



ADRC Highlights

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Asian Disaster Reduction Center

Higashikan 5F, 1-5-2
Wakinohamakaigan-dori,
Chuo-ku, Kobe
651-0073 Japan

Tel: 078-262-5540
Fax: 078-262-5546
editor@adrc.asia
http://www.adrc.asia

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● 2011 Tohoku-Pacific Ocean Earthquake

We would like to express our deep and heartfelt sorrow and sympathies for the victims of the earthquake and resultant tsunami on 11 March. They have reminded us once again that our society is still vulnerable to the fury of nature. While the earthquake was predicted to occur around that region, the scale was well beyond our preparedness. This resulted in human casualties that have reached record levels.

Search and rescue teams are saving survivors even today. Thousands of people are still missing and many others are waiting for aid and emergency supplies. Our priority is getting to those survivors and providing for them. More than 100 countries already expressed their kind offer of assistance, many of which are already in the field helping disaster victims. We are grateful for their warm-hearted support.

Recovery and rebuilding will start shortly. It will take many years. It is important for Japan to maintain its strength and solidarity while making steady progress. Although the catastrophe has had a large impact on our society, Japanese people remain calm and cooperative. I think this is exactly what we need at this challenging time – a trust in our society's resilience.

● Promoting Cooperation with Affiliated Institutions

World Bank seeks closer cooperation with the Asian Disaster Reduction Center

TOKYO, February 16, 2011 - The World Bank and the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen cooperation and regional partnerships for disaster risk reduction, and to enhance capacity-building and knowledge-sharing in disaster prevention, mitigation and response across Asia and the Pacific. The MOU was signed by Mr. James W. Adams, World Bank's Vice President, East Asia and the Pacific and Dr. Shigeru Itoh, the ADRC chairman and was followed by a high-level workshop identifying the main needs in the current disaster risk management and climate change adaptation agenda, and concrete ways in which the WB and ADRC can jointly deliver expected results.

The new cooperative arrangement between the World Bank and the ADRC will promote capacity-building and technical assistance in the areas of disaster prevention, mitigation and response by mobilizing technical experts within ADRC member countries and technical assistance projects. Through cooperation with relevant stakeholders across Asia and the Pacific, the Memorandum seeks to encourage knowledge exchange and foster activities and projects related for instance to early warning systems and retrofitting of schools and hospitals.



Dissemination and Establishment of a Disaster Prevention Culture for Asian Countries

From 17 January to 18 February 2011, the ADRC, in collaboration with JICA, conducted a JICA training course on the Dissemination and Establishment of a Disaster Prevention Culture for Asian Countries for government officials in Asian countries. Six government officials in charge of disaster risk reduction, representing the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Fiji, Bangladesh, Thailand and Viet Nam, took part in the training. The primary objective of the training was to establish concrete disaster reduction measures tailored to each participant's country, utilizing knowledge and methods gained through the training.

During the training, participants learned the roles and activities of the various relevant organizations such as local authorities, academic organizations, the Japan Meteorological Agency, mass media, and NPOs, while attending lectures and occasionally visiting related facilities and organizations. The training included the following specific activities: (1) town watching and hazard map creation activity, in which the trainees explored a certain area of downtown, identified risks, and came up with solutions, (2) a visit to Unzen Hugendake Volcano to learn about volcanic disaster mitigation measures, and (3) lectures on the formation of action plans, during which the trainees developed their own action plans. The trainees are expected not only to carry out their action plans but also to apply the knowledge and methods they learned during their training so to disseminate and establish the significance of disaster risk reduction measures.



Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management

From 17 January to 25 February 2011, the ADRC, in collaboration with JICA, conducted a JICA the Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Course for government officials in 12 countries. Eighteen government officials in charge of disaster risk reduction took part in the training. This course aimed to help participants formulate and further develop disaster management plans in their own countries based on the concept of total disaster risk management, by enhancing their understanding of the disaster management systems adopted by the central and local governments of Japan.

During the training, participants attended a series of lectures on such topics as the Japanese disaster management system at the central and local levels, Japanese measures against flooding, sediment disasters, and earthquakes, school disaster risk reduction, community-based disaster risk management, the role of the media in disaster risk reduction, lifelines and natural disasters, and business continuity planning. In addition, they were able to establish friendly relations with officials, community members, and students over the course of their program.

These experiences provided an invaluable opportunity for the participants to see how Japanese government agencies, NGOs, and private sector institutions are promoting disaster risk reduction in Japan. The trainees were excited to utilize what they learned in Japan to contribute to efforts aimed at promoting disaster risk reduction in their respective countries.



