

## **‘Prepare for worst’ disaster plan call**

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The United Nations Development Program has called on regional governments to invest in disaster preparedness.

The Asia Pacific region was hit by multiple disasters in the past few weeks, with earthquakes in Indonesia, a tsunami in Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga, and wild storms in South-East Asia.

Jordan Ryan, director of the UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, told Radio Australia's Connect Asia program: "There is growing awareness that both the intensity of these storms and the frequency of these storms will only increase, because of such things as global climate change."

There were already examples in western nations that were unprepared for weather events, and suffered as a result.

### **Vulnerability**

The idea was to reduce vulnerability to disasters.

"We're really concerned to assist national authorities, work in partnership with other governments, especially in the Pacific with Australia and New Zealand," Mr Ryan said.

He said countries needed to think how they could merge the work of a number of agencies into single disaster management plan.

The UN official said planning could include assessing where a threat was likely to strike.

For example, villages may have to be moved.

He believed for some places that found themselves in the way of the latest tsunami, "five metres would have made a difference".

There was a need "to put disaster risk management into the consciousness of finance officials" and other bureaucrats and politicians.

"Of not just the Red Cross people who work on the ground, but prime ministers and leading ministers, to make sure that things work better the more prepared we are."

National budgets had to include disaster planning funding, even if it was not used in the year under review.

It was also vital to follow through this sort of detail with an awareness plan, Mr Ryan said.

### **Looking**

In Samoa and Tonga, some villagers - not fully aware of their danger - had gone out to look at the advancing tsunami, rather than immediately flee, he said.

After a disaster, countries also have to "build back better", with stronger construction that could withstand trouble.

Work still needed to be done in terms of mapping out risks, addressing them coherently, having resources available, and budgeting for trouble.

"It might not happen this year, it might never happen. But it's much better to be prepared," Mr Ryan said. © ABC