



# ADRC Highlights

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## ● Promoting Cooperation with Member Countries

### Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) 2020: Sessions 1 & 2

Following up on last month's issue, we would like provide details about Thematic Sessions 1 & 2 of the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) 2020 held on 20-22 October 2020.

#### Session 1: Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Measures and Challenges to the Intensifying Disaster Risks

Session 1 highlighted the importance of sharing experiences and knowledge among five ADRC member countries and included three reports on specific projects in Asian countries from partner organizations. It was moderated by Dr. Manzul Kumar Hazarika (Director, Geoinformatics Center, Asian Institute of Technology).

The first speaker, from an ADRC member country, was Ms. Myat Moe Thwe (Department of Disaster Management, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, Republic of the Union of Myanmar). She talked about disaster risk assessment efforts, disaster mitigation measures, and challenges and lessons learned from cyclones in Myanmar, particularly Cyclone NARGIS of 2008 (Category 3, storm surge 7.01 meters). The next speakers were Ms. Nguyen Thi Xuan Hong and Mr. TANAKA Yasuhiro (Vietnam Disaster Management Authority, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Vietnam). They talked about the current flood situation in Vietnam. In this context, legal developments are urgently needed to respond to climate change. While the capital city of Hanoi has embankments, further actions are necessary to respond to climate change in the future. The third speaker was Mr. Umar Fikry (National Disaster Management Authority, Maldives). He reported on the impact of the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 in the Maldives, including the economic loss of about 62% of GDP. The fourth speaker was Dr. Kamalov Jamshed (Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense, Tajikistan). He reported on the latest DRR activities in Tajikistan and explained that various disaster prevention related projects are being implemented with support from the ADB, the World Bank, Japan, and the King Salmon Foundation. The fifth speaker was Mr. TAKAHASHI Kazuaki (Ministry of the Environment, Japan). He talked about DRR activities related to climate change. The Ministry of the Environment has been promoting climate change countermeasures in cooperation with the Cabinet Office.

The first DRR expert was Prof. Cees van Westen (University of Twente). He introduced a digital technology for a disaster prevention project being implemented in Tajikistan in collaboration with UNDP and the Government of Japan. Next was Dr. Mizan Bustanul Fuady Bisri (United Nations University). He introduced the importance of knowledge management (KM). He mentioned four types of KM practices: (1) people-centered KM, (2) process-centered KM, (3) technology KM, and (4) goal-setting KM. The third expert was Mr. Keith Paolo C. Landicho (AHA Centre). He reported on the AHA Center's effort in ASEAN countries. The AHA Center is an intergovernmental organization founded by the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM). It plays a coordinating

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role in emergency response in the event of a disaster, and manages disaster information under the principle, “One ASEAN, One Response.”

Dr. Manzul Kumar Hazarika introduced other papers that were not presented in this session. Armenia submitted a report on risk evaluation based on the experience of the Spitak earthquake in 1988. Bangladesh issued a report on the latest hazards due to abnormal weather. Nepal reported on its Strategic Plan for DRR (2018-2030). He also noted that tourism income is decreasing as a result of climate change problems in the Maldives, and a Strategic Plan 2030 has been compiled in Tajikistan. In conclusion, he noted that strengthening the networks between national governments and DRR experts is needed for better DRR in Asia.



