

Hotspots Background & Acknowledgements

As part of its efforts to integrate disaster risk management into development efforts, the World Bank's Disaster Management Facility (DMF), now the Hazard Management Unit (HMU), initiated discussions in 2001 with the newly established Center for Hazards and Risk Research (CHRR) at Columbia University to discuss the possibility of a global-scale, multihazard risk analysis focused on identifying key "hotspots" where the risks of natural disasters are particularly high. The project would aim to provide information and methods for development planners and decisions makers to inform priorities for disaster risk reduction and development investment decisions. Discussions culminated in a jointly sponsored "brainstorming" workshop held at Columbia in September 2001 at which a small group of experts examined in depth whether such an analysis was feasible and worthwhile. A summary of the workshop and presentations is available on the ProVention Consortium web site at: <http://www.proventionconsortium.org/conferences/highriskhotspots.htm>.

Developed from that initial workshop, the "Identification of Global Natural Disaster Risk Hotspots" (Hotspots) project was implemented under the umbrella of the ProVention Consortium by World Bank staff from the HMU and the Development Economics Research Group (DECRG) and Columbia University staff from the CHRR, the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), the International Research Institute for Climate Prediction (IRI), and the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory (LDEO). The project has also benefited greatly from close collaboration with the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute (NGI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), and other individuals and groups.

In November 2002, a second workshop was held at Columbia University involving experts on key natural hazards as well as potential case study authors. (For more information on this workshop, see <http://www.proventionconsortium.org/conferences/highriskhotspots2002.htm>.) This workshop reviewed the initial plans and approaches under development by the core project staff, coordinated plans for the case studies, and obtained feedback from the World Bank and others, including the new director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, Prof. Jeffrey Sachs. This workshop led to the preparation of a revised work plan, including the addition of several new case study activities to the project. Intensive project work continued in 2003, culminating in a working meeting in December 2003 at which key results were reviewed and plans developed for the final project reports and dissemination of results. In March 2004, a review and synthesis meeting was held at the World Bank in Washington, DC, where project results were presented to experts from the ISDR Working Group III on Vulnerability, Risk and Impacts, the World Bank, and other interested organizations.

This report contains the results of the global hotspots analysis as well as summaries of the case studies, which are being published as a separate volume. The list of case studies and contributors is provided in Table 8.1. The project team wishes to thank the HMU—especially its former manager, Alcira Kreimer—for her strong support, guidance, and encouragement throughout this challenging project. We thank Maryvonne Plessis-Fraissard, director of the Transport and Urban Development Department, for her support of the initiative. We thank Maria Eugenia Quintero and Zoe Trohanis at the HMU for their technical and organizational contributions to the project. We especially thank the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their interest and financial support. We are grateful to the CHRR, the Earth Institute, and the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University for providing complementary funding of the project and their support of the Caracas case study.

The Hotspots project benefited enormously from interactions with the project on "Reducing Disaster Risk," a collaborative effort involving UNDP, UNEP, and others. We especially thank Yasmin Aysan, Pascal Peduzzi, Andrew Maskrey, and Ron Witt for their willingness to exchange data, methods,

and ideas. These two projects share a common approach with regard to analysis of disaster risk and vulnerability. Pablo Recalde played a key role in organizing WFP participation in the project and case studies. We also acknowledge the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) for the Tana River case study.

We thank Kathy Boyer for her extensive help with project management and implementation, especially with regard to the case studies. We very much appreciate the tireless efforts of Piet Buys of DECRG and Greg Yetman and Kobi Abayomi of CIESIN to access, transform, and analyze the wide range of global data used in this project. We gratefully acknowledge the extensive administrative and organizational support provided by Stacey Gander of the CHRR and Jennifer Mulvey, Ed Ortiz, and Hannia Smith of CIESIN. We also thank our colleagues within the Earth Institute at Columbia University for their extensive inputs and guidance on a wide range of issues, both organizational and technical. These individuals include Deborah Balk, George Deodatis, Klaus Jacob, Upmanu Lall, Marc Levy, Brad Lyon, Roberta Balstad Miller, Chet Ropelewski, Jeffrey Sachs, Andrew Smyth, Angeletti Taramelli, Jeff Weissel, and Lareef Zubair. We are grateful to Matt Barlow, Klaus Jacob, Oddvar Kjekstad, and Sylvia Mosquera for their helpful reviews of the final draft. Of course, the opinions, conclusions, and recommendations provided in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the World Bank, the Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York, our sponsors, our partners, or our colleagues.

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