

Recovering the Importance of Monitoring Networks of Natural Processes in the Concept of Early Warning Systems

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Until the early 80's, most efforts in natural disasters were concentrated on monitoring the processes responsible of disasters and very little was done to incorporate social issues in risk assessments. With the advent, in the late 80's, of the Risk Management philosophy, a new integrating view of disasters was developed and more completed risk analyses were produced.

The declaration of the 90's as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction forced governments, all over the world, to invest more funds towards the reduction of losses under the umbrella of Risk Management. Most of that money went into the social part of Risk Management, reducing funding, and ignoring in some cases, the monitoring aspects of natural processes. In some countries, meteorological, seismological and volcanological networks, among others, did not benefit from that international declaration and some even suffered a negative impact.

Early Warning systems depend on these networks for the understanding of natural processes that lead to a disaster. If we don't understand the mechanisms that originate and control the evolution and size of a particular process, we cannot effectively design a reliable early warning system. This is a call to bring a balance and ensure that no component of Risk Management gets under funded or ignored.