21 October 2020: Session 1

## Session 2: Disaster Preparedness and Response Measures Amidst COVID-19

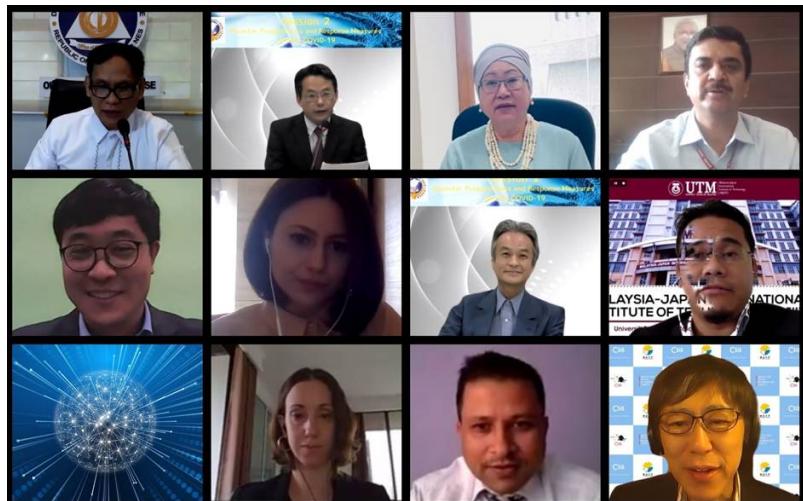
Session 2 of the ACDR2020 dealt with disaster preparedness and response measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prof. ISHIWATARI Mikio of the University of Tokyo, who moderated the session, said that “Disaster risk management (DRM) authorities in Asia are facing difficulties in managing disasters during the COVID-19 pandemic because most systems are not prepared using a multi-hazard approach.” Recognizing that some Asian countries are being impacted by disasters on top of the pandemic, Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, adviser to the Prime Minister in Malaysia, stressed in her keynote the importance of “future-proofing our systems against complex challenges.” Taking care of the environment is one way to future-proof the DRM system, she noted, stating that “environmental protection is disaster management.”

While managing disasters during the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging, some emerging actions by DRM agencies are notable. In the Philippines, Director Claudio Yucot (Office of Civil Defense Regional Office V) reported that his office introduced new practices in responding to typhoon Ambo (Vongfong) in May 2020. For example: (1) suspected COVID-19 cases were segregated from the evacuation area; (2) separate facilities were designated to take care of suspected COVID-19 cases; (3) occupants of the evacuation room must be either members of one family or people who know each other from the same neighborhood; and (4) no media was allowed at the emergency operations center. In India, Mr. Sandeep Poundrik, IAS, reported that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in anticipation of the cyclone season (e.g., Amphan in May 2020), introduced a GIS-based Decision Support System (DSS) platform to manage disasters in the midst of COVID-19. This platform has a geo-enabled dashboard for the public, where State Disaster Management Agencies (SDMAs) and other stakeholders can access information related to COVID-19 cases, logistics, resources, and surveillance. In the Republic of Korea, Mr. KANG Jinmo reported that the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) developed a New Guideline for Temporary Shelters to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 that outlines quarantine measures (e.g., use of public buildings and town halls as temporary locations) prior to facility operations as well as the stockpiling of hygiene supplies (e.g., sanitizers and facemasks). This prevented the spread of coronavirus during the heat wave and typhoon disasters during the summer.

Enhanced preparedness measures have also been put in place in many countries. In Armenia, Ms. Syuzanna Vardazar Kakoyan said that the Ministry of Emergency Situation (MES) is integrating COVID-19 response in its Risk Analysis and Emergency Response Plan. In Nepal, Mr. Beda Nidhi Khanal reported that the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) is strengthening the institutional coordination between its disaster response system and COVID-19 management system as part of its disaster preparedness measures.

## Continued

Partner organizations have also been innovating in extending support to disaster DRM institutions. Ms. Helen Mould reported that OCHA-ROAP supports countries through the implementation of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), particularly in identifying the needs across 12 countries in the Asia-Pacific and in securing financial support for plan implementation. Prof. SHIBASAKI Ryosuke reported that the University of Tokyo developed an open-source software application called “Mobipack” that serves as a decision support system (DSS) tool for managing COVID-19 as well as other disasters.



