

**Mr. G. M. Janaka K. Gunawardena from Sri Lanka**

26 December 2004 was a black marked day in the Sri Lankan history. The massive tsunami caused unprecedented damages to the lives, livelihoods and properties of people living in the coast of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka is a small island situated only 36 km below the Indian subcontinent. It is a tropical climatic country and is prone to floods, landslides, droughts and cyclones. Compared to neighboring countries, intensity of these disasters is generally moderate. This had led to the lack of public awareness of disaster risk, until the tsunami hit the country.



As Assistant Director to the National Disaster Management Centre of Sri Lanka, I believe that we could have minimized damage by about 50 % if there was great awareness among the general public and the officials.

The tsunami tragedy drove the government of Sri Lanka to take steps to strengthen its disaster management system. On 12 December 2005, the President decided to form two new ministries for disaster management, which are the Ministry of Disaster Management and the Ministry of Disaster Relief Services. On 13 May 2005, the parliament of Sri Lanka approved the Disaster Management Act No. 13 to strengthen the disaster management policies.

Considering the above, the Visiting Researcher Program of ADRC has been a great opportunity for me and my country to learn disaster countermeasures through various activities like participating in various conferences, seminars and programs, and visiting disaster affected areas and various organizations.

I would like to serve my country with disaster management skills and knowledge which I have acquired through this visiting researcher program.