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● Promoting Cooperation with Member Countries

Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2013

Information sharing among member countries, advisor countries, and other relevant organizations are indispensable for strengthening the networks of people working on disaster risk reduction in Asia. The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) convenes an annual international conference attended by disaster risk management officials from member countries and disaster experts from



international organizations to promote information sharing, facilitate the exchange of opinions, and enhance partnerships among participants.

The Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) 2013 was held in Kobe, Japan on 23 January 2013. The conference was jointly organized by the government of Japan, the United Nations Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), and ADRC, and was attended by a total of 83 participants, including high ranking government officials from 25 countries as well as representatives of 15 international and regional organizations, the academic community, and the private sector. At the opening ceremony, remarks were given by Mr. Yoshitami Kameoka, Parliamentary Secretary of Disaster Management, Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, ADRC Chairman Dr. Shigeru Itoh, and Mr. Andrew Maskrey, Global Assessment Report (GAR) Coordinator, UNISDR.

ACDR2013 consisted of three sessions on the following key topics:

1. Space Based Technologies for DRR
2. Engagement of Private Sector in DRR
3. Global Trends on DRR and Towards a Post-HFA

In the first session, the Japanese space agency (JAXA), research institutions (Asian Institute of Technology and the University of Tsukuba), delegates from the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, and ADRC presented information on good practices within Asia regarding the utilization of space technologies. This was followed by a wide-ranging discussion of future activities and plans. In the second session, representatives of a private company, academia (Kyoto University) and regional organizations (APEC, ADPC and ADRC) gave briefings on their research findings and discussed the critical role of the private sector and recent good practices. In the final session, UNISDR reviewed the outcomes of the Fifth Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Global Assessment Report 2011, confirming key points of discussion with regard to moving toward a post-HFA framework.

ACDR 2013 was a great success thanks to the substantial contributions of all of the speakers and the active involvement of all participants.

*For more information, please visit the ACDR 2013 website at http://www.adrc.asia/acdr/2013_index.html.

● ADRC Visiting Researcher Report

Ms. Ma Aletha Ahumada Nogra (Philippines)

Mabuhay from the Philippines! I am Ma. Aletha Ahumada-Nogra, Civil Defense Officer III from the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), Department of National Defense (DND). The OCD is the executive arm and secretariat of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC). OCD is a civilian bureau situated under the DND, and the Secretary of the DND is the Chairman of the NDRRMC. OCD's mission is to lead and administer a comprehensive national civil defense and disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM) program in the Philippines and its vision is to be a center of excellence in disaster risk reduction and management by 2020.



I am currently assigned to the OCD-DND Regional Center VI, which is comprised of six provinces, two highly urbanized cities, 117 municipalities, and 16 component cities. Our area of responsibility includes the four main islands (of the 7,107 islands of the Philippines) of Panay Island, Guimaras Island, Boracay Island, and a part of Negros Island.

Presently, I am serving as the Chief, Training Unit of OCD Region VI. As such, I am working closely with the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Councils (LDRRMCs) on coordinating the implementation of various DRRM trainings prepared by the OCD Central Office. One of my tasks is to act as a resource person in the field of DRRM. Likewise, I provide technical assistance to various stakeholders in the conduct of capacity-building and enhancement programs in DRRM in the Western Visayas Region.

I would like to express my utmost gratitude to ADRC for this opportunity to intensively learn about and really experience the best practices in disaster risk reduction in Japan. As a Visiting Researcher, I have personally seen how saving lives and minimizing property damage have become a way of life for Japan, which serves as a showcase that the rest of the world can learn from. I also had the privilege of attending the ACDR2013 and the International Recovery Forum (IRF) where presentations covered the many lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake and other mega disasters. I also thank ADRC for bringing together four nations (Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and India) through the Visiting Researcher Program so that we can learn from one another's strengths and weaknesses, and help make our countries more resilient to disasters.