22 October 2020: Session 2

Presentations in this session offered several insights, and Dr. Khamarrul Azahari Razak summarized as follows: (1) responding to disasters in the midst of a pandemic requires multi-level collaboration and enhanced multi-hazard preparedness efforts; (2) an integrated disaster risk management approach is needed in complex crises; and (3) cooperation with civil society is crucial to enhance community-level disaster preparedness and response. It was noted that other papers from Kazakhstan, Singapore, and GeoThings were submitted for this session but were not presented due to limited time slots, but they are posted on the ACDR website (<https://acdr.adrc.asia/>). As a way forward, the moderator suggested that ADRC shall further promote knowledge management of the practices and lessons concerning a multi-hazard approach in Asia, including the sharing of case studies, capacity building, and the application of lessons into policies and programs.

## Report from Member Countries: Maldives

In this issue, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight extracts from the Maldives' report on Theme 1 “Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Measures and Challenges to the Intensifying Disaster Risks,” which is introduced in the ACDR 2020 website.

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Maldives is highly exposed to natural hazards and climate variability. With sea levels expected to rise and extreme weather events likely to increase in frequency and intensity, the low-lying Maldives is considered one of the world’s most vulnerable countries. The country’s maximum elevation is 2.4m above sea level. The consequences of high frequency events such as monsoonal flooding, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion, sea swells and sea level rise, combined with the potential of thunderstorms, flash floods, prolonged dry periods, and coral reef destruction, pose a real threat to lives, livelihoods and the economy of Maldives. As coastal erosion and pressure on inhabitable land resources increase, the physical vulnerabilities of island populations, infrastructure, and livelihood assets will increase as well. The effects of climate change, if poorly managed, could cause annual economic losses of more than 12 percent of Maldives’ GDP by 2100.

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You can see the full report, as well as other reports on the ACDR2020 website: <https://acdr.adrc.asia/>.

## ● Promoting Cooperation with Affiliated Institutions

### First Online Tsunami Seminar

Since its establishment, ADRC has been promoting Tsunami Disaster Reduction with a wide range of activities, such as damage surveys, research, conferences, workshops, and training courses. Especially since World Tsunami Awareness Day was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2015, ADRC has dedicated itself to raising tsunami DRR awareness at every opportunity. ADRC is now in the process of holding a three-session series of tsunami seminars to present research findings by DRR experts. The first Online Tsunami Seminar was held on 24 November 2020.

Mr. NAKAGAWA Masaaki, Executive Director of ADRC, kicked off the seminar by outlining the objectives of the event and welcoming participants. The next presenter was Prof. IMAMURA Fumihiko, Director, International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS) of Tohoku. He recalled the Great East Japan Earthquake of 11 March 2011, and explained that it was a triple disaster and tragedy, due to the simultaneous occurrence of the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant failure. To solve problems that became apparent during that disaster, Tohoku University established IRIDeS, building on its existing group of interdisciplinary experts. To date, the research and expertise from IRIDeS has made several contributions to tsunami DRR, including the application of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in the simulation and instant prediction of tsunamis. He concluded by expressing his hope that this series of seminars would allow participants to learn about the experience and lessons of 2011 and about the latest developments in tsunami DRR.

Next, Dr. Anawat Suppasri, Associate Professor, gave an overview of the history of tsunamis in Japan and argued that Japanese experts are constantly learning more and more from these historical tsunami experiences. In the 1896 Meiji-Sanriku tsunami, the key lesson was that people must move to high ground. The lesson from the 1933 Showa-Sanriku tsunami was for people to move to high ground and also to build seawalls in some areas. After the 1960 Chile tsunami, more pieces of disaster mitigating infrastructure were built (e.g., seawalls, breakwaters, and tsunami gates). After the 1993 Okushiri tsunami, structural measures, town planning, and a combination soft measures (e.g., raising tsunami awareness) were introduced. Since the 2011 Great East Japan Tsunami, more emphasis has been given to disaster prevention and risk reduction. He discussed a publication entitled, “Tsunami Evacuation during COVID-19: A Guide for School Administrators” which provides step by step instructions for what to do prior to an emergency, during the evacuation and within the evacuation centers, with a view to preventing the spread of infectious diseases during a tsunami.

