



# ADRC Highlights

Asian Disaster Reduction Center Biweekly News Vol.12

November 16, 2000

## ➤ Promotion of Tsunami Awareness Program in PNG

On October 2000, ADRC has published the English version of Tsunami awareness pamphlet in cooperation with PNG government as one of the activities of the National Disaster Preparedness and Awareness Committee.

### □ Background

On July 17, 1998, the gigantic tsunami reaching 15m at maximum attacked Aitape area centering Sissano Lagoon on the northwestern coast of Papua New Guinea and took lives of more than 2,500 people. This Aitape Tsunami was caused by M7 offshore earthquake and its unusual scale of waves were attributed to a submarine landslide also caused by the quake.

In any case, PNG is located in geophysically seismic and volcanic prone areas in the Pacific and experienced tsunamis in its history. However, the people there did not keep sufficient knowledge on tsunamis and how to avoid disasters by them. This is believed one of the reasons why so many people lost their lives. The Government of PNG started the tsunami disaster preparedness and awareness program with geology experts in light of the above lesson.

### □ Joint Endeavor a. PNG's Official Program

The Government of PNG organized the National Disaster Preparedness and Awareness Committee chaired by Prof. Hugh Davies of Univ. of PNG. This committee has been conducting the PNG and Region Tsunami Conference (PARTIC) in Madang and various activities including national broadcasting of TV programs, making of videos, posters on tsunamis.

Requested to make cooperation in this program by Prof. Davies through Dr. Imamura, Assoc. Prof. at Tohoku Univ., ADRC decided to make tsunami awareness pamphlets with PNG by getting precious advise from tsunami experts in Japan and the US including Dr. Imamura.

### b. Tsunami Pamphlets

PNG and ADRC started planning of the pamphlet making from August 1999, and both agreed to produce 200,000 copies in English and Tok Pisin languages for local residents and children with the view that this should be used at school education.



As a coordinator, ADRC traveled to PNG twice, and studied

some tsunami materials including lessons from Okushiri Tsunami Disaster 1993 for a better pamphlet. In April 2000, the draft was almost completed. Finally in October, the first printing of the English version was published in PNG. Tok Pisin version will be published to the non-English speaking population in the country soon. "In case of an earthquake, tsunamis would come. So run to higher ground immediately." This crucial lesson is now becoming a common knowledge among the PNG people.

### □ Tasks for the future

ADRC has also started delivering the pamphlets to the concerned people and organizations in tsunami prone countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia.

There are countries that are unable to wait construction of tsunami breakwaters, sea walls and seismicity monitoring stations nationwide. In such cases, education in wider sense, including dissemination of knowledge and raising awareness on disaster prevention and preparedness, would be the most realistic and effective measures to take at the moment as we have good results in PNG through this direction.

For the future tsunami disaster prevention, awareness raising among people is indispensable. ADRC is going to provide this results as a product of cooperation with PNG to the countries in the Asia Pacific Region, which, ADRC really hopes, will contribute to tsunami disaster reduction in the region.

( By Taichi Kusaka, Senior Researcher )

## ➤ Recent Natural Disaster

### □ Landslides in Central Java, INDONESIA

Several landslides triggered by torrential rains in Central Java, Indonesia have caused a lot of damage and loss of life.

On October 30, the landslides hit the district of Cilacap and Banyumas, about 350 km east of Jakarta have killed at least 40 people and forced about 4,000 people to evacuate their homes. It is estimated, in total, 10,000 houses have been flooded, 150 were totally destroyed, and 3,500 hectares of rice field or crops have been damaged.

On November 5, as heavy rain has continued, People in Purworejo, Purbalingga, and Kebumen district have got serious damages. One-meter high floodwaters inundated the villages in those districts, and dozens of houses have been under mud, which have claimed at least 52 lives. President Abdurrahman Wahid has visited the victims on the site of the worst-hit area, and the government has dispatched aid to relieve their suffering.

(6 & 14 Nov. IFRC Information Bulletin / 6 Nov. BBC News)