



# ADRC Highlights

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## ● Letter from a Former Visiting Researcher

### Mr. Beda Nidhi KHANAL from Nepal

#### My stay in Japan: a mixture of enthusiasm and anxiety amid COVID-19

Japan is a country that has made a name for itself in dealing with disasters and rebuilding beautifully. I arrived from Nepal and joined Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), an attractive office in friendly environment, on 13 January 2020. I was excited about the prospects of learning a new culture, interacting with new people from different places around the world, and learning best practices in disaster management from the perspective of this fascinating country.

I was set to return, after a three month period of study, in time to celebrate the Nepali new year (mid-April) and my wedding anniversary with my wife and family. Suddenly, a strange disease started spreading out of Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization (WHO) later named it COVID-19. Countries started to take different measures to prevent and control this disease. When Japan identified some infected passengers aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship, the news went viral. Meanwhile, the government of Nepal also started taking response measures and announced restrictions on all arrivals from some countries, including Japan, starting 20 March 2020. This was followed by a lockdown starting 24 March, which has been extended now five times, and is slated to last until at least 18 May. Nobody knows where things will go from there! In lockdown, people are supposed to stay home; they are not allowed to go out except for emergency care or the most essential services. This pandemic has created a very strange situation for all living beings globally. I started having a lot of feelings about life, liberty, governance, capacity, possibility, and hope.

The world turned from general security toward “hygiene security.” More and more we hear people referring to a “lockdown,” “emergency,” and “social distancing,” while people are told to “stay home,” “don’t touch your face,” “wear a mask,” “use hand sanitizer,” “wash your hands frequently,” “avoid crowds,” and “control your sneeze.” Scientists are working day and night to find a treatment against this virus. Some have claimed partial successes, too. Behind the hard work and measures applied to control the global pandemic, new scenarios for global politics have started to be discussed among global minds.

On the other side of coin, meanwhile, the lockdowns in most countries have resulted in cleaner air, and the environment and planet are experiencing rejuvenation in many ways. The mountains look more beautiful, roadside flowers are blossoming, wild animals are roaming the roads, and people are coming to better recognize that our earth is shared by all living creatures.

In the meantime, people have increasingly begun to work from home, which



**Continued**

has created its own kind of culture. There have been many ZOOM meetings. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) has organized many COVID-19 webinars for recommending response measures and sharing progress reports. I have learned from these as well. I also share what I have learned with Nepali society through social media and other online media. I also keep a diary of my daily activities in Japan. Additionally, I prepared a comparative report on COVID-19 observations in Nepal and Japan, and forwarded that to the executive director of ADRC. I have also spent a lot of time working on my study report. All these activities have made my time at DK House in Kobe easier. ADRC is taking good care of us (I am here with another stranded research fellow from Sri Lanka, though colleagues from Bhutan and Thailand were able to return home as planned).

I have consulted with the Nepali Embassy in Tokyo about the possibility of returning to Nepal and have asked the Ministry of Home Affairs for the necessary permit and logistical support. They are keeping me up to date on my request. Now, my little 3.5 year-old son frequently talks to me via messenger with a ball in his hands. He says “Pa! You are lying, come play football with me today,” and it makes me emotional. I hope Nepal is working on reopening the international airport and resuming air services for all the Nepali people waiting to come home from abroad.

Social media and online news sources have become my friends during this silent time. The media provides a lot of information about the recent strategies adopted by Japan to fight Covid-19. Japanese scientists are working hard to find a treatment and they are making progress in their efforts. The national government and governors are very active. The state of emergency has been extended beyond the first seven prefectures to 13 prefectures. Health facilities and measures have been enhanced, more than 210,000 new isolation rooms have been booked in hotels, and preparations are being made for the worst-case scenarios. Recently, graphs posted online (<https://covid19japan.com/>) show a decreasing trend in infections, which inspires hope that people will soon begin to live in a “new normal” in this beautiful country, Japan.

With lockdown measures and controlled borders, Nepal has successfully controlled the spread of this virus to only 82 cases (<https://covid19.ndrrma.gov.np/>) as of 6 May 2020. The recovery rate also is good, and no critical cases have been reported as of the date of this writing. Per the reports of the Ministry of Health and Population, the cases of this disease in Nepal are little different from the rest of the world; there is a high prevalence of asymptomatic cases and further study is needed. The government is preparing to loosen the lockdown by area. Thousands of emigrants in other countries are eagerly asking the government to open the international airport so that they can arrange their return trips home. Although a detailed plan for accepting returning nationals from abroad has yet to come out, the government of Nepal is providing assurances that preparations are under way and has asked us to stay patient while sheltering in place in our current locations. I remain ever hopeful.

6 May 2020  
Beda Nidhi Khanal

Update: Beda san returned home safely on 16 May 2020!

**● Announcement****Challenges in Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in Asia**

ADRC has been collecting information on preventing and responding to the spread of COVID-19 in the ADRC Member countries through our network of more than 100 former Visiting Researchers (VRs). The information collected to date is available on the ADRC website: [https://www.adrc.asia/publications/disaster\\_report/covid19.php](https://www.adrc.asia/publications/disaster_report/covid19.php).

## ● Promoting Cooperation with Affiliated Institutions

### JICA Training “Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction”



Visiting the flood disaster area of Asakura city

From 8 January to 21 February 2020, ADRC, in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), offered a course entitled “JICA Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction.” The training was attended by seven government officials in charge of disaster risk reduction for six countries, namely Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, India, Myanmar, and Nepal.

During this 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 education, community-based disaster risk management, and role of the meteorological observatories. In addition, they participated in the ADRC’s town watching

exercise and visited areas affected by a flood disaster in Asakura city.

The trainees showed great interest in Japanese disaster management systems and disaster risk reduction efforts, and were keen to learn from every lecture and exercise offered during the training. It is hoped that the participants will make good use of the knowledge and methods they learned during this course to help strengthen the disaster management systems in their home countries. ADRC would like to express its sincerest gratitude to all of the organizations that contributed to the success of this course.

## ● Participation in International Conferences

### ASEAN High-Level Symposium on Disaster Management 2020

On 26-27 February 2020, ADRC participated in the ASEAN High-Level Symposium on Disaster Management 2020 held at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia. The symposium was organized by the ASEAN Secretariat and funded by China with the objective of providing a platform for discussions on disaster management in a cooperative framework by involving relevant experts from various backgrounds and by complementing existing ASEAN mechanisms. More than 100 participants the DRR sector, as well as the social and financial sectors, attended from ASEAN member countries, academic institutions, international organizations and NGOs.



Opening Session

The symposium consisted of an opening session and six thematic sessions. At the end of Session V “Sufficient Recovery Plans, Rehabilitation, and a Build Back Better Strategy,” ADRC gave comments on disaster data development and methodologies in the ASEAN countries, as many panelists consistently reported facing challenges in terms of the accuracy and coverage of disaster data, in all disaster phases and fields of activity, throughout the symposium. Then application of GLIDE to their work was suggested a possible future solution.

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