The second seminar was held on 22 December 2020. Watch for details in the next issue of ADRC Highlights!



24 November 2020: First Online Tsunami Seminar

## ● Announcement

### Next Online Tsunami Seminar

The third Online Tsunami Seminar is planned for 26 January 2021. Please visit the following link (<https://bit.ly/ADRCTsunamiSeminar>) for more information and registration details. We hope you will be able to participate.

## ● Participation in International Conferences

### **ADRC at the 15th Integrated Workshops (15th IWS) of the Typhoon Committee**

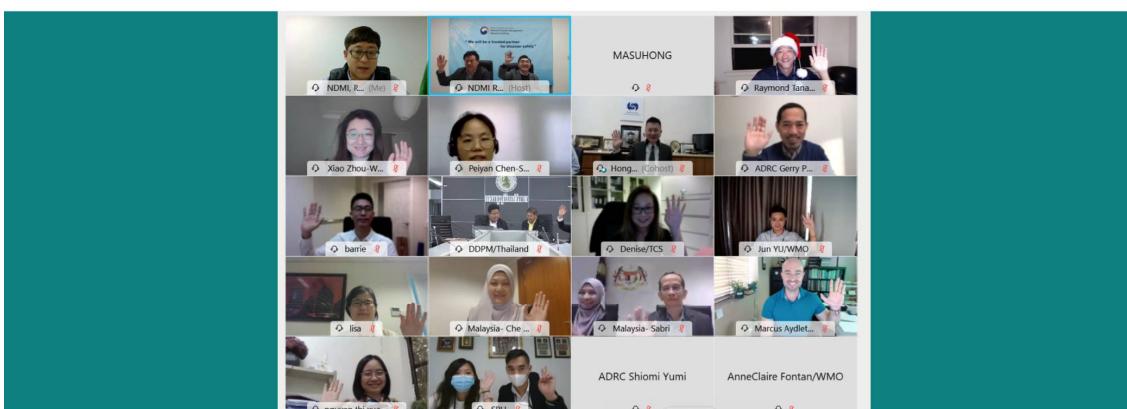
Since 2006, the Typhoon Committee (an intergovernmental body under the joint auspices of ESCAP and WMO, and comprised of 14 member countries in the Asia-Pacific) annually organizes the Integrated Workshops (IWS) highlighting three areas of work: meteorology, hydrology, and disaster risk reduction. The key objective of organizing the IWS is to discuss current and emerging typhoon-related issues. In 2020, the Typhoon Committee adopted the theme, Innovative Strategies and Measures for Typhoon-related Disaster Risk Reduction under Public Emergencies for the 15th IWS, virtually organized on 1-2 December 2020.

ADRC delivered one of the keynote presentations entitled, “Disaster Response Amidst COVID-19: Lessons from Recent Typhoons.” The presentation highlighted the activities of the disaster risk management (DRM) agencies in the Philippines, India, and the Republic of Korea in responding to recent typhoon disasters on top of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering restrictions of people’s movement, and the additional health protocol requirements of social distancing and face coverings, DRM agencies introduced new response measures such as: (1) designating more evacuation centers (not just schools but include other safe building like churches or gymnasiums); (2) adopting separate measures for screening and isolating evacuees who have contracted COVID-19; and (3) utilizing digital technologies (e.g., mobile apps and disaster dashboards) to support decision-making.

Moreover, the two ADRC delegates also participated in the working group discussions, particularly in the working group on disaster risk reduction (WGDRR), in finalizing the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) for 2021. It was noted that most of the AOPs in 2020 could not be implemented due to COVID-19. Thus, in 2021 the implementation of those AOPs will be continued, including by virtual means.

### **ESCAP/WMO Typhoon Committee 15<sup>th</sup> Integrated Workshop**

*“Innovative Strategies and Measures for Typhoon-related  
Disaster Risk Reduction under Public Emergencies”*  
1-2 December 2020 / Video Conference



Participants in the 15th IWS

### **For Inquiries & Subscription Information**

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