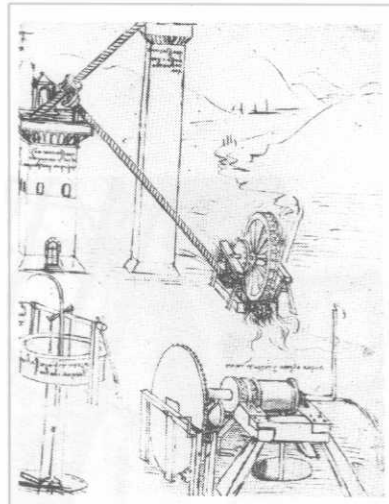
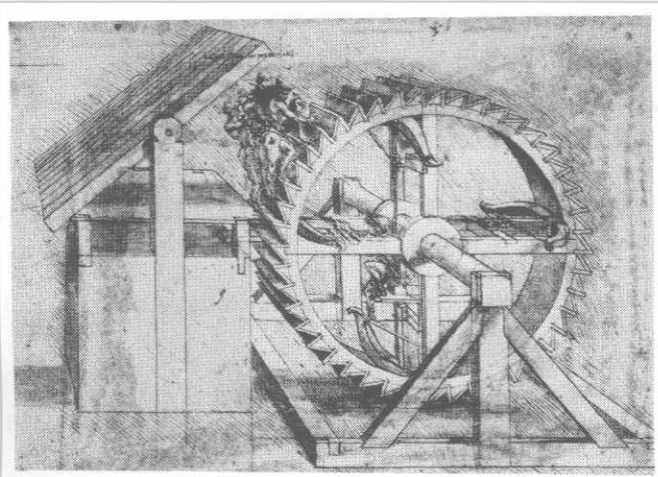
#### The Information Role

When Journalists Join  
Humanitarian Efforts  
by H. Kvam ..... 37

Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance  
by S. Rusu ..... 39

#### What's New on the Bookshelf ...

Mudflows  
Legal Aspects of Natural Disaster Prevention ..... 40



Engineering  
solutions  
by Leonardo  
da Vinci

**T**his issue of DHA News features reports from agencies and field operators on approaches which have proven to be successful in limiting the damage caused by emergencies, whether natural or man-made. By sharing information on lessons learned and experience gained in developing and refining practical tools for disaster management, I believe we are furthering a coordinated and coherent response to these emergencies.



**by Yasushi Akashi**  
***Under-Secretary-General  
for Humanitarian Affairs***

The international community has learned that a number of tools must be in place even before disasters occur. Given the need to respond immediately in face of calamity, the delivery of humanitarian assistance can not be subject to the slightest delay. We have therefore developed measures to facilitate customs approvals and have also employed civil defense and military assets to reinforce the response capacity of the United Nations. We have also striven to enhance cooperation among the many actors involved in accurately assessing relief needs and promptly delivering coordinated assistance.

While we aim to work together to respond to the pressing needs of the affected population, we must also strengthen our ability to reduce human suffering and material destruction by developing strategies for prevention and rehabilitation. Constructing earthquake or cyclone-resistant buildings, for instance, does not cost much more than erecting traditional structures, but this can save lives when disaster strikes.

Involving local populations in planning measures to increase their self-reliance is another key element in a successful disaster response. This calls for training and education, without which even the most sophisticated techniques would be useless. Teaching school children to draw a map of the area in which they live, indicating hazards and pointing out strengths and weaknesses of the community, is a simple but effective way to promote self-reliance and to anticipate natural disasters.

In developing new tools and enhancing those already in place, we are strengthening our capacity to work together for a safer environment and a better future for much of the world's population.