



ADRC Highlights

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Asian Disaster Reduction Center

Hitomirai-kan 5F, 1-5-2
Wakihamaikagiri-dori
Chuo-ku, Kobe
651-0073 Japan

Tel: 078-262-5540
Fax: 078-262-5546
editor@adrc.or.jp
<http://www.adrc.or.jp>

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● ADRC Visiting Researcher Report

Ms. Zhang Yunxia from China

My name is Zhang Yunxia, and I am from the People's Republic of China. I work in the Disaster Information Department of the National Disaster Reduction Center of China, where I am primarily responsible for collecting and analyzing disaster information and assessing property losses caused by natural disasters.

China is a country that suffers some of the world's most serious natural disasters due to its vast territory, complicated climatic, geographical, and geological conditions, and fragile ecological conditions. Over 70% of China's cities, inhabited by 50% of the population, are located in regions that frequently sustain major meteorological, seismological,



geological, and maritime disasters. Every year for the past 15 years, natural disasters have affected about 300 million people, forced the evacuation of eight million residents, destroyed three million houses, and led to economic losses valued at nearly 200 billion yuan (\$28 billion). Natural disasters have become an important factor impeding the balanced and sustainable socio-economic development of China.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to disaster relief in its efforts to guarantee smooth social and economic development. After years of persistent efforts, the rise in losses caused by disasters has been curbed to a certain extent, and the number of disaster-induced deaths has been drastically reduced. In recent years, the government has stepped up its efforts to build a disaster reduction system.

First, organizations and legislation have been improved. In January 2005, the China Commission for International Disaster Reduction was renamed the National Commission for Disaster Reduction, and a committee of experts was established. Some local governments have also established disaster reduction committees or similar coordination organs, and have established effective working mechanisms. Improvements have been made in the areas of disaster reduction management, use of expert consultants, decision-making support, and the development of comprehensive coordination mechanisms. More than 30 laws and regulations have been promulgated on earthquake preparation, fire prevention, flood preparation, weather forecasting, and sandstorm prevention and management.

Second, disaster reduction has been incorporated into the government's development plans. The Chinese government has made disaster risk reduction a top priority on the agendas of national and local socio-economic development

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plans. The government has built and expanded its emergency response system and has formulated the National 11th Five-year Plan for Disaster Reduction.

Third, a disaster monitoring and warning system is being developed. We have set up a 24-hour disaster monitoring and analysis system to improve disaster information management. At the same time, inter-departmental communication and consultation have been more effective, and the development of early warning systems is being promoted. The collection and exchange of information enable government authorities to make appropriate decisions regarding public risk prevention.

Fourth, the emergency disaster relief system has been further strengthened. The State Council issued a State Overall Contingency Plan for Emergent Public Events. The Ministry of Civil Affairs prepared the Contingency Plan for Disaster Relief, Operational Procedures for Abrupt Natural Disasters, and Operational Procedures for Emergent Disaster Relief. A national contingency plan system has essentially been established. In conducting disaster relief work in recent years, many local governments have implemented the contingency plan in a timely and orderly fashion, and have achieved positive results. China has also set up a disaster relief supply reserve system. Central-level stockpiles of disaster relief supplies have been established in 10 cities including Shenyang, Tianjin, Wuhan, Nanning, Chengdu and Xi'an. Local stockpiles in some particularly disaster-prone areas have also been prepared. The central and local governments have stepped up their disaster relief efforts as improvements have been made to the emergency fund allocation system. Under this system, funding and supplies from the central government will be provided to disaster-stricken areas within three days of a major disaster.

It is well known that Japan has advanced theoretical and practical knowledge in disaster management. The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995 caused massive losses. Thanks to the unrelenting efforts of many parties, the stricken areas were rebuilt in a relatively short time. The Japanese government and citizens seem to have performed a miracle. I am the second official from China to take part in the Visiting Researcher Program, and I am confident that this will be a great opportunity for me. During my six months with the ADRC, I hope to focus on damage assessment and vulnerability assessment. I hope that the research and work I conduct here will contribute to my research efforts in the future, and also hope to inform other Asian countries about China's disaster management experiences.

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ADRC Senior Advisor Mr. Hajime Yokobori retired on 29 February 2008. All of us at the ADRC offer our best wishes for his continued success.

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