● ADRC Visiting Researcher Report

Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed KHAN (Bangladesh)

My name is Mohiuddin Ahmed Khan. I joined in Bangladesh Civil Service in 1989. I served in different capacities at the field level, including local level administration and city corporation (municipal corporation), and at the policy level in the Bangladesh Secretariat in the Disaster Management and Relief Division of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. I was promoted to the rank of Deputy Secretary in 2006.

Bangladesh is a disaster prone country. Floods are a recurring problem there. Every year, 18% of the country experiences flooding. On average, 844,000 million cubic meters of water flows into the country during the monsoon period every year. As many as 750 small and large rivers flow through the country. The catastrophic Cyclone SIDR in 2007 and Aila in 2008 severely damaged human lives, property, and infrastructures in six coastal districts of Bangladesh. I had been working in a cyclone affected area and engaged in rescue, relief and post cyclone rehabilitation programs as a local level government official. We are facing the challenges of climate change and sea level rise. This has added new dimensions to our natural disaster risks, such as salinity and water logging in some coastal districts.

The government of Bangladesh has assigned the highest priority to efforts to address disasters, namely floods, cyclones, tsunamis, and earthquakes. Disaster preparedness, response, and recovery planning programs have been sketched out. As an official of Disaster Management Ministry, my assignment as a visiting researcher with the ADRC in Kobe is to enhance my knowledge, skills and experiences so that I am well equipped to face future disaster challenges.

My research plan at ADRC is to conduct a comparative study on community mobilization to reduce risks before, during, and after disasters in both Bangladesh and Japan. More specifically, I will conduct a comparative study on the planning of community mobilization for disaster prevention and preparedness, post-disaster emergency measures, and disaster recovery and rehabilitation in these two countries. In any disaster, it is the local people – the community – that have to respond first.

The Visiting Researcher program at ADRC is an excellent opportunity for me to conduct research on disaster preparedness and disaster reduction. The visiting researcher program covers a wide range of disaster related issues through the organization of various activities, including seminars, symposia, rallies in memory of the great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and visits to the disaster risk assessment museum, disaster-related organizations, and affected areas. It would not have been possible for me to understand the great initiative taken by the Hyogo prefectural government and the government of Japan in managing disasters had I not been able to participate in this program. Kobe city is the Mecca of disaster management and a center of excellence for disaster reduction and mitigation. I am impressed with the Visiting Researcher Program for creating an opportunity for Japan to share its knowledge and experience on disaster with participants and member countries of ADRC.

The disaster knowledge that I have had gained during my stay in the resilient city of Kobe will immensely benefit my organization and my country, Bangladesh. As a visiting researcher, I came to understand that Japan is a pioneer and champion of disaster reduction throughout the world, and has been implementing an impressive portfolio of disaster mitigation and preparedness measures. The Japanese government's initiative and commitment to mobilizing local communities and the international community to minimize damage and losses from disasters is highly commendable.

I would like to express my gratitude to the government of Japan and ADRC, both its management and my fellow researchers, for the wholehearted support and cooperation that has been extended to me, and for the efforts taken to make my stay comfortable. I would also like to thank the government of Bangladesh for allowing me to be benefit from Japan's practical experience.



Mr. Baasansuren DEMBERELYNAM (Mongolia)

I am Demberelnyam BAASANSUREN, and I am from Mongolia, a land known for its wide steppes and the Gobi Desert. After I completed my undergraduate degree in international relations, I earned by certification to work for a government organization by passing Mongolia's civil service exam. I started my career as a specialist in charge of foreign relations in the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Mongolia, a key organization in the disaster management field. To simply describe my assignment, NEMA is charged with coordinating the activities of different stakeholders who are involved in disaster response, including non-governmental and governmental organizations, the private sector, community groups, and international organizations. To effectively engage international contributors in our major disaster response activities, we keep donors and international stakeholders updated with the latest disaster information and develop contingency plans in cooperation with UN agencies. My main responsibility is to collect and upload information and assist with international projects in the field of disaster mitigation, response, and recovery.

To strengthen the professional skills of our emergency personnel, it is essential to enable them to participate in international trainings and seminars such as Urban Search and Rescue Training and Disaster Preparedness and Firefighting Training. These types of trainings give them great opportunities to enhance their knowledge and thinking through comparative study and exposure to creative approaches to disaster management. Thus we, the foreign relation officers, seek out such opportunities for our personnel to attend international trainings and seminars, or joint disaster preparedness exercises or drills for emergency personnel. In 2010, NEMA sent a total of 165 high or mid-level emergency personnel to international trainings and joint exercises. The Foreign Relations Division coordinates all of the administrative and communication details with the hosts.

