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### **3. Accumulation and Provision of Information on Natural Disasters and Disaster Reduction**

#### **3-1. Policy and Methods**

##### **3-1-1. Policies on Accumulation**

Based on the resolutions of 23 countries in the Asian region, ADRC has been collecting and organizing information on the situation of natural disasters in each country, as well as information, knowledge of and experiences with the systems, plans, and specific measures of each country for disaster reduction. This is to facilitate the sharing of information between countries. The development of such fundamental information infrastructures has been carried out with the aim of promoting the establishment of national disaster reduction systems in each country, and multinational cooperation for disaster reduction in Asia.

In addition, we collected information from the disaster reduction officers of various countries and other related organizations, and constructed a database of the latest information on recent natural disasters and human resource information on specialists of disaster reduction, with the intention of disseminating the information. It has also become possible to acquire more detailed and definite information through collaboration with foreign visiting researchers and the Asian Unit of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which is reflected in disseminated information. Furthermore, the OCHA ReliefWeb Office in Kobe has opened in ADRC this fiscal year and has facilitated sharing information more quickly and clearly.

We plan to continue collecting detailed information on the following, and release the information through the Internet and other media:

**Disaster reduction systems (judicial systems, organizations, basic plans, and manuals on managing disasters, etc.)**

**Actual cases of disaster countermeasures (measures taken during major disasters in the past, etc.)**

**Information on natural disasters (descriptions and damage incurred by earthquakes, floods, cyclones, and other natural disasters)**

**Human resource information (disaster reduction administrators, experts, international organizations, private companies, NGO members, etc.)**

##### **3-1-2. Collecting Information from Member Countries, Etc.**

In fiscal 2001, as in the previous year, ADRC collected disaster reduction related information on various countries through the following methods:

###### **1 ) Questing information from member countries**

While gaining the understanding of each member country on the purposes of establishing the ADRC and the need for multinational disaster reduction cooperation, we have been asking member countries to provide natural disaster information, as well as information on actual disaster cases and disaster reduction systems, and have been receiving such information from these countries.

###### **2 ) Survey of member countries**

We toured two member countries (Kazakhstan and Myanmar) during this fiscal year to verify the persons in charge of disaster reduction in this counterpart country, explain the purpose of ADRC's activities, obtain basic information on disaster reduction, and ask for the continued support of member countries.

As a result, Kazakhstan pledged its support in providing information to ADRC and, at the same time, requested active exchanges of information on disaster reduction be made through guest researchers from Kazakhstan to ADRC in the future. As for Myanmar, we met with the country's disaster reduction officer directly for the first time since ADRC opened and were able

to exchange information concerning Myanmar's natural disasters, their national system and measures for disaster reduction, etc.

### **3 ) ADRC International Meeting**

At the Fourth ADRC International Meeting (January 22 and 23, 2002), member countries, and advisor countries, and countries and organizations participating as observers provided reports and other materials that include natural disaster information, actual case studies for dealing with disasters, and disaster reduction systems. They also voiced their requests concerning the activities of ADRC. As this meeting was followed by the Asian Meeting on the ISDR which was held in the same venue, it was highlighted by the participation of representatives from United Nations organizations involved in disaster reduction such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs(Kobe Office, India Office), UN-HABITAT Serving Asia and the Pacific, Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the India Office of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The meeting proved to be a significant opportunity to strengthen potential multinational disaster reduction cooperation in the Asian region in the future.

### **4 ) Use of WWW (World Wide Web)**

#### **(1)Disaster reduction information in each country**

Following the last fiscal year, ADRC has been using the Web to collect information on the disaster reduction systems of various countries, as well as related information from administrators in charge at international organizations and countries. In particular, India has been sending e-mails and disaster management information via the Web since the Gujarat earthquake, which the ADRC places, on its homepage as needed.

In the future, it will be important to track the trends of disaster reduction information supply in various countries, as well as support the active construction of information supply systems from various countries through technical support for the construction of mirror sites and disaster information databases.

#### **(2)Disaster reduction information of academic research institutions and international organizations**

In addition to these efforts, international organizations and research centers are actively collecting and providing disaster reduction information from various perspectives. Through the spread of Internet services, there has been a gradual establishment of systems able to share this information over the Internet.

Among the many organizations and research centers, the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disaster (CRED), Louvain Catholic University, Belgium, has a disaster database (EM-DAT) carrying statistical data on natural disasters in the world, which is available on the Internet.

While the EM-DAT serves as a database on statistic figures, OCHA provides information on natural disasters and reliable information on disaster measures and management in an effort to support humanitarian activities during disasters at its Relief Web site on the Internet.

ADRC, in order to further promote sharing of such information on disaster mitigation, proposed the use of common disaster ID's and started more specific activities concerning the GLIDE (GLobal IDEntifier) number project this year with consensus of other disaster reduction-related organizations such as the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Use of a GLIDE number on an incident or disaster will allow easy collection and use of information dispatched by various disaster reduction-related organizations concerning the same disaster occurrence.

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### 3-1-3. Other Efforts

#### ["ReliefWeb Project" Kobe Office Opens for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs]

The Kobe Office of the "ReliefWeb Project" of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was established in ADRC on August 16, 2001. ReliefWeb ([www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)) is a project of the UN whose beginning of activity dates back to 1996 and now posts their activities on its website at the earliest possible time. The latest information on international efforts of humanitarian assistance toward damage and losses caused by natural disasters and conflicts with which OCHA is involved, including situations and conditions is updated on the website. The information including what is needed, who is providing what kind of aid and at what places, ... etc. is collected from more than 600 partners. Having their Kobe office located physically close to the ADRC office, members from the two offices can meet more often for the exchange of ideas on how information can be better collected and provided. We hope to make more specific proposals on our cooperation in the future.