This research is my humble contribution to ADRC and the Republic of the Philippines through the OCD and aims to advance our pursuit of safer, more adaptive, and more resilient communities as we strive for the goal of sustainable development for our children, and for our children's children.

Mr. Duni Chand Rana (India)

I am from the Himachal Pradesh Administrative Services (HPAS), and am presently posted as Joint Secretary to the Government of Himachal Pradesh at HP Secretariat, Shimla. I joined the services in 1999, since which time I have been posted to many administrative positions mainly in fields involving disaster management work. Over the last two years, I worked with the UNDP as State Project Officer-HP in GOI-UNDP DRR Program (2009-12). Under this program, we conducted many training activities for various stakeholders, developed and designed information, education, and communication (IEC) materials, and also assisted the state government in establishing a basic policy and procedural framework for disaster management. We also assisted the state in finalizing the framework for the establishment of emergency operation centers and initiating detailed state-wide multi-hazard risk assessment. In order to design a targeted IEC campaign and conduct focused training and capacity building of various stakeholders, a study to capture the current status of knowledge, aptitude, and awareness (KAP) in disaster management was commissioned and finalized.



Due to its physiographic and climatic conditions, India is one of the world's most disaster-prone

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areas. It is vulnerable to windstorms from both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. There are active crustal movements in the Himalayas, leading to earthquakes, and about 58.7% of the total land mass is prone to earthquakes of moderate to very high intensity. The Himalayas, being a fairly young mountain range, are undergoing constant geological changes that result in landslides. Floods are caused by heavy rains and droughts occur in the arid and semi-arid regions. About 12% of the total land mass is prone to flooding and 68% of the arable land is vulnerable to drought. Western India, typified by the Thar Desert, and central India, where the Deccan Plateau is located, face recurring droughts due to acute shortages of rainfall. India has also increasingly become vulnerable to tsunamis. It has a coastline that stretches along 7,600 km, and is repeatedly threatened by cyclones. In addition to the lives that are lost, India loses 2% to 3% of GDP annually due to disasters. Many pockets of the country are hotspots for disasters and our vulnerability index is one of the highest in the world.

Steps have recently been taken to institutionalize holistic disaster management in India. For emergency response, India has a system of multiple toll-free numbers (100 - Police; 101 - Fire; 108 - Medical; 102 - Ambulance; 1070/1077 – Disaster, etc.). However, having multiple toll-free numbers tends to cause confusion. Also, in most emergencies, response efforts must be taken by more than one agency and the present system lacks a means of achieving the effective coordination and integration of services. This can lead to response deficiencies and delays. Multiple toll-free numbers and response systems also lead to waste in terms of resources and manpower. The existing system does not use the many ICT tools available for handling calls, creating databases and a decision support system, managing emergency dispatch, and optimizing the utilization of existing resources. The existing system also has no effective and efficient means of communicating early warning signals to vulnerable communities and response agencies. The end result is avoidable loss of life.

Here at ADRC, I am interested in studying the Japanese system and international best practices in emergency response systems (ERS) and in proposing a model ERS for India, preferably based on a single integrated toll-free number for optimum resource utilization and effective response.

During my brief stay in Japan, I have attended international conferences with other visiting researchers, observed community disaster drills, participated in activities commemorating the anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and seen youth education activities. I have also tried some hands-on activities and look forward to many more. Preserving the memory of past disasters and using that knowledge for the education and training of the next generation is done remarkably well in Japan. It is also amazing to see as how this knowledge is being transferred to the next generation in a very interesting and systematic way. "We don't forget 1995.1.17" (the day the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake struck Kobe) is the tagline for DRR used by the residents and government of this beautiful port city.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my state government, the government of India, and ADRC for giving me the great opportunity to participate in this program. I am sure it will help me grow professionally and I will be able to contribute to DRR in my state and country in the future. I would also like to express my deep gratitude and admiration to the ADRC staff members for taking such good care of us and for facilitating our learning.

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