As a representative of the younger generation of disaster management practitioners in Mongolia, I have had the privilege of learning from distinguished experts from various countries who are committed to the work of reducing potential disaster losses, and creating safer and more peaceful living environments. Thus, I am highly satisfied with my work and am dedicated to strengthening the disaster management capacity and international cooperation capabilities of my organization.

The geography of Mongolia is highly varied, with the Gobi Desert to the south and cold, mountainous regions to the north and west. Much of Mongolia consists of steppes. Since it is a landlocked country in East and Central Asia, bordered by Russia to the north and the People's Republic of China to the south, east and west, we do not experience such disasters as tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, or lava and debris flow. Nevertheless, Mongolia is prone to plenty of other types of natural disasters triggered by climate change and global warming, such as desertification, dzud (severe winter disasters), earthquakes, landslides, snow, dust and thunder storms, and flash floods, as well as manmade disasters including forest and steppe fires, industrial accidents, and building fires. Since no disaster is confined to the territory of only one state, it is important to develop close cooperation in the field of disaster management between organizations at the regional, national, and international level. Thus, I find the ADRC Visiting Researcher Program to be one of the best practical examples of disaster management collaboration at the international level, specifically in the area of disaster mitigation. It is a great opportunity for me to become familiar with the good practices and lessons learned from previous major Japanese disasters that Mongolia has never experienced before.

There is a popular quote that says, "To the world we may be just one person, but to one person we can mean the world" (Brandi Snyder). We are all committed to strengthening our disaster management capacity as well as protecting our population from all types of natural, biological and social threats, and we can achieve great things if we work together.



Mr. Ara GHONYAN (Armenia)

I'm a visiting researcher at the ADRC from Armenia. Geographically, Armenia is located in the northeast of the Armenian Upland between the Caucasus and Southwestern Asia. The Armenian Upland is one of the most active segments of Alpine-Himalayan seismic belt.

Armenia is one of the most disaster prone countries in the southern Caucasus. It is vulnerable to a number of disasters caused by natural hazards, such as earthquakes, droughts, floods, landslides, mudslides, strong winds, snowstorms, frost and hail. All of these adverse events disrupt the routine life of a community and have a wide range of human and material consequences. Homes are destroyed, communities are isolated, and basic services are damaged.

Located in one of the world's most active seismic zones, Armenia frequently experiences earthquakes. Numerous strong earthquakes have occurred over the course of Armenia's history, destroying many buildings and taking many human lives. The last and the most catastrophic event was the Spitak earthquake (1988), which caused massive destruction and took the lives of more than 25,000 people.

Seismic observations and seismic hazard assessment tasks are the responsibility of the National Survey for Seismic Protection of the Republic of Armenia (NSSP). This governmental organization was established in 1991, after the catastrophic earthquake of December 7, 1988, with the aim of drastically improving the seismic observation system and seismic risk reduction measures, thereby protecting people against earthquakes.

I work for the Armenian Western Survey for Seismic Protection (AWSSP) which is a state non-commercial organization within the Ministry of Emergency Situations that is responsible for earthquake disaster risk reduction in Armenia with particular emphasis on the capital city of Yerevan. The main tasks of AWSSP are multidisciplinary seismic hazard assessment and seismic and environmental risk reduction. And the AWSSP operates with a seismic network and can provide information about seismicity and seismic regime patterns in Armenia as well as in Yerevan.

The lessons learned from the Spitak earthquake showed that seismic risk reduction strategies and disaster management systems are integral factors in national safety. ADRC has been a coordinating body in the fields of risk and hazard assessment, risk reduction, and disaster management for the Asian region since its founding, and it is an institution that allows member countries to share not only their theoretical knowledge, but also to share their practical knowledge in the disaster field. I think my purpose and position at ADRC as a Visiting Researcher is very important. During my stay in Japan, I visited various research institutions and governmental organizations and gave two presentations intended to share my experience and information on disasters in my country with ADRC researchers. I appreciate the valuable experience I gained during my time at ADRC. I expected to learn about disaster prevention and preparedness, disaster emergency measures, disaster recovery and reconstruction, and earthquake disaster countermeasures. I am sure that my experience at ADRC will be beneficial to my work for the AWSSP, and will also prove beneficial to the work being done by other governmental and non-governmental organizations responsible for disaster management and prevention.

I would like to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to the entire staff of ADRC for their kindness, hospitality and readiness to provide any support needed during my stay in Japan.

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