Fig.3-1-3 OCHA ReliefWeb Internet Site: <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf>

## **3-2. Information on Disaster Reduction Systems**

### **3-2-1. Scope of Information**

Elements composing the disaster reduction systems of different countries include: judicial systems for laying down the basis for implementing measures to deal with disasters, organizations which actually implement these measures, and basic plans for continually establishing disaster reduction systems. Other elements include disaster reduction actions for each disaster, and disaster manuals, which describe disaster measures.

#### **1 ) Judicial systems**

Not all countries have fundamental laws like Japan's "The Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act." Some countries prescribe disaster reduction systems in accordance with government decrees and rules of specified organizations. Taking into consideration the respective situation of each country, it is not easy to determine which is a better method. However, the sharing of national information concerning laws and regulations is considered a useful reference to countries that are attempting to establish legal systems or improve their current systems.

#### **2 ) Organization**

Usually different disaster measures are taken according to the situation of the countries. Like judicial systems, the sharing of information should prove useful when devising measures to deal with similar disasters.

#### **3 ) Basic plans**

Only a few member countries, including Japan, have disaster reduction plans. Again, the information shared on disaster reduction plans should serve as a reference for countries intending to draw up such plans in the future, and is therefore highly likely to contribute to the reduction of damage caused by natural disasters.

#### **4 ) Disaster manuals**

Most disaster manuals are compiled by countries and regions based on the natural disasters that the region or country has experienced, or by the type of natural disaster specific to that country or region. Since regions and countries deal with natural disasters independently, they often do not share their experiences and measures even for common natural disasters. This has resulted in a lack of proper or sufficient disaster countermeasures in some countries and regions. ADRC has thus been making efforts since the previous fiscal year to collect information to enable the sharing of these existing disaster measures and disaster manuals. Further efforts are required. ADRC will continue promoting the inter-regional and international sharing of experience, knowledge, and views on measures for specific disasters that have been formed and accumulated in different countries and regions.

### **3-2-2. Level of Information Source**

The information needs to be collected not only on the national governmental level, but also at levels of local, regional, and even municipal governments if the information is useful. As a rule, when a disaster hits, it is the local government (regional, municipal), which implements the disaster measures. If the scale of the disaster exceeds the capability of the local level, the central government or international community will intervene to provide support in disaster management and relief. This means that the establishment of regulations, organizations, and systems by the central government do not always improve the disaster reduction and disaster measure abilities at the local or grass-root level. Therefore, it is essential to share useful information at all levels.

### **3-2-3. Information Accumulation Methods**

As indicated in 3-1-2, since the last fiscal year, ADRC has been accumulating information on the disaster reduction systems of different countries by requesting information from member countries, implementing field surveys, holding international conferences, and by its own unique

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methods using the Internet.

### **3-2-4. Future Tasks**

Concerning future tasks, the ADRC plans to further reinforce and expand its database, analyze information collected, and based on the data acquired, pinpoint the needs of different countries to promote multi-national disaster reduction cooperation.

#### **1 ) Reinforcement and expansion of the disaster reduction database**

In order to share the information between countries concerning disaster reduction systems accumulated at ADRC, the ADRC constructed a database on its homepage to enable free retrieval and access of information on disaster reduction systems. It enabled many countries and regions to establish and improve their own national or regional disaster reduction systems while referring to actual examples from other countries. The ADRC will continue its efforts in updating and enhancing the contents of the database with the cooperation of member countries to realize a more user-friendly disaster reduction database system.

#### **2 ) Analysis of information and dealing with the needs of countries**

Analysis of information collected helps clarify the specific situations and needs of various countries. It is apparent that countries like Japan, Russia, and Singapore already have national level disaster reduction systems, while others such as Nepal, Laos, and Papua New Guinea are currently preparing to establish disaster reduction systems. We believe that the former countries need to implement various improvements to enhance and reinforce their existing systems, and that priority should be given to help the latter group of nations to complete disaster system development, which is the common challenge of intra-region collaboration.

In order to reduce Asia's vulnerability to natural disasters, it is essential for countries to consider disaster reduction measures in their basic national long-term plans. To realize this, it is first necessary to heighten the disaster reduction awareness of the government as well as among the people. The sharing of information on disaster reduction between countries, including its systems, should be achieved at an early stage; while lawmakers, policy makers, and planners should appropriately prioritize and continue to always include the disaster reduction issue in the basic plans of their country and region.

#### **3 ) Promotion of cooperation**

As agreed at both the 4<sup>th</sup> International Meetings, it is vital that disaster reduction administrators and specialists of member countries exchange the latest information on disaster reduction systems and measures by continuing to hold regular meetings. It is equally important that researchers from member countries working at ADRC help to promote active personnel and information exchanges in the Asian region taking advantage of the guest researcher program, which started in July 1999. In addition, to reduce the damage from natural disasters in Asia, while serving as a mediator, the ADRC is required to form a network of disaster reduction staff, technologies, and physical resources between Japan and the other countries of Asia, in order to stimulate exchanges.