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Papua New Guinea lies in the great Pacific Ocean within the area of latitude 0 to 14 degrees south and longitude of 141 to 160 degrees east of the equator. The mainland of PNG shares the boundary line with the eastern part of the Republic of Indonesia known as Irian Jaya. Tectonically, Papua New Guinea is bisected by one of the most geological active seismic region of the world known as the "Pacific Ring of Fire".

It (PNG) is more exposed than most countries in the world to the effects of disaster-causing natural phenomena. The nation has a history of natural disastrous events that have affected its people and economy adversely. This is because of its natural location in the area where tectonic plates meet and where Pacific and India air stream meet or interchange. The natural disasters that PNG is prone to includes earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, drought, tropical cyclones, floods, landslides and even frost in the highlands. In addition to the natural disasters, PNG also experienced man-made disasters such as oil spills, industrial pollution, unregulated land use, environment degradation caused by development activities and population movements. The complexity of the disaster causing events tend to increase as Papua New Guinea develops into a combination of transitional and modern society.

The most disastrous event that occurred in the history of Papua New Guinea was the Aitape Tsunami of July 17 1998, killing over 2200 people, hospitalizing over 300, and leaving more than 11,000 homeless. Lessons learnt from the tsunami of 1998 and other major disasters such as the Rabaul Twin Volcanic Eruption and the 1997 – 98 Drought showed that PNG as a community was not prepared to meet the challenges that these natural disasters imposed on its communities. As a young developing nation with limited resources, Papua New Guinea is making efforts to address the issue of effective disaster management.

Bearing in mind that natural disasters cannot be stopped, the least a country can do is, to ensure that vulnerable communities are better informed and are more aware of their own risk, and are better prepared and able to cope with disasters when they occur. And the Government of Papua New Guinea through the National Disaster Management Office considering lessons learnt from previous disasters has launched an Education and Awareness Program for the 21st century for the entire country and particularly for the vulnerable areas with the ultimate aim of reducing disasters.

I work with the Risk Management Section of National Disaster Management Office as the Training/Education Officer. The National Disaster Management Office is the Office responsible for Disaster Management in Papua New Guinea. Coming to ADRC, I had a vague idea of the Visiting Researcher Program. However, during my orientation program, I came to learn and fully understand that the Visiting Researcher Program does not only provide training rather it provides an environment where researchers from the 23 member countries come to share their experiences and knowledge, contribute and co-operate with disaster related experts and professionals at ADRC and in Japan.

I also learnt that apart from sharing experiences and knowledge, the visiting researcher program provides opportunities for Visiting Researchers to visit various disaster prone areas such as volcanic eruption, earthquake, and landslides and also visit Japan Government Organizations and other Institutes and Agencies that are associated with disaster management. At the end of the program the Visiting Researcher does not only gain experience but also enhances his or her knowledge and skills in the field of Disaster Management.

I look forward to learning, sharing ideas, working, co operating and contributing to the activities of ADRC.

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