

## 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction

### Fast facts from Chile and the Latin American region

#### RISK

- Globally, mortality risk associated with floods and tropical cyclones is now decreasing. In contrast, in Latin America and the Caribbean it continues to rise, implying that vulnerability reduction is not offsetting increases in exposure. Economic loss risk is also continuing to increase. In the case of tropical cyclones, this increase is outpacing growth in GDP per capita implying that the risk of losing wealth in weather-related disasters is now outstripping the rate at which the wealth itself is being created.
- However, as flooding and landslides in Brazil, Colombia and Costa Rica in 2010 highlighted, a significant proportion of disaster damage in Latin America is associated with frequently occurring weather-related extensive disasters (i.e., localized events that get only limited media attention and public response). In a group of 12 countries in Latin America, which now have national disaster databases, housing damage has increased approximately four-fold since 1990.
- Chile is one of these pioneering countries that have begun to systematically record their disaster losses. An analysis of its data base of smaller, frequently occurring disaster events shows that mortality risk in Chile is falling while the rate of housing damage is rising.
- The 27 February 2010 earthquake in Chile was by any standards an extreme event, releasing five hundred times more energy than the earthquake in Haiti the previous month. However, it only killed 486 people, a fraction of those who died in Haiti. In contrast to Haiti, exposure was lower, and Chile has a history of dealing with earthquakes. It is also an upper-middle-income country with a consolidated democracy and low levels of corruption.

#### RISK GOVERNANCE

- The ability of a country to absorb disaster losses depends on a large number of (interdependent) factors. Recent analysis shows that governance (including rule of law, accountability, transparency etc.) plays an important role for a country's resilience. The example of Chile – a middle income country – shows that risk governance capacity is not just a reflection of GDP per capita.
- Chile had the lowest level of corruption in Latin America according to the *2009 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)*, and was ranked the 25th least corrupt country in the world by Transparency International. This shows that low- and middle-income countries do not have to wait for their economies to develop before they address their disaster risks.
- Public awareness plays an important role in creating the necessary social demand effective risk governance. Following the Haiti and Chile earthquakes, media in neighbouring countries increased their disaster reporting. Nearly 20 percent of the media reports in Jamaica and 13 percent in Peru focused on the need to identify risks and vulnerabilities in their own countries, and another 15 percent and 34 percent respectively on risk reduction measures. In Haiti, Chile and neighbouring countries, the media showed that it was capable of holding governments and the international community to account. This capacity is limited however, by the media's short attention span and rapid drop-off in coverage after disasters.

#### REDEFINING DEVELOPMENT

- A number of countries have begun to adapt their social policies and welfare programmes to build resilience against disasters. Chile is one of the few countries that have successfully made provisions in its conditional transfer programmes that allow for supplemental payments in exceptional circumstances.
- The Chilean government extended payments from the country's social assistance programmes, Chile Solidario and Programa Puente, to households affected by the February 2010 earthquake. This came in the form of a lump-sum transfer of 40,000 Chilean pesos (approximately \$US73 at the time), which went to all affected households regardless of wealth or whether they were previous members of the programmes.